Managing turn entry: The design of *EI*-prefaced turns in Mandarin conversation

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Abstract

Using the methodology of conversation analysis, this article examines how participants claim speakership in multiparty Mandarin conversation. Specifically, I describe the use of two previously unspecified practices involving turn-initial *ei* and demonstrate how their deployment figures in the management of turn transfer in everyday Mandarin interaction. I first show that even though orthographically Mandarin *ei* is always represented as a stand-alone unit in writing, separated from the sentence that follows, this particle is not always produced as its own prosodic unit in natural conversation and may or may not be latched onto the turn component it prefaces. I next show that the resulting two different turn formats routinely occur at differential sequential positions in my 35 hours of data: Whereas speakers commonly deliver an *ei*-preface in an independent intonation contour when claiming speakership at a transition-relevance place, they tend to latch the *ei*-preface onto the turn component it preface if the attempt is made at a non-transition-relevance place. I argue that this recurrent orderly distribution should not be viewed as an outcome pre-determined by the sequence's structure, but rather as an embodiment of the would-be next speakers' orientation to the fit between the incipient turn entry and the currently on-going talk.
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1. Introduction

It has long been recognized that the organization of turn-taking is one of the most fundamental practices in talk-in-interaction. However, although the phenomenon of turn-taking is obvious, the distribution of turns to participants is by no means random or free of constraints. From a conversation-analytic perspective, the recurrent orderly transfer of speakership from one speaker to a next has been described as organized by a set of rules with ordered options (Sacks et al., 1974) and requires an intricate participant coordination that operates on a turn-by-turn basis (e.g., Jefferson, 1984; Schegloff, 1987, 2000, 2001).

Despite the systematicity of the organization of the turn-taking system, the management of turn transfer, especially that of turn entry, is by no means a simple interactional task. This is especially obvious in multiparty conversation, in which at each possible completion point of a turn at talk, there is always, in theory at least, the possibility of a multiparty competition for the next turn entry. Not only can a current speaker choose to extend his or her current turn across the completion point, but any other parties to the conversation can also be selected or can self-select to speak next.

In competing for a next turn with other potential next speakers, then, there is often not only the pressure, on the part of an intending next speaker, to project the earliest possible start at a next transition-relevance place; in the face of the likelihood of multiple sources of simultaneous starts, the speaker interested in speaking next also needs to plan and project his or her turn's talk in a way that can possibly resist and emerge from such simultaneous starts – that is, to emerge as a sequentially effective and implicative turn should simultaneous starts occur.

One place that commonly reflects the analysis of these two sequential demands by an intending next speaker is at turn beginnings. As Schegloff (1987) has noted, turn beginnings are locations that are vulnerable to overlap impairment and yet they are also ''sequence-structurally important places'' (Schegloff, 1987:71) as well as important resources in conversation. In part, the importance of the turn beginning position has to do with the fact that it projects a shape and a type of the turn which the other co-participants in conversation will both be orienting to and be constrained by in analyzing the new turn's talk (Sacks et al., 1974). The turn-initial position is also important because it is a standard position for a class of turn components which are used to serve as turn-entry devices (Sacks et al., 1974) and/or to mark some relationship between the just-prior turn and the turn currently underway (e.g., Schegloff, 1987; Heritage, 2002, 2013).

Though a topic not commonly addressed in the recent upsurge of studies of turn-initial objects (see Heritage, 2013 and Kim and Kuroshima, 2013 for a review of this literature), the use of turn-initial resources for claiming incipient speakership in the moment-by-moment unfolding of talk-in-interaction has long attracted the attention of conversation analysts. For example, several decades ago Sacks (cited in Schegloff, 1982) brought up the possibility of starting a turn with stand-alone *uhm* as a way of occupying the turn space before the speaker is fully ready to project the turn. Likewise, Schegloff (1996) listed an array of turn-initial conduct – such as bodily-visual behavior, facial expression, lip parting, cough, throat clear, and hearable in-breaths – as possible resources for embodying a similar interactional move on the part of the speaker. The connection between the projection of a turn and speaker bodily behavior has been further explored in three studies: Streeck and Hartge (1992) described how the deployment of two gestural techniques at transition-relevance places in Ilokano conversation can serve as turn-entry devices. Wu (1997) examined the use of turns prefaced with Mandarin particles *a* and *ei* and noted a regular association of these two particle-prefaced turns with different bodily conduct when used as a turn-entry device in multi-party conversation. Similarly, Mondada (2007) demonstrated how publicly displayed pointing gestures at small-group work meetings can be used as a practice for projecting imminent speakership.

The present study continues in a similar vein of research and examines how Mandarin speakers manage to claim and establish speakership vis-à-vis their potential competing co-present parties in multiparty conversation. More specifically, we will be concerned with two previously-unspecified prosodically-variant turn designs involving turn-initial *ei* and explore how their deployment figures in the management of turn transfer in everyday Mandarin interaction.

On a more general level, this study also aims to contribute to the on-going dialogue on the importance of turn-initial objects and the role they play in talk-in-interaction[1] while at the same time expanding the scope of investigation into their interface with prosody in achieving interactional functions.

This article is conversation-analytic in orientation. The data for this study are drawn from a corpus of approximately 35 hours of audio- and videotaped face-to-face conversations collected in Beijing, Hebei and Tianjin, China, during 2001–2002 and 2006–2011. From a subset of the data, a collection of approximately 150 instances were assembled and used as the primary basis for the present analysis. As this study aims to examine how current non-speakers self-select to speak next in potential competition with multiple simultaneous starts or already-ongoing talk, only the use of the two target turn designs in multiparty conversation will be considered.

In the present data, all of the participants spoke what is considered the standard variety of spoken Mandarin, *Putonghua*, though they were not all from Beijing, Hebei or Tianjin originally. Some participants were from places such as Dongbei, Shandong, Shanghai, Sichuan, and Yunan. Most participants came from middle-class backgrounds and their ages ranged from the early twenties to the late sixties. Participants in each conversation were family members, friends and acquaintances, and they were recorded during activities such as lunches, dinners, visits to relatives, Mahjong games or simple get-togethers for chitchat. No participants were provided with any topic to talk about in the conversation.

