

## Repetition in the initiation of repair

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### Introduction

The organization of repair has received sustained interest in the study of language and social interaction over the past decades. Although, until recently, research in this area has based its claims primarily on English materials, there has been a growing interest, especially in the past ten years or so, in exploring how repair operates in languages other than English. This expanding body of research includes studies of German (e.g., Egbert 1996, 1997b, 2004; Selting 1988, 1992, 1996; Uhmann 2001), Japanese (e.g., Fox *et al.* 1996), Korean (e.g., Kim 1999a, 2001), Thai (e.g., Moerman 1977), and Mandarin Chinese (e.g., Chui 1996; Tao *et al.* 1999; Wu 2006; Zhang 1998), among others. Some of these studies have focused on the mechanisms of self- and other-initiation of repair in the languages examined (e.g., Chui 1996; Kim 1999a, 2001; Moerman 1977; Zhang 1998), while others have uncovered the linkages between repair and other aspects of interactional practice, such as prosody (e.g., Selting 1996; Tao *et al.* 1999) and bodily conduct (e.g., Egbert 1996), and still others have explored the relation between repair and syntax from a cross-linguistic perspective (e.g., Fox *et al.* 1996).

As part of this growing effort to understand the organization of repair across languages, this chapter investigates two repeat-formatted other-initiated repair practices in Mandarin conversation. Using the methodology of conversation analysis (CA), this study will show that the two Mandarin repair initiations under examination, like other-initiation of repair in English, serve not only to initiate repair but also as vehicles for accomplishing additional

negatively valenced actions, such as displaying a stance of disbelief or nonalignment. However, in further explicating the common sequential and activity contexts of these two practices, I will also describe a previously undescribed division of labor between repair initiations and demonstrate how the use of these two Mandarin practices is sensitive to two intertwining axes: the epistemic stance of the speaker who initiates the repair and the sequential context and positioning of the initiation of repair.

The analysis draws upon a corpus of approximately two hours of telephone conversations and seventeen hours of videotaped face-to-face conversations among family members, friends, and acquaintances. The data were collected in mainland China, Taiwan, and the USA.

In what follows, I will first briefly review previous work on other-initiation of repair and lay out a few initial observations regarding the use of the two Mandarin practices under examination in clear-cut contexts of repair. I will then examine occasions in which they are used to implement actions beyond repair initiations and discuss how these uses can be related to the basic properties they exhibit as repair initiators.<sup>1</sup>

### **The candidate phenomenon: repeat-formatted other-initiation of repair**

In general, research on other-initiation of repair has been pursued along two different lines. The first line of inquiry (e.g., Curl 2005; Egbert 1996; Kim 1999a, 2001; Schegloff 2000b; Schegloff *et al.* 1977; Zhang 1998) is concerned mainly with the internal organization of repair sequences, exploring issues such as the locus of repair initiation relative to the trouble source turn as well as the repertoire of practices for the initiation or resolution of repair. The second line of inquiry (e.g., Couper-Kuhlen 1992; Drew 1997; Egbert 1997b, 2004; Kim 1999a; Robinson 2006; Schegloff 1997b; Selting 1988, 1992, 1996) focuses not so much on repair sequences *per se*, but rather on the larger sequential contexts in which such repair initiations and sequences figure, as well as their interactional uses in these contexts.

One prominent theme along this second line of inquiry is the double-barreled nature of other-initiated repair – that is, its

capacity for, and frequent use in, implementing additional interactional projects while simultaneously serving to initiate repair. Egbert (1997b), for example, demonstrates how initiating repair in multiparty German conversation can be used strategically not only as an entry or exit device to such conversations but also as a display of affiliation among conversational co-participants. Selting (1988, 1992, 1996) shows that prosodically marked other-initiation of repair in German can carry an emotive overtone of “astonishment” and indicate a problem of expectation on the part of the speaker. Drew (1997) focuses on what he terms “open class” repair initiators in English (e.g., “Pardon?,” “Sorry?,” “What?”) and shows how their use can embody the speaker’s treatment of the turn being targeted as either topically or sequentially disjunctive or in some way inappropriate. And the strong connection between the use of other-initiated repair and the display of incipient nonalignment on the part of its speaker has also been documented in several studies (e.g., Heritage 1984: 339–344; Kim 1999a; Pomerantz 1984; Schegloff 1997b, 2007a; Schegloff *et al.* 1977). The following example, from Schegloff (2007a: 102–103), is a case in point:

(1) Schegloff (2007a:102–103)

- 1 Bee: a→ =[Why] whhat’sa mattuh with y- Yih sou[nd HA:PPY,] hh
- 2 Ava: [Nothing. ]
- 3 Ava: b→ u- I sound ha:p[py?]
- 4 Bee: c→ [Yee]uh.
- 5 (0.3)
- 6 Ava: d→ No:,

Here, Ava initiates repair (Arrow B) of Bee’s assessment (“Yih sound HA:PPY,” Arrow A) of Ava’s emotional state. To this repair initiation, Bee responds in the next turn (Arrow C) with a confirmation. Although this response by Bee suggests that she is treating Ava’s repair initiation, *prima facie* at least, as involving a hearing or understanding problem, Ava’s subsequent disconfirmation (Arrow D) nonetheless retroactively indicates that this prior repair initiation serves not merely to initiate a repair but to portend disagreement as well.

The present study pursues the second line of research and considers a similar phenomenon in Mandarin conversation as that illustrated in Extract 1. An initial sense of the presence of a similar

operation – and a further complication – involved in the use of repeat-formatted other-initiated repair in Mandarin is evident in the following two excerpts, both paralleling Extract 1 closely:

(2) (CMC01–403A)

- 1 C:        *ta yi xiaoshi:: fu ni duoshao, xianzai.*  
              she one hour    pay you how:much now  
              “How much does she pay you- for an hour:, now?”
- 2 W: a→ *pianyi de    le.    sanshi.*  
              cheap NOM CRS thirty  
              “Cheap. Thirty dollars.”
- 3 C: b→ *yi    ge xiaoshi sanshi?*  
              one C hour    thirty  
              “Thirty dollars for an hour?”
- 4 W: c→ *(uh [huh])*  
              PRT PRT  
              “(uh [huh.])”
- 5 C: d→        *[Bu pianyi.*  
                      N    cheap  
                      [ “Not cheap.”