In what follows, I will first introduce the Mandarin turn-initial *ei* and the two target turn formats constructed out of it. I will then describe and compare the prime sequential contexts for each turn format in my data and examine their respective uses within these contexts. A discussion of seemingly deviant cases will be provided next, followed by a concluding discussion.

2. Two prosodically-variant designs of turns prefaced by *EI*

2.1. Mandarin initial EI

Mandarin initial particle *ei* has been traditionally characterized under the category of ''interjections,'' which, according to Chao (1968), have two distinctive features which set them apart from final particles. First, unlike final particles, which are

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always unstressed, interjections are usually stressed and exhibit "a variety of intonational patterns." Second, while particles are always bound, "being enclitic to the preceding syllable and in construction with the whole preceding phrase," interjections are free and never bound (Chao, 1968:795). This view by Chao appears to be in line with common observations that orthographically, Mandarin *ei* is always represented as a stand-alone unit in writing, separated from the sentence that follows.

Chao (1968) lists eight phonetically slightly different *ei*'s, which he claimed to be used respectively (i) as a "sound of agreement"; (ii) to express agreement more "effusively"; (iii) to express "hearty agreement, but in a more deliberate manner"; (iv) to express an approval of something that was just said or done; (v) to indicate that "something suddenly happens, or suddenly occurs to one"; (vi) to express "satisfied self-assurance"; (vii) to express "sudden surprise"; and (viii) "[i]n answer to one's name" and "[i]n compliance with a command" (Chao, 1968:815–816).

Similarly, Hu (1987) proposes six uses of *ei*: (i) to get another's attention; (ii) to indicate that something suddenly occurs to one; (iii) to express disagreement or unhappiness; (iv) as a response token; (v) to express a sentimental feeling; and (vi) to sigh (Hu, 1987:99–100).

Wu (1997) is the first study examining Mandarin initial *ei* based exclusively on naturally occurring conversations. She proposes the general function of *ei* as marking a disjunction in discourse. She further demonstrates that *ei*-prefaced turns commonly serve to launch a unilateral topic shift and are frequently used in multiparty conversation by a current speaker to incorporate a marginally involved party or by a marginally involved party to incorporate oneself. This proposal of *ei* as marking a disjunction with what has otherwise been underway is also supported in Tsai (2008).

2.2. The present inquiry: two variant turn designs

Considering the several uses of *ei* proposed in the literature, a close examination of my data suggests that lumping all occurrences of *ei* under one umbrella and treating them as one single particle may prove analytically unwarranted. For the present purposes, I only consider cases in which *ei* occurs in turn-initial position and in which turn-initial *ei* is (arguably) followed by an additional turn component or turn components.[2]

As it turns out, traditional characterizations (e.g., Chao, 1968) and commonsense intuition notwithstanding, such *ei*-preface in my data is *not* always "unbound" – i.e., it is not always produced as its own prosodic unit. There are, in fact, two different turn designs involving the use of an *ei*-preface. In the first type of turn design, *ei* is produced with a clear intonation of its own and is prosodically separated from the additional turn component that follows. In the second, *ei* is prosodically latched onto the additional turn component, i.e., they are produced in a single intonation contour. These two types of *ei*-prefaced turn designs are illustrated, respectively, in the following two sets of examples.

(1) and (2) exemplify cases in which *ei* is produced in a separate intonation contour. Note that the *ei*-preface in (1) is separated from the additional turn component by a pause whereas in (2) it is not. Both are common in my data.

(1) (HR_1_27_09_tape 3_58:40)
```
D:->  ei↑, (.)  wo   shi  bu  shi  mei  he   de:shihou=
                PRT  I    be   N   be   N    drink  when
      'ei↑,[3] (.) didn't I, before I started drinking,'=
D:    =jian  zhao  ni   wo  jiu  shuo  le=
       see   ASP   you  I   then  say   ASP
      ='when I first saw you, I already said,'=
```

(2) (Cao_6_28_06_38:25:00)
```
Y:->  ei,   ni   qu  le  duoshao   nian  le
      PRT  you  go  ASP  how:many  year  ASP
      'ei, how many years have you been there?'
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[2] As a result, aside from the stand-alone *ei* and cases in which *ei*-preface occurs in other than turn-initial position, such as in storytelling or reported speech, this article also excludes from analysis cases in which *ei* is used as an agreement/response token [cf. (i)–(iv), (vi) and (viii) in Chao (1968) & (iv) in Hu (1987)], as a sigh [cf. (vi) in Hu (1987)], or as a sentimental cry [cf. (v) in Hu (1987)]. In these latter cases, *ei* appears to serve as a response token or a "response cry" (Goffman, 1978), preforming quite different interactional functions than other *ei* tokens whose occurrences seem mainly to mark some kind of "disjunction" in discourse.

[3] As these examples have also shown, there are, in fact, two types of phonetically distinctive *ei* in the present corpus. The phonetically marked *ei*, represented in the transcripts as "*ei*↑", is produced either with a markedly high pitch, or with some kind of marked dynamic pitch movement, such as a rising or a falling-rising pitch contour. There are no discernible differences in how these two types of phonetically distinctive *ei* figure in the two turn designs discussed in this article. The discussion and explication of the use of the prosodically marked *ei* is too complex to be included here and will have to wait for another venue.

(3) and (4), on the other hand, illustrate the occurrence of *ei* when it is prosodically latched onto the following turn component:

(3) (Cao_6_11_06; audio b236; r-audio b67; 51:34:15)
M:-> *ei*↑= *ni   bu shi gao fanyi   ma*
     PRT you N   be   do   translate Q
     'ei↑=didn't you do translation?'

(4) (Cao_6_12_06_C6_16:24:10)
C:-> *ei   =[ta zhengzhuang shi shenme   ne*
     PRT 3sg symptom   be   what   PRT
     'ei=[what's his symptom?'

As I will demonstrate in the remainder of this article, the matter of whether turn-initial *ei* is prosodically separated from or latched onto the turn component it prefaces is far from random or coincidental. There are, for the most part,[4] systematic turn designs embodying the *ei*-speaker's analysis of what he or she is about to project vis-à-vis the current sequential environments. In effect, I shall propose, these two variant turn formats are motivated by the management of turn transfer – that is, they are locally-administrated, recipient-designed resources available for intending self-selecting next speakers to manage the transfer of turn in talk-in-interaction.

3. Differential sequential positioning of the two turn designs

3.1. EI produced as its own prosodic unit

An initial observation that the use of the two variant *ei*-prefaced turn designs has to do with the management of turn entry can be made from their differential distribution of sequential positioning. In my data, the turn design in which the *ei*-preface is produced as its own prosodic unit commonly occurs in sequential positions in which a turn transfer is sequentially justified, if it's not indeed expected.

3.1.1. At a transition-relevance place where no one else self-selects to talk next
One such sequential context is at a transition-relevance place where no one else self-selects to talk next. An obvious case is example (5), in which the *ei*-prefaced turn (line 12) is launched following a long ensuing lapse (line 11) after a discussion about the proximity of three participants' birthdays was brought to a close.

(5) (Cao_6_11_06_video_07:56)
1M: *jide   ma*, [*wo   liuyue sanshi:hao*
     remember Q   I   June   30th
     'Remember?   [My (birthday is) June 30th.'
2D: [↓*a*
                 PRT
                 ['↓Yeah.'
3D: *za   liang   jiu   cha   yi   tian*,   *a*
     we   two   just   differ one   day   PRT
     'We two are only one day apart, huh?'
4M: (nods)
5   (.)
6D: *aihhyou zamen san   ge   ren   zenme [zheme jin   a*
     PRT   we   three   C   person why   so   near PRT
     'Ge(hh)ez(hh)   why are   we three's birthdays   [so close!'
7C: [*ta   qiyue yi:hao*
                                     3sg July 1st
                                   ['Hers is July 1st.'

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4 Cf. the discussion of ''deviant cases'' in section 4.