(3) (CMC 05–06, 00:20, audio 315a)

- 1 L: a→ *hai, hebei    jiu    mei shenme hao difang.*  
              (sigh) (province) just N    what    good place  
              “((sighs)) There are not many good places in Hebei.”
- 2 M: b→ *hebei    a? =*  
              (province) PRT  
              “Hebei A? =”
- 3 L: c→ *=uh.*  
              PRT  
              = “Yeah.”
- 4        (0.5)
- 5 M: d→ *langfang hai xing.*  
              (place)    still okay  
              “Langfang is okay.”

As with Extract 1, in each of these excerpts, a speaker initiates repair (Arrow B) by repeating part of the prior assessment by another (Arrow A); and in each excerpt, following a recipient confirmation (Arrow C), the repeat speaker moves to launch a

disagreeing response (Arrow D): In Extract 2, the speaker delivers a straightforward negation of the prior assessment; and in Extract 3 the speaker introduces an exception to the recipient's just-proffered negative evaluation of the province by claiming that one of its cities – i.e., Langfang – is “okay.” Despite the similarity, it can be noted, however, that the repair initiations in these extracts are not in entirely the same format: Whereas the repeat in Extract 3 is suffixed with the particle *a*,<sup>2</sup> the one in Extract 2 is not.

What Extracts 2 and 3 suggest, then, is both a commonality and variation between English and Mandarin. On the one hand, as in English conversation, repeat-formatted other-initiation of repair in Mandarin apparently can serve not only to initiate repair but also as a vehicle for accomplishing negatively valenced actions such as projecting disagreement. On the other hand, however, in initiating a repair through the use of repeat to accomplish such an action, a Mandarin speaker will have to select between at least two alternative practices: a question-intoned repeat<sup>3</sup> and a repeat suffixed with the final particle *a*. The second of these practices appears to have no direct analogue in English.<sup>4</sup>

As will be shown below, the selection between these two Mandarin practices in implementing negatively valenced projects is not random; rather, the division of labor appears to be consistent with, and may in fact be carried over from, the basic meanings they index when serving as straightforward repair initiators. To demonstrate such a connection, let us turn first to a brief overview of the use of these practices in clear-cut contexts of repair initiation.

### Question-intoned repeats and *a*-suffixed repeats in clear-cut contexts of repair

As straightforward repair initiations, question-intoned repeats and repeats suffixed with *a* commonly adumbrate different problems their speakers are having with respect to the trouble source turns targeted and frequently engender different types of responses from their recipients.

Repeats suffixed with *a* are commonly heard as confirmation questions, i.e. the use of this format makes a recipient's confirmation or disconfirmation relevant in next position. This is illustrated respectively in Extracts 4 and 5, both from a conversation recorded in

Beijing between two acquaintances. Immediately prior to Extract 4, M has just asserted that life in Beijing is boring. In Extract 5, the topic has turned to a neighborhood where M used to live.

(4) (CMC 05–05, 00:40, audio 243a)

- 1 L: *suibian ni.*  
as:wish you  
“Whatever.”
- 2 (0.3)
- 3 L: a→ *chabuduo zhao ren jia le de le.*  
almost find person marry ASP get CRS  
“(I’ll) just get married to some guy.”
- 4 (0.5)
- 5 M: b→ *zhao ren jia le de le a?=*  
find person marry ASP get CRS PRT  
“Just get married to some guy A?”=
- 6 L: c→ *=uh.=*  
PRT  
= “Yeah.”=
- 7 M: d→ *=wo zher hen duo ren dasuan qu ne.*  
I here very many person plan marry PRT  
= “I know lots of guys who are ready to marry.”

(5) (CMC 05–03, 01:45, audio 130a)

- 1 M: *bu, yuanlai women jia zhu nar?*  
no originally we home live where  
“No, where did we live before?”
- 2 M: *<zhu dongcheng na kuair.*  
live (place) that area  
< “(We) lived in the Dongcheng area.”=
- 3 M: a→ *=[dongcheng liuyin jie na kuair.*  
(place) (place) street that area  
= “Near Liuyin Street in Dongcheng.”
- 4 L: *=[((clears throat))*
- 5 (0.5)
- 6 L: b→ *[[guyun jie a?=*  
(place) street PRT  
[[ “Guyun Street A?”=

- 7 M:        [[*shi*    *b-*  
                    *be*  
              [[ “(It) is-”
- 8 M: c→    =*aiyahh*,        *liuyin jie*.  
                    (exclamation) (place) street  
                    = “*aarrgh!* *Liuyin Street*.”
- 9            (.)
- 10 L: d→    *ao*:.  
                    PRT  
                    “Oh:”

In each of these cases, a speaker displays a hearing or understanding problem with respect to a prior turn (Arrow A) by initiating a repair through a partial repeat suffixed with the final particle *a* (Arrow B); and, in each case, this *a*-suffixed repeat is responded to with either a confirmation or disconfirmation (Arrow C). That such a confirmatory type of response is adequate for repair initiations in the form of *a*-suffixed repeats can be evidenced by the repeat speakers' subsequent moves (Arrow D): They either proceed to produce a sequentially relevant pending response, as in Extract 4, and, by implication, treat the recipient's confirmatory response as sufficient for their prior inquiries. Or, as in Extract 5, they receive the confirmation with a free-standing *ao* “oh,” which, by proposing a change in the speaker's local state of information as a result of the response, reaffirms the status of the *a*-suffixed repeat as one which is meant to request a confirmation or disconfirmation.

By contrast, a confirmatory type of response is not always adequate for question-intoned repeats. In the database, although some such repeats appear to be treated as candidate hearings offered for confirmation of a prior turn's talk, the majority of such repeats turn out to involve recognition or understanding problems. Consider, for example, Extract 6 below, in which the participants are talking about a variety of foods in the northeast area of Mainland China.

(6) (CMC 01–01, 03:22, audio 034a)

- 1 Z:→ *ranhou ta nar* ( ... ) *yi yang, dongbei de ming cai*,  
          then it there    one C    northeast ASSC famous dish  
          “And there's ( ... ) another famous northeastern dish,”

- 2 Z:→ *jiao zuo guobaorou*.  
call CP (dish)  
“called ‘guobaorou.’”
- 3 (0.5)
- 4 N:→ *guobaorou?*  
(dish)  
“‘Guobaorou?’”
- 5 Z:→ ((nod))=
- 6 N:→ =*she- na shenme* [*guo?*]  
that what (word)  
= “Wh- which [‘guo’ is that?”
- 7 Z: [*guo*.]  
(word)  
[ “‘Guo.’”
- 8 W: [*↑nang ba*.]  
(word) PRT  
[ “↑Isn’t it ‘nang’?”
- 9 Z: [*guo: jiu shi guo: de guo:*.]  
(word) just be (word) ASSC (word)  
[ “‘Guo:’ is just the ‘guo:’ in ‘guo:.’”

In line 4, N initiates repair on the name of the food just mentioned through a question-intoned repeat. Although Z’s response – a simple affirmative nodding (line 5) – displays her treatment of N’s repair initiation as possibly checking a candidate hearing, N’s immediate move to follow Z’s response with a further clarification question (line 6) retrospectively marks that the trouble she has been proposing involves a recognition problem, rather than a hearing problem.

Extract 7 provides another instance of question-intoned repeats. Here, despite the non-presence of a follow-up clarification question, the question-intoned repeat is nonetheless treated as embodying an understanding problem. In this excerpt, the participants are exchanging their views of the city of Chengdu, which both of them have been to.

(7) (CMC 05–02, 04:40, audio 105a)

- 1 M: *ni lai nabanr::(.)*  
you come there  
“(When) you were there::(.)”



- 2 M: *ni zui xi(huan) chengdu shenme?*  
you most like (city) what  
“what did you like most about Chengdu?”
- 3 (0.5)
- 4 L: *chi de. qihou.= ou, wo zui xihuan qihou. qici shi*  
eat NOM weather PRT I most like weather next be  
*chi de.*  
eat NOM  
“Food. Weather. = Oh, I like its weather the best, and then the food.”
- 5 M: *you tong gan. zhende.*  
have same feeling really  
“(I) feel the same. Really.”
- 6 M: → *nar qihou jianzhi tai lan le. =zhende.*  
there weather truly too bad CRS really  
“The weather there is just too bad. =Really.”
- 7 (.)
- 8 M: <*na zhong- [na zhong*  
that kind that kind  
“The kind of- the kind of-”
- 9 L: [*↑qihou tai lan le?*  
weather too bad CRS  
“The weather is too bad?”
- 10 (0.3)
- 11 M: → *ni shuo- ni (tian tian jian zhao taiyang mei zai nar)?*  
you say you day day see CP sun N at there  
“Tell me- did you (see the sun every day there)?”
- 12 (0.7)
- 13 L: <*↑a:, wo jiu xihuan mei taiyang a.*  
PRT I just like N sun PRT  
< “*↑Ah::*, I just like (the fact) that the sun does not come out.”

Here, consistent with how he behaves in the remainder of this conversation, M interacts with L in an ironic and joking manner. In line 5, M first emphatically aligns with L's displayed favorable stance toward the weather of the city but then abruptly ends his responses with a sharp contrary view about this topic (line 6). To this unexpected twist, L, after a slight delay, reacts by repeating part of what M has just said with a raised pitch (*↑qihou tai lan le*,

“↑the weather is too bad?”; line 9). Note here that M’s subsequent response (line 11), albeit with a shade of challenge, is clarificatory in nature and apparently treats L’s prior repeat as displaying an understanding problem.

Contrasting Extracts 6–7 with 4–5, we find that whereas in all of these excerpts a party undertakes to claim some kind of trouble with a prior turn’s talk through a repeat, these differently formatted repeats have different sequential implications. When suffixed by the particle *a*, the repeat is intended and understood as a candidate hearing or understanding of the trouble source turn, ordinarily making a recipient confirmation relevant in next position. Without the *a*-sufficing and with question intonation, however, the repeat is commonly offered not as what the speaker proposes to have understood but as the speaker’s momentary breakdown in comprehension of the element being repeated in its current sequential context.

Of particular relevance to our discussion below is that, as Extract 7 has also demonstrated, the speaker’s displayed non-comprehension of the trouble source turn embodied in the use of a question-intoned repeat may arise not only from the repeat speaker’s lack of familiarity with a reference previously mentioned (e.g., Extract 6); it may also arise from an apparent sense of abruptness and unexpectedness associated with how the trouble source turn figures in its sequential context (cf. Drew 1997). As noted, M begins his response to L’s favorable view of the weather in Chengdu with an aligning response (line 5), which appears to be leading up to a subsequent reinforcing positive comment. However, just as this response by M appears to be on its way to completion, it takes an abrupt twist and ends with a contradictory comment about this subject (line 6). It is notable that L’s subsequent repeat (line 9) targets just this seemingly incoherent part of the response by M, giving evidence that it is the unexpected twist manifested by this response that has caused her puzzlement.

As we will see in the following sections, this use of question-intoned repeats to mark what is being repeated as unexpected or having come out of the blue, as well as the use of *a*-suffixed repeats to mark a relatively higher degree of speaker certainty, are generic features of these two practices. These features and the different epistemic stances so instantiated are present not only in contexts in

which these two practices serve straightforwardly to initiate repair but also in contexts in which they accomplish actions beyond repair initiation.

### The use of question-intoned repeats and *a*-suffixed repeats in the service of negatively valenced work

To explicate the division of labor between the use of question-intoned repeats and *a*-suffixed repeats in implementing additional negatively valenced work, I will focus on sequences sharing the following features:

- The repeat is responded to with a repair-relevant response – which commonly (though not invariably) takes the form of a confirmation or clarification of the matter addressed by the repeat.
- While the repair-relevant response displays the repeat recipient's treatment of the repeat, *prima facie* at least, as initiating a repair, namely, as indicating a hearing or understanding problem, the repeat speaker's subsequent move suggests that his or her prior repeat is not merely repair-implicated.
- Commonly, the repeat speaker follows the recipient's response with a negatively valenced response regarding the matter being addressed – a move which suggests that the prior repeat-formatted repair initiation was employed (and perhaps exploited) in the service of projecting the follow-up negative response.

In the following sections, I will demonstrate that while *a*-suffixed repeats and question-intoned repeats both figure in such sequences, they differ along two dimensions: the epistemic stance of the speaker who initiates the repair, and the sequential context and positioning of the repair initiation. I will consider these issues in that order.