```
8C:     dui    dui    dui
        right  right  right
        'Right. Right. Right.'
9D:     u[n
        PRT
        'Ye[ah.'
10M:     [un
         PRT
           ['Yeah.'
11      (6.0)
12J:-> ei, (0.4)  chi  zhe  ge   ma
        PRT        eat  this C    Q
        'ei, (0.4) wanna eat this?'
13      (.)
14J:    lai=
        come
        'Here.'=
15C:    =ou   dui,   hai  you   xingrenr
        PRT   right  also have  almond
        ='Ah, right, there're also almonds.'
```

A similar case is the following, in which the *ei*-prefaced turn (line 10) occurs after 0.5 seconds of silence following a sequence in which two other co-participants were talking about a mutual friend's daughter.

```
(6) (Cao_6_26_06_C7_2:50:00)
1C:     haoxiang hai  bu   cuo. gan  de    hai  bu   cuo=
        seem         also N    bad  do   CSC  still N    bad
        'Seems pretty good. Has done pretty well.'=
2C:     =hai  na    ge:: (1.0)
        still  that  C
        ='Has even been uh::' (1.0)
3C:     tisheng  le     (zenme  shuo  de)
        promote  ASP    how     say   NOM
        'promoted (or what-do-you-call-it.)'
4J:     ao     ao     ao
        PRT    PRT    PRT
        'Oh.   Oh.    Oh.'
5C:     gan  de    hai  bu   cuo
        do   CSC   still N    bad
        'Has done pretty well.'
6J:     dui,  tamen  na  ge  ying-
        right they   N   C
        'Yeah, their- the uh Eng-'
7J:     yingyu  dou-  xue  de    bu   cuo  de
        English all   learn CSC  N    bad  NOM
        'English is all- pretty good.'
8C:     en
        PRT
        'Yeah.'
9       (0.5)
10B:-> ei,  na  ge- (.) yaoshi  zai  meiguo  de=
        PRT  that C       if      at   US      NOM
        'ei, the uh- (.) if those in the US,'=
11B:    =tamen  ziji  qu  xuexi (0.4)
        they    self  go  study
        ='they go study there themselves,' (0.4)
```

```
12B:    yiban   daxue   limian  hao  bao   ma
        general college inside  good apply Q
        'is it easy to apply to college in general?'
```

In both instances, this *ei*-prefaced turn design is deployed when a prior sequence was brought to a close and when nobody in the conversation rushed to self-select to speak next.

Of course, a legitimate turn transfer need not follow an ensuing pause or gap after a sequence; a turn transfer can also legitimately occur in the course of turn-by-turn talk without gap. In this latter sequential context, especially when no one else appears to be competing for the floor at a possible transition-relevance place, the *ei*-preface, if deployed, is canonically delivered in an independent intonation contour. Example (7), from a gathering of three middle-aged old friends, illustrates. This excerpt begins with an inquiry directed by Jenny (J) towards Cathy (C), who has lived and worked in the US for a long time.

```
(7) (Cao_6_28_06_38:25:00)
1J:    ni   zai nar  gongzuo duoshao   nian le
       you  at  there work    how:many  year ASP
       'How many years have you been working there?'
2          (1.0)
3C:    en::  gongzuo dou shi nian le    ba
       PRT   work    all ten  year ASP  PRT
       'Um:: have probably worked for ten years.'
4J:    [shi   nian
        ten   year
       ['Ten years.'
5C:    [shi  duo   nian
        ten  more  year
       ['A little over ten years.'
6Y:-> ei,   ni   qu  le   duoshao   nian le
       PRT   you  go  ASP  how:many  year ASP
       'ei, how many years have you been there?'
7C:    qu  le    dou kuai   ershi   nian le
       go  ASP   all almost twenty  year ASP
       'Have been there for nearly twenty years.'
```

In lines 4 and 5 respectively, Jenny moves to receipt Cathy's prior response with a partial repeat just when Cathy proceeds to amend that response. As these two overlapping turns come to possible completion, the opportunity of a transition to a next speaker becomes relevant. Yvonne (Y) joins in at this transition-relevance place with an *ei*-prefaced inquiry (line 6). In it, the turn-initial *ei* is produced as its own prosodic unit, separated from the inquiry it prefaces.

3.1.2. At a sequential position when no one else is supposed to claim the primary speakership

In examples (5)–(7) above, the *ei*-preface is delivered as its own prosodic unit when produced at a possible transition-relevance place where no one else self-selects to talk next. This *ei*-preface turn design, however, is also frequently chosen when no one else is supposed to claim the primary speakership at the point at which the *ei*-prefaced turn is launched. Consider example (8), from a conversation of a group of old high-school friends in their mid-twenties. In line 1, Don (D) is half-jokingly commenting on and complimenting the legs of a female co-participant, Zoe (Z), in front of his "buddies." This comment is met with slight reproach by Zoe in line 3.