#### *The effect of the epistemic stance of the repeat speaker*

We have seen that compared to question-intoned repeats, repair initiations in the form of an *a*-suffixed repeat commonly convey a stronger epistemic stance on the part of the speaker. To illustrate

that such a difference is also visible when the use of these two practices implicates a problem of interactional alignment, let us consider first Extract 8 below, which involves a question-intoned repeat that serves to project a negatively valenced response. In this excerpt, the participants are talking about the expense of visiting Jiuzhaigou – a well-known scenic spot in China.

(8) (CMC 05–06, 03:30, audio 368a)

- 1 M:        *jiuzhaigou, qu na bian, dei hua duoshao qian a?*  
              (place)   go that side   must spend how:much money PRT  
              “How much does it cost to go (on a trip) to Jiuzhaigou?”
- 2            (.)
- 3 L:a→    *tch! wo juede liang qian yinggai gou        le. yi ge ren.*  
              I   feel   two   thousand should enough CRS one C person  
              “tch! I think two thousand should be enough, for one person.”
- 4 L:        [((clears throat))
- 5 M: b→    [*yi (ge) ren   liang qian?*=  
              one C person two   thousand  
              [“Two thousand for one person?”=
- 6 L: c→    =*uh.*  
              PRT  
              = “Yeah.”
- 7 M: d→    *na jiu xia bei le.*  
              then just next life CRS  
              “Then (wait) until the next life.”
- 8            (1.0)
- 9 L:        *ganma?*  
              what  
              “What?”
- 10 M:        *tai gui        le.*  
              too expensive CRS  
              “(It’s) too expensive!”
- 11 L:        ↑*gui        ma?*  
              expensive Q  
              “↑Is (it) expensive?”
- 12 M:        *tai gui        le. tai gui        le.*  
              too expensive CRS too expensive CRS  
              “(It’s) too expensive! Too expensive!”

Here, it can be noted that the repeat-formatted repair initiation (Arrow B) is followed by a negatively valenced response produced by the repeat speaker (Arrow D) after the information being targeted is confirmed (Arrow C). It can also be noted, however, that whereas the repeat speaker M subsequently displays a less-than-embracing stance toward the information being targeted, he does not challenge or contest the information itself. Rather, the production of the question-intoned repeat appears to have more to do with the speaker's display of a sense of unexpectedness toward the information. This is embodied in M's production of a cry of dismay (*na jiu xia bei le*, "then (wait) until the next life"; line 7), which, like his subsequent comments (*tai gui le*, "too expensive") in lines 10 and 12, apparently treats the estimated travel expense as excessively high rather than untrue.

The embodiment of a weaker epistemic stance in the selection of a question-intoned repeat is also apparent in cases in which the repeat speakers subsequently move to convey a sense of doubt about the truth-value of the target information: In these latter cases, it is observed that despite the expression of doubt, the repeat speaker nonetheless commonly designs and/or delivers his or her subsequent query in an epistemically downgraded fashion. A case in point is Extract 9, where the two participants, L and M, are talking about a friend of M's, whose girlfriend was L's classmate for several years at a university in Chengdu.

(9) (CMC 05–09, 00:55, audio 096b)

- 1 L: *wo dou hai mei jian guo ta.*  
I all still N see ASP he  
"I haven't met him yet."
- 2 (.)
- 3 M: *mei jian guo ta ma? =*  
N see ASP he Q  
"Haven't met him?" =
- 4 L: → =*wo zai chengdu de:shihou jiu lao tingshuo. =*  
I at (city) when then always hear  
= "I heard about him a lot when I was in Chengdu." =
- 5 L: =*ranhou (yao) dao beijing ye chang tingshuo.*  
than will come (city) also often hear  
= "And then I also heard about him a lot in Beijing."

- 6           (.)
- 7 M:       [ni-  
          you  
          [ “You-”
- 8 L:       [jiu wen da ming.  
          long hear big name  
          [ “Have heard his name for a long time,”
- 9 L:       [ranhou mei jian guo ren.  
          then N see ASP person  
          “but have never met him in person.”
- 10 M: → [ni zai chengdu lao tingshuo guo?  
          you at (city) always hear ASP  
          “↑You heard about him a lot in Chengdu?”
- 11 M: → tamen liang [bu shi zai, chengdu bu shi renshi,=  
          they two N be at (city) N be know  
          “Didn’t they [in Chengdu- didn’t (they) know (each other)=-”
- 12 L:                   [wo tingshuo guo.  
                        I hear ASP  
                        [“I did.”
- 13 M: → =bu shi hen chang shijian (ma)?  
          N be very long time Q  
          = “not for a long time?”
- 14 L:       ~~zen~~::me bu shi hen chang?=  
          how N be very long  
          “How: could it not be a long time?”=
- 15 L:       =dasan jiu renshi le ba.  
          junior then know CRS PRT  
          = “(I think) they knew each other since (they were) juniors.”
- 16 L:       yi nian duo me.  
          one year more PRT  
          “(They’ve known each other) for more than a year.”
- 17 M:       shi ma?  
          be Q  
          “Have they?”

Here, L’s claim of having frequently heard about this man in Chengdu (line 4) suggests that the romantic relationship between this man and L’s former classmate had already begun and was possibly even well established at that time. In response to this information and

implication, M produces a question-intoned repeat (line 10), to which L responds with a confirmation (line 12).

That this question-intoned repeat by M serves to do more than initiate repair can be seen in the fact that immediately following it, and without waiting for a responsive affirmation, M produces a question (*tamen liang bu shi zai, chengdu bu shi renshi, bu shi hen chang shijian [ma]*, “didn’t they in Chengdu ... didn’t they know each other ... not for a long time?”; lines 11 and 13) which can be, and is in fact, heard as a challenge to the validity of L’s prior claim (notice L’s rebuttal in line 14). Note, however, that although this follow-up question by M is challenge-implicating, it is delivered and designed in an epistemically weakened fashion: Not only is the question delivered with many hesitations and disfluencies, but the final shape it takes – a double negative construction (*bu shi renshi bu shi hen chang shijian (ma)*, “didn’t (they) know each other **not** for a long time?”) – is epistemically much weaker than its affirmative version would be (*bu shi (zhi) renshi hen duan de shijian (ma)*, “didn’t (they) know each other **for a short period of time** (only)?”).

In Extract 9, then, there is evidence that even though the question-intoned repeat embodies a certain degree of doubt on the part of the speaker toward the information just received, such a stance, as in many other similar instances in the corpus, is substantially weakened and mitigated. In fact, if we consider the question-intoned repeats examined earlier (e.g., Extracts 7–8), and the fact that across these instances a predominant usage of question-intoned repeats is to embody a sense of unexpectedness on the part of the speaker, there is a sense that the use of the question-intoned repeat in Extract 9 is strategic in nature. That is, by using a question-intoned repeat, and thereby invoking a sense of the unexpectedness commonly associated with its use, the repeat speaker in effect marks the newly received information as less than expected and in need of clarification, rather than as less than truthful and in need of correction.

This difference, between marking a piece of information as less than expected versus marking it as less than truthful, can be more clearly demonstrated if we compare Extracts 8–9 with those involving an *a*-suffixed repeat in similar negatively valenced contexts. In

these latter instances, the repeat speakers commonly follow their *a*-suffixed repeats with a statement or query which in some way contradicts or compromises the information just received and commonly displays a stronger epistemic stance toward the matter being addressed. Extracts 10 and 11 illustrate.

Extract 10 provides an expanded version of Extract 3 and comes from the same conversation as Extract 9. Of particular interest here is that whereas in both Extracts 9 and 10 M initiates repair through a partial repeat of what his interlocutor has said in a prior turn, in Extract 10, below, M suffixes his repeat with the final particle *a* (line 2), in contrast to what he does (in line 10) in Extract 9.

(10) (CMC 05–06, 00:20, audio 315a)

- 1 L: *hai, hebei jiu mei shenme hao difang.*  
(sigh) (province) just N what good place  
“((sighs)) There are not many good places in Hebei.”
- 2 M: → *hebei a?*=  
(province) PRT  
“Hebei A?”=
- 3 L: =*uh.*  
PRT  
= “Yeah.”
- 4 (0.5)
- 5 M: → *langfang hai xing.*  
(place) still okay  
“Langfang is okay.”
- 6 L: *uh::? (.) bu hui ba.*=  
(PRT) N likely PRT  
“*Mm::?* (.) Are (you) serious?”=
- 7 M: =*langfang yinwei xianzai yao jian yi daxue cheng.*  
(place) because now will build one college town  
= “‘cause now (they) plan to build a college town in Langfang.”
- 8 L: *diang. (na) xia zhao le.*=  
(exclamation) that scare CP CRS  
“Right! How impressive!”=
- 9 M: =*jiu shi li beijing jin.*=  
just be away:from (city) close  
= “(It’s) just very close to Beijing.”=



- 10 L: =*wo dangnian kao- daxue de:shihou*,  
I that:year test college when  
= “The year when I applied to- colleges,”
- 11 L: *wo bao le yi ge- wujing kexue yuan*.  
I apply ASP one C police science college  
“I applied to- the Police Academy.”
- 12 (0.5)
- 13 L: *qu nar mianshi,<wo jiu faxian,.hhh*=  
go there interview I then find  
“(I) went there for an interview.< Then I found out .hhh”=
- 14 L: =*langfang hai meiyou (chengdu) xiancheng- (.)*  
(place) yet N (place) county  
= “Langfang wasn’t as- (.)”
- 15 L: *ganjing (.) zhengjie- (.) da*.  
clean tidy big  
“clean- (.) tidy- (.) or as big as (Chengdu) county.”
- 16 M: *langfang nar mei ren guan*.=  
(place) there N person take:charge  
“Nobody is in charge in Langfang.”=
- 17 M: → =*xiao shihou wo ye zai langfang dai guo*.=  
little when I also at (place) stay ASP  
= “When (I) was little, I also stayed in Langfang.”=
- 18 ((The storytelling continues.))

Here, as noted earlier, in response to L’s assessment of Hebei (line 1), M not only produces an *a*-suffixed repeat (line 2) but, following the recipient confirmation (line 3), also moves to produce a disagreeing response (line 5). Notice that compared with the negatively valenced response which M produces subsequent to his question-intoned repeat in Extract 9, this disagreeing response by M (*langfang hai xing* “Langfang is okay”; line 5) is designed and delivered with a much stronger epistemic stance: Not only is this disagreeing response delivered in a straightforward manner without significant hesitation or disfluency, it is also cast as a straightforward assertion which presents information contradictory to that which is being targeted, rather than as a query displaying weaker epistemic strength.

Notice also that in Extract 10 not only does M have prior first-hand knowledge concerning the city of Langfang, but it is precisely

by reference to this knowledge that he finds L's prior comment in line 1 problematic (lines 7, 9, and 16–18). In this respect, therefore, M's subsequent delivery of firmly asserted information that is contrastive with what L has just said, as well as his move to invoke his prior independent experience of this matter, are compatible with his selection of an *a*-suffixed repeat as the repair initiator; all of these actions display a stronger epistemic stance on the part of the speaker toward the matter being addressed.

Extract 11, from a conversation between two college roommates, provides a similar instance. Where this excerpt begins, H is in the midst of reporting an incident she saw on her way to school one day. In line 6, D interrupts H's storytelling by first launching a repair initiation clarifying the place where this incident took place. After the place reference is clarified (lines 7–8), D then retrieves a piece of information that H had reported earlier (line 1), by repeating part of that information and suffixing it with *a* (line 9).

(11) (CMC 09 audio 150a)

1 H: =*jiu kan yi liang huang se chuzuche guo:qu le.*  
 then see one C yellow color taxi pass:by CRS  
 = “and then (I) saw a yellow cab passing by,”

2 H: .*h ranhou faxian libian de nü de-*  
 then find inside ASSC female NOM  
 “.hhh then (I) found the lady inside-”

3 H: ↑*zhang de hao yanshou* [ou.  
 look CSC very familiar PRT  
 “↑looked really familiar.”

4 D: [↑*hhheng::*  
 (exclamation)

5 H: *xiang xiang xiang xiang,*  
 think think think think  
 “(I) kept thinking and thinking and thinking,  
 ↑ *a::* [(... )  
 (exclamation)  
 oh:.”