```
(8) (HR_1_27_09_tape 3_58:40)
1D:    tuir  ting   xi    de
       leg   pretty slim  NOM
       '(Her) legs look pretty slim.'
2          (0.7)
3Z:    ni   he    gao le   ba   ni
       you  drink high ASP  PRT  you
       'You must be drunk.'
```

```
4E:     he[he
        (laugh)
        'he[he'
5D:->     [ei↑, (.) wo  shi  bu  shi  mei  he    de:shihou=
           PRT   I   be   N   be   N   drink  when
          ['ei↑, (.) didn't I, before I started drinking,'=
6D:     =jian  zhao  ni   wo  jiu    shuo  le=
        see   ASP   you  I   then   say   ASP
        ='when I first saw you, I already said'=
7D:     =↓wo  shuo  Zoe     (jinr-)  /(zhen-) (.)
         I    say   (name)  today    really
        ='↓I said, "Zoe's legs (today-)/(really-)"' (.)
8D:     tuir  ting  xi   de=
        leg   pretty slim  NOM
        '"look pretty slim"'?'=
9Z:     =na  [ni  jiu  mei  shui  xing  ne
        then you just  N    sleep wake  PRT
        ='Then [you must have not been really awake.'
```

It may be relevant to note first that reproach or, more broadly, complaint, is one prototypical instance of the first part of what conversation analysis terms ''adjacency pairs'' (e.g., Sacks et al., 1974:716). Among other things, the first-pair part sets constraints on and projects the relevance of what should be done in a next turn. In this case, Zoe's reproach makes an apology or self-defense a conditionally relevant action in the next turn. Although the occurrence of the first-pair part does not in itself restrict the allocation of the next turn to some candidate next speaker[5] (cf. the slight laughter from Ethen in line 4), the fact that this reproach by Zoe is addressed to Don makes a response from *him* a relevant and expectable next action – that is to say, Don can be understood to be the legitimate next speaker at this particular sequential moment. Note, then, that in his response (lines 5–8), Don launches a type-conforming second-pair part, a self-defense dismissing Zoe's accusation as unfounded. This self-defense is prefaced by *ei* produced in a separate intonation contour.

In my data, the privileged right to speakership in conversation is not always connected with the constraints posted by adjacency pairs. It can also occur as a result of the fact that the telling currently underway has not reached a possible completion point. Example (9), from the same conversation as (7), provides one such instance. Here, Yvonne (Y) is talking about how the residents in a community in which one of her houses was located were reacting to the proposal for a complete teardown and rebuild of the community.

```
(9) (Cao_6_28_06_C8_4:37:00)
1Y:     jiu  wo: (.)  wo  na   fangzi  na:huir  (0.2)
        just I          I   that house   then
        'Like me: (.) during the time when my house,' (0.2)
2Y:     chai  de:shihou
        tear  when
        '(was about to be) torn down,'
3Y:     na  bang  laotou   laotaitai=
        that C    old:man  old:woman
        'a whole bunch of elderly men and women there''=
4Y:     =ye  bu  yuanyi  dong
        also N   willing move
        ='also weren't willing to move.'
5       (0.5)
6Y:     zuihou   ↑yixiazi         (0.3)
        finally  all:of:a:sudden
        'In the end, ↑all of a sudden,' (0.3)
```

⁵ Cf. Sacks et al. (1974:716–717).

```
7C:     jiu   shi   budui   de      na   ge   a=
        just  be    military NOM    that C    PRT
        'You mean the house provided by the military?'=
8Y:     =bu   shi.  jiu-  jiu   wo::   ziji  [na    fangzi
          N   be    just  just  I      self   that  house
        ='No. (It) was- was      my: own      [house.'
9C:                                            [a
                                                PRT
                                                 ['Oh.'
10Y:->  ei,   jiu   yi    wanshang          (to J)
        PRT   just  one   night
        'ei, just overnight,'
11Y:    yixiazi           quan  dou  mingbai   le.   haoxiang
        all:of:a:sudden   all   all  understand ASP  seem
        'all of a sudden, (they) all got it. (It) seemed.'
12J:    dou   ban   le
        all   move  ASP
        '(They) all (agreed to) move.'
```

In line 6, Yvonne appears to be on her way to launching the climax of the story. With the use of *yixiazi* 'all of a sudden' produced with a marked rising shift in pitch (i.e., marked by "↑" in the transcript), the design features of this turn strongly project an unexpected twist of the story. Additionally, the 0.3 seconds of silence produced right before the delivery of the twist can also be seen as an invitation for the recipient to offer an understanding of the story's upshot and to jointly deliver it (cf. Lerner, 1991). In response, however, instead of offering an understanding of the projected upshot, the intended recipient, Cathy (C), offers an understanding check on the referent of the story (line 7), arguably stalling the progression of the storytelling. After responding to the understanding check with a disconfirmation (line 8), Yvonne turns to another co-participant, Jenny (J), apparently to redo the projection of the story's climax "for another first time" (lines 10–11). Notably here, Yvonne deploys an *ei*-prefaced turn as she engages with Jenny in projecting the story's ending and this *ei*-preface is produced in a separate intonation contour from the remainder of its prefaced turn.

Here, as with example (8), the *ei* speaker is arguably entitled to the speakership when launching the *ei*-prefaced turn – in this case, by virtue of the fact that her storytelling has not officially reached its projected completion yet. As with example (8), too, then, we can see that the turn format the speaker opts for is to produce *ei*-preface in an independent intonation contour.

What we have seen in this section, then, are cases in which *ei* is produced as a prosodically-separate unit from the additional turn component it prefaces. Across these excerpts, there are good grounds for arguing that the competition for the conversational floor is not particularly stiff at the point when the *ei*-prefaced turn is launched: The *ei* speaker is either a legitimate next speaker or *the* legitimate speaker at that particular moment from a sequence-structure's perspective. As we'll see next, this is the major difference which sets this set of cases apart from the other set of cases in which *ei* is produced as prosodically latched onto the turn component it prefaces.

3.2. EI-preface delivered as prosodically latched onto the turn component it prefaces

Contrary to the cases discussed in section 3.1, the canonical sequential position for the *ei*-prefaced turns in which turn-initial *ei* is prosodically latched onto the following turn component is at a non-transition-relevance place.

3.2.1. When the current turn in progress has not reached its projected completion

One common type of non-transition-relevance places where this *ei*-preface turn format figures is at a place at which the current turn in progress has not reached its projected completion. A case in point is example (10), taken from a group of friends in their mid-fifties who have known each other since high school. Prior to this excerpt, one participant has just commented on Jiana's frequent job changes. In response to this criticism, Jiana (J) comes to defend herself by attributing her constant career changes to bad luck (lines 1–6, 8).[6]

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[6] For a full explication of this excerpt, see Wu (2011).

(10) (Cao_6_11_06; audio b236; r-audio b67; 51:34:15)
```
1J:    [pt! bu.  wo lao      xiang- (.)
            no   I   always  want
       ['pt! No. I have always wanted to-' (.)
2J:    jiu shi-  gao yi    ge-
       just be   do  one   C
       'I mean- do one-'
3J:    gao- gao dao- gao dao di=
       do   do  until do  until bottom
       'do- do to- do (something) to the end.'=
4J:    = >dan shijishang genben bu keneng=
          but in:fact     at:all  N  possible
       = >'But in fact, it was not possible at all.'=
5J:    =wo jiu- wo zhe ge ren      jiu yunqi-
         I   just  I  this C person just  luck
       ='I just- all my life my luck has been-'
6J:    [te       bu hao.  =renjia dou shuo wo yunqi tebie]<=
       special N  good  others all  say  I   luck  special
       ['really bad.=They all say my luck has been really']<=
7M:->  [ei↑= ni    bu shi gao fanyi      ma]
       PRT   you   N  be   do  translate  Q
       ['ei↑=didn't you do translation?']
8J:    =[[bu     hao
          N      good
       =[['bad.'
9M:     [[ni     bu    shi ying-
         you    N     be  English
        [['Didn't you Eng-'
10M:   yingwen fanyi    ting bang de     ma=
       English translate pretty good NOM  Q
       'translate English pretty well?'=
11J:   = ↑ni  kan wo yuanlai fan       de=
         you  see  I  original translate CSC
       = ↑'You see I used to translate'=
12J:   =dou tebie      hao=
        all  especially good
       =['really well.'=
```

Before Jiana's self-defense comes to a possible completion point, another co-participant, Mary (M), comes in with a query about Jiana's translation career, something that she apparently thought Jiana had done well in the past (line 7). Note here that Mary's *ei*-prefaced query is produced in overlap with Jiana's turn in progress (line 6) and, in fact, comes in at a point at which not only has Jiana's current turn not reached a possible completion point but the projected telling in which this turn is lodged has not come to completion either. Note, then, that in delivering the *ei*-prefaced query, Mary doesn't produce *ei* as its own prosodic unit but rather latches it onto the query it prefaces in a single intonation contour.

Of course, to start to speak in the course of another speaker's turn need not result in overlapping talk (e.g., Jefferson, 1986). Still, when this happens, the *ei*-prefaced turn is commonly packaged in a format in which *ei* is prosodically latched onto the turn component it prefaces. Example (11) illustrates.

(11) (Cao_6_28_06_C8_39:54:20)
```
1Y:    ta    shuo ↑ni  ye   bu kan kan wo shi shei hehe
       3sg   say  you also  N  see see  I  be  who  (laugh)
       'He said, "↑You didn't even look to see who I was." hehe'
2         (.)
3Y:    wo shuo ni   zuo xia  ba   hhh=
       I   say  you sit  down PRT  (laugh)
       'I said, "Why don't you sit down?" hhh'=
```

```
4Y:     =wan  le    you   yi    bian=
         end  ASP  again  one   C
        ='And then (he said it) again.'=
5Y:     =ranhou zai    yi    kan haha   iou  hahahahaha
         then   again  one   see (laugh) PRT  (laugh)
        ='Then (I) took a look again haha    Geez! hahahaha'
6       (.)
7C?     wo
        PRT
        'Oh.'
8C:     hehe
        (laugh)
        'Hehe'
9Y:     haiyou       na   ge  shei
        additionally that C   who
        'Also, what's-his-name,'
10C:->  ei=   nei tian- (.) ei=  nei ge huluo   um: tch! (.)
        PRT   that day      PRT  that C  (name)  PRT
        'ei=that day- (.) ei=Huluo um: tch!' (.)
11C:    hujun:   haishi jiao shenme=
        (name)   or     call what
        'Hujun or what's-his-name,'
12C:    =ou   houlai- houlai wo xiang qilai=
         PRT  later   later  I  think up
        ='Oh later on- later on it occurred to me,'=
13C:    (recount continues)
```

Prior to this excerpt, Yvonne (Y), a healthcare professional, and her two long-time friends had been reminiscing about their old mutual friends from high school. Here, Yvonne is recounting an exam-room encounter that she had with an old friend, during which she did not initially recognize him (lines 1–5). After a brief recipient response to this reported event (lines 7–8), Yvonne goes on with her story, apparently to add a recount about another friend whose name, however, she exhibits a momentary difficulty in recalling (line 9). Instead of waiting for the name search to be resolved and the projected telling to be completed, Cathy (C) nonetheless proceeds to jump in at this moment to launch a recount of her own: In line 10, Cathy first launches her story by reference to the time when the event in question happened ("ei=that day") but then immediately revises it by reference to the character involved ("ei=Huluo um: tch!"). This recount by Cathy, though not produced in overlap with Yvonne's turn in line 9, is arguably interruptive of the projected telling in progress. Here, it can be noted that Cathy uses *ei*-prefaces in both of her two consecutive tries to claim the speakership and that in both tries, she latches the *ei*-preface onto the additional turn component that follows.

   Example (12) offers another case in which the entry into a turn space through a non-transition-relevance place is facilitated by the use of an *ei*-preface latched onto the turn component that follows. Here, the sequence-structurally illegitimate turn entry takes place when turn-by-turn talk is at work. This excerpt comes from the same conversation as (10). Just before this excerpt, Cathy (C) shared the news that she had one time been diagnosed with suspected hyperthyroidism.