6 D: [(... ) *zai nar a?*  
 at where PRT  
 “(. .) where?”

7 H: *jiu- jiu zai na- zanmen xuexiao na ge- (0.3) lu shang.*  
 just just at that we school that C road on

- 8 H: *xuexiao de lu shang.*  
 school ASSC road on  
 “On the road in the school.”
- 9 D: → ↑*huang se chuzuche a?*  
 yellow color taxi PRT  
 “↑A yellow cab A?”
- 10 H: *um.=*  
 PRT  
 “Yeah.”=
- 11 D: → =*xiali a?*  
 (cab company) PRT  
 = “A Xiali (cab)?”
- 12 H: *bu shi. huang se de.*  
 N be yellow color NOM  
 “No. (It was) a yellow one.”
- 13 (0.5)
- 14 D: → ↑*zher na: you huang se de chuzuche [a?*  
 here where have yellow color ASSC taxi PRT  
 “↑How can there be yellow cabs here?”
- 15 H: [you.=  
 have  
 “There are.”
- 16 H: =*shang bian yi banr shi huang de, yi banr (bie ...)*  
 top side one half be yellow NOM one half other  
 = “The top of the cab was half yellow, (and) half  
 (another ...)”
- 17 D: *ou::.*  
 PRT  
 “Oh::.”

In response to H's affirmation (line 10) of the *a*-suffixed repeat, D initiates another repair by producing an understanding check (*xiali a*, “a Xiali (cab)?”; line 11), which takes the form of a best guess about the specific cab company that owns the yellow cab in question.<sup>5</sup> This understanding check is disconfirmed by H (line 12), who goes on to reaffirm the color of the cab, and, by implication, the validity of her prior report as well. In answer to this disconfirmation, D produces a question (line 14), which is designed with the question word *na*, “where,”<sup>6</sup> with slight stretching, as well as stress on the word *huang*, “yellow,” which represents the issue in question. If and through this design, the question can be heard

as “pro-forma” in nature. That is, it is not meant to request new information but to question a prior utterance by introducing the relevance of a corresponding negative assertion, namely, the assertion that there are no yellow cabs at all here (cf. Koshik 2003). And this is just the way H treats it: In line 15, she moves to confirm the accuracy of her report, though backing down with a modification of her prior claim (line 16).

Extract 11, then, offers us another instance in which the speaker of an *a*-suffixed repeat displays an orientation to independent knowledge concerning the matter being addressed – and an instance in which the repeat speaker subsequently produces a doubt-implicated disaligning response that displays a stronger epistemic stance. If an epistemically weakened follow-up query, as argued earlier, retrospectively marks the prior question-intoned repeat as the speaker’s display of a sense of unexpectedness toward the information just received (e.g., Extract 9), then the subsequent challenge-implicated query produced by D here, as well as her invocation of prior knowledge on the matter, can be seen as indicating that her previous *a*-suffixed repeat is not only unexpectedness-implicated but is, in fact, challenge-relevant.

This section has shown that the choice between question-intoned repeats and *a*-suffixed repeats in accomplishing negatively valenced work is largely determined by, and itself embodies, the epistemic stance of the speaker toward the information in question: Whereas the use of a question-intoned repeat is commonly accompanied by a follow-up negatively valenced response that is epistemically weakened or unexpectedness-implicated, an *a*-suffixed repeat is ordinarily followed by a negative response which displays the speaker’s orientation to prior knowledge of the matter at issue, and which is often built with a stronger epistemic stance. Such a difference, I have also suggested, is consistent with the features these two practices exhibit in the context of straightforward repair initiation.

### *The effect of the sequential context and positioning of the initiation of repair*

The fact that the speaker’s epistemic stance, albeit relevant, is not the only axis pertinent to the selection between these two

repair initiations is made clear by a subset of cases containing question-intoned repeats. These cases are similar to the previously examined excerpts involving *a*-suffixed repeats (e.g., Excerpts 10–11) in that the repeat speakers move subsequently to invoke prior knowledge regarding the target information. A unique feature of the majority of these cases is that such question-intoned repeats almost always occur in a sequentially disjunctive position, produced to address a prior turn by another which appears to have been abruptly launched or ill-fitted in its sequential context from the repeat speaker's perspective.<sup>7</sup> This usage of a question-intoned repeat, I would suggest, is consistent with its use to mark that which is being repeated as unexpected or having come out of the blue, as we have observed in earlier examples (e.g., Extracts 7–8).

Consider Extract 12, from a telephone conversation between two friends who practice a Chinese martial art together at the same association. Prior to this excerpt, B, who had been absent from classes for several days, has just told F that she does not know how to get to the sessions due to a recent change in bus schedules. This excerpt begins with B's reiteration of her problem with transportation, which appears to be produced here as an implicit request for information, but which apparently is treated by F as an account for B's absence and is merely responded to with an information receipt (line 4).

(12) (T-mom & bo 165)

- 1 B:     *dao na ge (wulun) chang a*,  
           arrive that C (name) field PRT  
           “(As for) how to get to the (Wulun) Association”
- 2 F:     *um*.  
           PRT  
           “Uh huh.”
- 3 B:     *zuo shenme lu hai bu zhidao lei*.  
           sit what road still N know PRT  
           “(I) don't know which bus to take yet.”
- 4 F:     *ou, zhe yangzi ou*.  
           PRT this manner PRT  
           “*Oh, I see.*”

5 B:  $\uparrow$ *wu:lao kongpa y- .hhh ta- ta ye bu zhidao ba?*  
 (person) afraid he he also N know PRT  
 “↑Mr. Wu probably also- .hh He- he doesn’t know either,  
 right?”

6 (1.0)

7 F: → *wulun:: chang: wo-* (0.5)  
 (name) field I  
 “The Wulun::Association:I- (0.5)”

8 B: →  $\uparrow$ *bu shi,*=  
 N be  
 “↑No, ”=

9 F: =*ta xianzai shi zuo- (.) haoxiang zuo yibai lu.*  
 he now be sit seem sit one:hundred road  
 = “Now he takes- (.) seems to take Bus 100.”

10 (.)

11 B: → <*yibai lu*>  
 one:hundred road  
 < “Bus 100?/!”>

12 F: *dui. wu:lao shi zuo yibai.*  
 right (person) be sit one:hundred  
 “Yes. Mr. Wu takes 100.”

13 (1.2)

14 B: → *ou:?*  
 PRT  
 “Yeah?”

15 F: *en ehnhh* ((smile voice))  
 PRT PRT  
 “Uh huh.”

16 B: → *oh, ta xianzai gai le yibai lu.=*  
 PRT he now change ASP one:hundred road  
 “Oh, now he’s changed to Bus 100.”=

17 F: =*dui::*  
 right  
 = “Right::.”

18 B: → *bu shi shiyi lu.*  
 N be eleven road  
 “Not Bus 11?”

19 F: *dui, bu shi.*  
 right N be

20 B: *haha*  
(laugh)  
“haha”

Here, not having been provided with any information on the proposed transportation problem, and possibly also taking F’s reaction (line 4) as a sign of her not having a solution, B brings up the name of another fellow practitioner (*Wu Lao* “Mr. Wu”), asking whether he might know about how to get to the association with the new bus schedules (line 5). Whereas this question by B in line 5 is designed in such a way that requires (minimally) only a confirmation or disconfirmation from the recipient, F appears to exhibit some difficulty in giving a response: Following B’s question, there is first a one-second pause (line 6); thereafter, F attempts to provide a response, which nonetheless ends with yet another pause (line 7).