```
(12) (Cao_6_11_06_C5_04:36)
1C:     xianzai jiben      dou zhengchang
        now     basically  all  normal
        'Now (I'm) basically normal.'
2D:     ou
        PRT
        'Oh.'
3D:     t[a   nei- nei- yi:  nei- nei jiakang-   nei
        3sg   that that one  that that hyperthyroidism that
        'I[t- that- that- once: that- that- hyperthyroidism- that'
4C:      [a
         PRT
         ['Yeah.'
```

```
5D:     yi-       yi    zhuyuan=
        one       one   hospitalize
        'once- once (you) get hospitalized,'=
6D:     =yi   tiaozheng  yihou  jiu    mei  shi   le    bei=
         one  adjust     after  then   N    matter ASP  PRT
        ='and get treatment, (you) should be just fine.'=
7J:     =ou
         PRT
        ='Oh.'
8       (.)
9D:     [chi    dian  yao       jiu   xing
         eat    little medicine then  OK
        ['Just need to take some medications.'
10C:    [wo  zhenzheng-
         I    really
        ['I actually-'
11C:    ta    shuo  wo  zhe  shi::=
        3sg   say   I    this be
        'He said mine was::'=
12J:->  =ei↑=diane   ni   xianzai [hai  shang  zhe  ban   ma]=
        PRT (name)   you  now      still go     ASP  work  Q
        ='ei↑=Diane, are   you [still working?']=
13C:                          [zhanshixing   de            ]
                               temporary     NOM
                              ['temporarily.']
14J:    =hai  zai  nei  ge  [(.)  fenyuan          nar,    ha
         still at   that C         medical:center   there  PRT
        ='Still at  that     [(.)  medical center,  huh?'
15D:              [hai  shang  ban   ne
                   still go     work  PRT
                  ['Still working.'
```

In response to the advice offered by Diane (D) (lines 3, 5, 6), who works in a hospital pharmacy, Cathy proceeds to project a clarification that her symptoms turned out to be a false alarm (lines 10–11, 13). Before the clarification by Cathy reaches a possible completion point, though, another co-participant, Jiana (J), cuts in with an *ei*-prefaced inquiry directed at Diane (line 12). Here, as in the previous two examples, this interruptive *ei*-preface and its following turn component are produced within a single intonation contour.

3.2.2. In violation of sequential constraints

In the excerpts examined so far in section 3.2, the *ei*-preface turn format, packaged in the form of a single intonation contour, is employed at a point at which the current turn in progress has not reached its projected completion – whether this turn in progress is part of an extended telling or of turn-by-turn talk and whether the *ei*-prefaced turn entry results in overlapping talk. Example (13) illustrates an additional sequential position for the use of this *ei*-preface turn design – that is, when the *ei*-prefaced turn is launched in violation of the adjacency-pairs constraints. In this excerpt, Martha (M), who is proficient in traditional Chinese foot massage therapy, is demonstrating to her two long-term friends how she had applied the massage therapy in helping relieve her husband's discomfort from recurrent canker sores.

```
(13) (Cao_6_12_06_C6_16:24:10)
1M:     mei  ge   jiao  zuo  le   jiangjin  ershi  fenzhong=
        each C    foot  do   ASP  nearly    twenty minute
        '(I) rubbed each foot for nearly twenty minutes.'=
2M:     =ta  ye  [ziji-
         3sg also self
        ='He himself      [also-'
3L:             [na    ge   difang
                 which C    place
                    ['Which spot?'
```

```
4C:->  ei    =[ta   zhengzhuang  shi  shenme  ne=
       PRT   3sg   symptom       be   what    PRT
       'ei=[what's his symptom?'=
5M:          [zai  zher
              at   here
              ['Right here.'
6C:    =shi  shenme  bing    ne=
        be   what    illness PRT
       ='What was the diagnosis?'=
7C:    =na   wo   na   ge  jimu     bu  shi  ye   shi  (°shenme°)
        that I    that C   stepmom  N   be   also be   what
       ='Y'know my stepmom is also (°like that.°)'
8M:    bu:
       N
       'No:.'
9M:    liang  hui  shir
       two    C    matter
       'Two different things.'
```

In line 3, Lisa (L) proceeds with an inquiry addressed to Martha (*na ge difang* 'which spot') – a move which makes a response from Martha relevant next. However, rather than waiting for that response to be given first, another co-participant, Cathy (C), undertakes at this point to launch an *ei*-prefaced inquiry (line 4), which collides in part with the expected response from Martha (*zai zher* 'right here'; line 5). Here, as with examples (10)–(12), the *ei* speaker proceeds to claim the floor at a point at which he or she is not a sequentially legitimate speaker. Once again, the production of the *ei*-preface is latched onto the turn component it prefaces.

What we have seen in section 3.2, then, are a set of cases illustrating a different *ei*-preface turn design, in which the delivery of turn-initial *ei* is prosodically latched onto the turn component it prefaces rather than intonationally separated from it. In these cases, I have also shown that the turns prefaced by *ei* occur in a very different kind of sequential position than those observed in section 3.1. To wit, such *ei*-prefaced turns are commonly occasioned at other than legitimate turn transition-relevance places.

3.3. Speaker's revision into the use of a different turn format

In sections 3.1 and 3.2, I have shown that the two target turn-initial *ei* designs are canonically associated with differential sequential positions: At a transition-relevance place, in which the attempt to enter into a turn space is considered sequentially legitimate, the speaker commonly first produces *ei* as its own prosodic unit before moving on to produce the additional turn component. On the other hand, at a non-transition-relevance place, in which the entry into a turn is both sequentially problematic and potentially interactionally challenging, the speaker generally latches *ei* onto the turn component it prefaces within a single intonation contour.

If this analysis is on target and the choice between these two turn designs is motivated by different sequential pressures in launching the turn, then we should expect to find cases in which a speaker revises his or her choice when a prior try with the alternative design format turns out to be less than successful. This seems to be what happens in the next example, which comes from the same conversation as example (13), about the foot massage therapy. Here, Martha (M) is reporting on her mother-in-law's trip to a medical service the night before.