Whereas it is clear from F’s response in line 7 that she is still searching for an answer or searching for a way to deliver a solution, it is opaque as to where her answer-in-progress is headed. In fact, the way in which F has begun her turn in line 7 (*wulun::chang: wo-*, “the Wulun:: Association:: I-”) can promote a hearing that what is projected is something about F’s own knowledge in relation to some aspects of this association, rather than about Mr. Wu’s, as B’s prior question (line 5) has asked. On this hearing, then, F can be taken by B as having misunderstood her (B’s) prior question.

And, indeed, this seems to be what happens here. In line 8, apparently attempting to remedy such a perceived misunderstanding on F’s part, B initiates what Schegloff (1992a) terms a “third position repair,” which regularly takes the form, “No, I don’t mean X. I mean Y.” However, just as B finishes producing the first component, *bu shi*, “no,” and is apparently on her way to completing this third-position repair, she is interrupted by F, who moves at this point to resume her earlier-suspended response (line 9). And it is to this interruptive response by F that B launches a question-intoned repeat (*yibai lu*, “Bus 100?/!”; line 11).

It should be noted that F’s response in line 9 is not only interruptive of B’s prior turn in progress (line 8) but also shifts away from the line of response introduced (yet not completed) in F’s own prior turn (line 7). In this regard, F’s response can be seen, from B’s perspective, as “doubly disjunctive” and hence may strike B as having

of the unexpectedness of the occurrence of F's response at this point in interaction that has prompted B – who otherwise appears to have some prior knowledge of the matter being inquired about (cf. her reactions in lines 14, 16, and 18) – to choose a question-intoned repeat, rather than an *a*-suffixed repeat, in initiating the repair.

As Extract 12 demonstrates, sequential context and positioning appear to play a role in the selection of the two repair-initiation formats under examination. In addition, such an effect can, and often does, prevail in cases where the repeat speakers turn out to have independent prior access to the matter being addressed – cases in which an *a*-suffixed repeat would otherwise be commonplace, as demonstrated in the previous section. This suggests that although the selection of a question-intoned repeat versus an *a*-suffixed repeat is closely related to the distribution of knowledge between the repeat speaker and his or her interlocutor, what the selection conveys is not always how the state of knowledge is objectively distributed nor the speaker's subjective evaluation of it but can rather be a display by the speaker of how he or she perceives the trouble source turn to figure in its sequential context.

### Question-intoned repeats in the context of intensified nonalignment

In the data so far examined, we have observed two major contexts in which question-intoned repeats are commonly chosen over *a*-suffixed repeats: (i) contexts in which the repeat speaker subsequently delivers a negatively valenced response that is epistemically weakened or unexpectedness-implicated, and (ii) contexts in which the repair initiation figures in a sequentially disrupted environment. In both contexts, I have argued, the use of question-intoned repeats frequently serves to embody a sense of unexpectedness on the part of the speaker toward the matter being addressed.

However, question-intoned repeats are sometimes observed to occur in contexts which are neither sequentially disruptive nor in which the negatively valenced responses they project appear in any way mitigated. While instances like this initially seem to conflict with the preceding account, upon examination, the use



of question-intoned repeats in these cases appears again to mark “unexpectedness”. A return to Extract 2, which is reproduced here with a few ensuing turns as Extract 13, provides a case in point.

(13) (CMC01–405A).

- 1 C: *ta yi xiaoshi:: fu ni duoshao, xianzai.*  
she one hour pay you how:much now  
“How much does she pay you- for an hour:, now?”
- 2 W: *pianyi de le. sanshi.*  
cheap NOM CRS thirty  
“Cheap. Thirty dollars.”
- 3 C: → *yi ge xiaoshi sanshi?*  
one C hour thirty  
“Thirty dollars for an hour?”
- 4 W: *(uh [buh])*  
PRT PRT  
“(uh [huh.])”
- 5 C: → *[Bu pianyi.*  
N cheap  
[ “Not cheap.”
- 6 W: *SHENme BU pianyi a. ta yanjiusheng.*  
what N cheap PRT she graduate:student  
“WHat do you mean by NOT cheap? She’s a grad student.”
- 7 (.)
- 8 W: *wo jiao ta gudai hanyu.*  
I teach her ancient:time Chinese  
“I teach her Classical Chinese.”
- 9 (1.0)
- 10 C: *u-oh.=ta shi yanjiusheng, =zheme da yi ge ren le a.*  
PRT she be graduate:student such big one C person ASP PRT  
“e- Oh.=She is a grad student?/! Such an old person.”
- 11 (0.5)
- 12 W: *ni: yiwei [ne ((infiltrated with laughter))*  
you think PRT  
“What did you suppose?”
- 13 C: *[buguo sanshi kuaiqian queshi- suan hen hao de.=*  
but thirty dollar actually count very good NOM  
“But thirty dollars is truly a very good pay.”

- 14 C: =*ni zhiyao- gen: na ge- (0.4)=*  
 you only with that C  
 = “If you- with the uh:(0.4)”=
- 15 C: =*na shei gei ta zhao le yi ge=*  
 that who for she find ASP one C  
 = “Who’s the person that has found one for her?”=
- 16 C: =*luo gei- dan zhao le [yi ge=*  
 (name) for (name) find ASP one C  
 “*Luo* has- found a (tutoring job) for Dan.”
- 17 W: [uh::  
 PRT  
 “Yeah,”
- 18 C: =*gei su:dan zhao [le yi ge, yi ge xiaoshi cai shi wu kuaqian.*  
 for (name) find ASP one C one C hour only fifteen dollar  
 “Found one for Dan Su. Only fifteen dollars an hour.”
- 19 W: [uh.  
 PRT  
 “Yeah,”
- 20 (.)
- 21 W: .*hhhh jiao shei a. nei ge jiao shenme ia.*  
 (in-breath) call who PRT that C teach what PRT  
 “.hhhhh Who’s the person? Er- what does she teach?”

As noted earlier, C follows W’s confirmation (line 4) of her prior repair initiation (line 3) with a straightforward disagreement (line 5). Note here that whereas C chooses a question-intoned repeat in initiating the repair, this excerpt is different from those examined earlier (e.g., Extracts 8–9, 12) in that not only is C’s follow-up negative response not epistemically weakened but the question-intoned repeat is also not produced in a sequentially disjunctive context.

A remarkable feature of instances like Extract 13 is the striking discrepancy between the information targeted by the question-intoned repeat and what the repeat speaker understands the issue to be. In this excerpt, C subsequently (lines 14–16, 18) reports a case she knows of in which a mutual friend has only been paid half of what W has reportedly received. In light of this background information, and perhaps also in light of the way in which W has initially oriented her recipients to assess the amount of pay to be reported (*pianyi de le*, “cheap”; line 2), the exact figure

which W ends up reporting can be seen by C as so unlikely that this information may appear initially to have been arrived at out of the blue. Here, I would suggest, C's question-intoned repeat appears to embody just this kind of initial reaction – that is, marking a sense of unexpectedness on the part of the speaker. And the unexpectedness being so marked here concerns not so much the abruptness with which another's prior talk is brought up in the local context but the significant gap between the newly received information and the repeat speaker's prior knowledge of the matter being addressed.<sup>8</sup>

Before leaving this section, it may be worth registering that given the capacity of question-intoned repeats to mark that which is being repeated as utterly beyond expectation, the possibility can be entertained that this feature may make question-intoned repeats an apt and well-suited resource for projecting *intensified* or *outright* disagreement. That is, by (strategically) marking what another has said in a prior turn as having come out of the blue, the speaker can in effect problematize the target information while at the same time reinforcing the adequacy of the position he or she is holding. However, while such a usage seems plausible, and, on occasion, even familiar to the ear, there are no clear exemplars of this kind in the data at hand. This proposal thus awaits further investigation and should be treated as impressionistic at present.

## Conclusion

Over the years, the other-initiation of repair has been a recurrent theme in CA and related fields and is perhaps one of the most well studied interactional phenomena cross-linguistically. Using a CA framework, this study has shown that, like other-initiation of repair in English, the two Mandarin repair-initiation formats under examination can similarly serve not only to initiate repair but also as vehicles for accomplishing additional negatively valenced projects. In further explicating the common sequential contexts of their occurrences, this study has also shown that these two repair initiation formats, while occurring in seemingly overlapping contexts, exhibit a consistent fine-tuned division of labor: Whereas *a*-suffixed repeats generally embody a stronger epistemic stance on the part of the speaker, question-intoned repeats, across

various contexts, consistently embody a speaker's display of a sense of unexpectedness toward the information being targeted.

Before closing this chapter, one final note regarding the implications for cross-linguistic and cross-cultural work on repair should be registered. As the foregoing discussion has demonstrated, in both Mandarin and English, repeat-formatted other-initiation of repair can serve not only to locate a hearing or understanding problem but to implicate alignment issues as well. And yet, the linguistic resources in Mandarin provide two alternative repeat formats through which speakers can calibrate a fine-grained epistemic stance toward the matter being addressed vis-à-vis their interlocutors while initiating the repair. These findings raise interesting questions as to whether other languages make a similar distinction in embodying negatively valenced stances in the context of other-initiation of repair, and if so, how this is achieved without the availability of final particles. Clearly, more studies are needed to further our understanding of the organization of repair in Mandarin as well as across languages, and more studies are needed if we are to understand how the organization of repair is, as suggested (e.g., Egbert 1996; Fox *et al.* 1996), an interactional phenomenon that is universal across languages and cultures while at the same time sensitive to the linguistic and cultural repertoire of each given language.

## Appendix: Abbreviations

ASSC	Associative ( <i>-de</i> )
ASP	Aspectual marker
CRS	Currently relevant state ( <i>le</i> )
CSC	Complex stative construction
C	Classifier
N	Negator
NOM	Nominalizer ( <i>de</i> )
PRT	Particle
Q	Question marker

## Notes

1 Part of the analysis discussed in this chapter has appeared in Wu

- 2 Over the years, various scholars have proposed different meanings for the particle *a*. (For a brief review, see Wu 2004.) In a more recent work, Wu (2004: 128) demonstrates that in TCU (turn constructional unit)-final position, the particle *a* generally exhibits a “contrast-invoking” property, used to “mark a discrepancy in knowledge, expectation or perspective regarding some state of affairs between the current speaker (i.e., the *a* user) and the prior speaker.”
- 3 The matter of what constitutes “question intonation” in a tonal language such as Mandarin is complicated and remains unsettled. Over the years, different proposals have been made as to how question intonation is realized in Mandarin. These proposals, albeit not in complete agreement with each other, generally point to some exaggerated gestures with which question intonation is realized (e.g., Chang 1998; Gårding 1987; Ho 1977; Schack 2000; Shen 1989; Tseng 2003; Yuan and Shih 2004; Yuan *et al.* 2002; Zeng *et al.* 2004). In this study, I have taken into consideration these findings while basing my identification of question-intoned repeats on my auditory perception after repeated listenings. The exaggerated gestures claimed in the literature to be associated with question intonation are reflected in the transcripts in the forms of underlinings, upward-pointing arrows, and/or left-facing arrows.
- 4 There are other repeat formats in Mandarin, e.g., repeats suffixed with the question particle *ma* (e.g., line 11 in Extract 8) or the particle *ou* (see Wu 2004). The exact functional differences among these formats await further investigation.
- 5 “Xiali” is the name of a cab company whose cabs, however, are red.
- 6 In this question, D chooses to design the question with *nar*, which literally means “where” in English but which can also serve to mark a question as being rhetorical.
- 7 Question-intoned repeats are observed to also occur in contexts in which the repeats are produced in a sequentially abrupt manner. For this usage, see Wu (2006).
- 8 That the difference between W’s pay and the pay of this friend can be perceived as huge can also be supported by W’s subsequent reaction after she learns of this friend’s pay – a big in-breath (line 21), apparently adumbrating a big surprise.