```
(14) (Cao_6_12_06_8:13:15)
1M:    wo  popo        zuotian   qu  le=
       I   mother-in-law yesterday go  ASP
       'Yesterday my mother-in-law went.'=
2L:    =um
        PRT
       ='Yeah.'
3M:    wo     popo        bu  shi- (.)  na   ge-
       I      mother-in-law N   be         that C
       'Wasn't my mother-in-law diagnosed with- (.) the-'
```

```
4M:     shenme: uh:: (.) jiao shenme (0.3) uh:: (.)
        what    PRT   call what          PRT
        'what:: uh:: (.) what-do-you-call-it (0.3) uh::' (.)
5M:     zhongzhengjiwu[li
        Myasthenia:Gravis
        'Myasthenia Gra[vis?'
6C:                    [a    [[dui    dui
                        PRT    right   right
                       ['Ah. [[Right. Right.'
7L:                          [[um
                               PRT
                             [['Yeah.'
8M:     qishi    gen naozi you   guan[xi de
        actually with brain have relation NOM
        'Actually (it's) related to the bra[in.'
9C:->                                  [ei, (.) nei  ge-
                                        PRT    that  C
                                        ['ei, (.) the uh-'
10C:    [ta    you-
         3sg   have
        ['she has-'
11M:    [wo yi   mo   ta  zhe  dian a=
         I   one touch 3sg this point PRT
        ['Once I touched this spot on her (foot),'=
12M:    =qixian wo  yiwei    shi gutou ne
         at:first I  thought be  bone  PRT
        ='at first I  thought it was a bone.'
13L:    ou::
        PRT
        'Oh::.'
14      (.)
15M:    yi  mo   xia   juran       hai limian shi ruan de
        one touch down unexpected also inside be  soft NOM
        '(But) once I pressed down on it, it was soft inside.'
16L:    [ou
         PRT
        ['Oh.'
17M:    [ta  zheng ge- (0.3) (zheng ge-) yingjianzi=
         3sg whole C          whole C    nodule
        ['The whole thing- (0.3) (whole thing-) was a nodule.'
18C:->  =<ei= ta    xianzai fazhan  dao shenme dibu=
          PRT 3sg   now     develop to  what   position
        =<'ei=how far along has her (illness) progressed?'=
19C:    =[women jiu  shi you  nei  ge=
          we    just be  have that C
        =['We just have this'=
20L:    [shi  ma. ou      (to M)
         be   Q   PRT
        ['Was it? Oh.'
21M:    [[hen  mei you  liqi      le
         very  N   have strength PRT
        [['(She's been) rather weak.'
22C:    =[[dula  na  ge siji   xianzai ye   shi=
          (name) that C driver now     also be
        =[['Dula's driver is also like that now.'=
```

```
23M:     = ↑a::
           PRT
         = ↑'Really::?'
```

Following the recipient's acknowledgement (line 2) of Martha's topic proffer, rather than continuing with the specifics of this trip, Martha goes on to talk about her mother-in-law's diagnosis of Myasthenia Gravis (lines 3–5, 8), apparently to provide some background information for the story to be projected. In overlap with Martha's talk in line 8, however, Cathy (C) launches a turn prefaced by *ei* (lines 9–10). Note in this turn that Cathy uses the *ei*-preface design typically associated with a legitimate turn entry: She first produces *ei* as its own intonation unit before proceeding to project the rest of the turn after a slight pause.

Here, Cathy's choice of the turn design is compatible with the way she starts up her talk, which is launched in "terminal overlap" with Martha's turn in line 8. Previous conversation analytic studies (e.g., Jefferson, 1984; Schegloff, 2000, 2001) have shown that the occurrence of "terminal overlaps" often indicates that "one speaker appears to be starting up by virtue of a prior speaker's analyzably incipient finishing of a turn" (Schegloff, 2000:5). At this sequential point, the timing of Cathy's entry into the turn and her choice of a less tightly-woven turn design to implement it may relate precisely to this anticipation of the imminent completion of Martha's ongoing turn.

However, although Cathy's entry comes close to a point where the current turn in progress is reaching a possible completion point, her turn entry occurs remote from possible completion of the telling already initiated – in other words, this is not a legitimate turn transition-relevance place. As it turns out, this turn entry by Cathy is rendered ineffective by the current speaker Martha and another co-participant Lisa (L), as both of them continue to focus attention on the story being projected (lines 11–17, 20).

Note, then, that just as Martha's story reaches a possible completion point (which may or may not be the speaker-intended transition-relevance place, however), Cathy immediately launches another *ei*-prefaced turn (line 18). Note that this time she resorts to the alternative *ei*-preface turn design – one that is commonly deployed when competition to the floor is keen, as we've seen earlier. This choice by Cathy is clearly in tune with the other efforts she makes to claim the floor, such as accelerating her talk (the "<" sign in line 18) and latching each of her utterances onto the next (marked by the "=" sign in lines 18, 19, 22) until the upshot becomes clear (line 22).

Here, then, as with the other cases examined in sections 3.1 and 3.2, the selection of the *ei*-preface turn design can be understood as embodying the speaker's analysis of the fit between the current sequential context and the incipient entry of a turn.

3.4. Interim summary and discussion

In sum, we've examined the differential positioning of the two target *ei*-preface turn designs within similar sequential contexts – contexts such as storytelling, multi-unit turns, turn-by-turn talk, and adjacency pairs. It may be relevant to note now that in the collection of approximately 150 cases I have assembled, the vast majority of cases (i.e., 130 in total) follow the patterns that we've discussed so far. That is, whereas intending next speakers routinely produce *ei*-preface in an independent intonation contour when the turn entry is occasioned at a transition-relevance place, they tend to latch *ei*-preface onto the turn component it prefaces if entering at other than a transition-relevance place. This is not to say that the selection of one *ei*-preface turn format over the other would guarantee a successful turn entry, but rather that the selection itself embodies the intending next speaker's analysis of how well the incipient turn entry would fit the current sequential position as well as how strongly the speaker is motivated to achieve the turn transfer at that given moment.

It is important to note that even though the two *ei*-preface turn designs are routinely used in differential sequential positions, their use should not be viewed as pre-determined by the structure of a sequence. Rather, like other conversational practices, they can be best understood as locally-managed and recipient-designed resources that can be mobilized by intending next speakers to manage the sequential demands associated with turn entry. This "locally-managed" and "recipient-designed" nature is also evident in some seemingly deviant uses of these two practices, to which we'll turn next.

4. Deviant cases

In my data, there are approximately 20 cases in which the use of turn-initial *ei* could be considered as departing from the regular patterns discussed in section 3. These cases generally fall into two categories. In what I term "Type 1" deviant cases, the *ei*-preface and the additional turn component that follows are projected within a single intonation contour even though the *ei*-prefaced turn is launched at a legitimate transition-relevance place. On the other hand, in "Type 2" deviant cases, the *ei*-preface is prosodically separated from the turn component it prefaces when the *ei*-prefaced turn is launched at a non-transition-relevance place and in overlap with some ongoing talk by another speaker.

Before discussing these cases, however, it may be worth differentiating them from cases which, prima facie, resemble these cases but aren't really deviant cases upon close examination. Consider the following example, from the same

conversation as example (10). Prior to this excerpt, this group of middle-aged women had been chatting about their adult children, most of whom were working for foreign-invested firms in China. Diane (D) had just finished a storytelling in which her husband reportedly used an old Chinese folklore saying, *gei gongchandang ganhuo bu yao tai fei liqi* 'don't work too hard when working for the Communist Party,' to persuade her daughter not to be totally consumed with work, only to be corrected by his wife that unlike people in their generation, who had no other choice but to work for the Communist Party, their daughter was not working for the Communist Party after all.

(15) (Cao_6_11_06_20:32) (slightly simplified)
```
1D:    tamen   na    genben  bu shi=
       3sg     that  basically  N   be
       'They are not'=
2D:    =gei gongchandang    ganhuo
         for  communist:party  work
       ='working for the Communist Party at all.'
3M:    gei  yang   zibenjia  [hai shi, a
       for  foreign  capitalist  also be PRT
       '(Working) for foreign capitalists, [that is, huh?'
4J:                                [(laugh)
5C:    [ei,⁷  yang   zibenjia
       PRT   foreign  capitalist
       ['Yeah, foreign capitalists.']
6      [(participants  [[laugh)
7D:                       [yang    zibenjia.
                         foreign  capitalist
                         [['Foreign capitalists.'
8D:    erqie yang  zibenjia  qishi   ting   hen    de
       also  foreign  capitalist  actually  pretty  fierce  NOM
       'And foreign capitalists actually are pretty demanding.'
9M:    hen:=
       fierce
       'Very:.'=
10D:   =yaoburan  ni    jia  name  duo   ban
         otherwise  you  add  that   much  work
       ='Otherwise (why's) there so much overtime work,'
11D:   [(jiu  zhe  ge  nei  de)=
        just  this  C  that  NOM
       ['(or stuff like that)?'=
12M:   [bu yao   ming
        N   want  life
       ['Don't care about life.'
13D:   =zamen gongchandang  dao      bu rang ni   jia   ban
         we     communist:party  actually  N  let    you  add  work
       ='Our Communist Party didn't ask you to work overtime.'
14D:   gongchandang   bu rang jia   ban
       communist:party  N  let    add  work
       'The Communist Party didn't ask to work overtime.'
15D:   gongchandang  genben  jiu  mei huo  gan
       communist:party  basically  just  N   work  do
       'The Communist Party didn't have any work to offer!'
16M:-> [ei↑,  na  ta,  na  ta,  na  ta
        PRT  that  3sg  that  3sg  that  3sg
       ['ei↑, then she- then she- then she-'
```

---

⁷ This is an *ei* example which serves as an agreement token. Examples like this are excluded from the analysis of the present study (cf. Footnote 2).

17C: *[(jiu   qu   shui   wujiao...)*
    just go sleep nap
   ['(Just to go take a nap...)'

18D: *gongchandang   genben   jiu mei you   qian   gei ni*
   communist:party basically just N   have money for you
   'The Communist Party just didn't have any <u>mo</u>ney for you.'

In the resumption of turn-by-turn talk following the storytelling, Diane and other co-participants are further elaborating on the import of the story (lines 1–15). Diane's elaboration can be understood as reaching a possible transition-relevance place upon completion of her turn in line 15, at which point both Mary (M) and Cathy (C) enter (lines 16 and 17 respectively), resulting in overlapping talk. Here, in her entry of the turn Mary produces an *ei*-preface in a separate intonation contour before producing the additional turn components – a turn format which is not typically associated with the context of overlapping talk, as we've seen earlier. However, if we consider the progressivity and the emergent nature of talk and interaction (e.g., Sacks et al., 1974; Lerner, 1996), it becomes apparent that the selection of the turn format by Mary may have been prompted by her analysis that she's coming in at a possible transition-relevance place. That is, she is proposing a "unilateral topic shift" (Wu, 1997) drawing on the story's main character[8] when Diane's post-story-completion talk has reached a possible completion point.

Here, as Sacks et al. (1974) have noted, simultaneous starts, such as those initiated by Cathy and Mary, "testify to the independent-for-each-party projectability of possible completion points of the talk that occupies current turn" (Sacks et al., 1974:707). That is, Cathy and Mary are equally legitimate to start as the next speaker in this sequential position, and each can construct her own turn in a way that is independent of what the other is doing at the same time.

Hence, Cathy's simultaneous start as well as the ensuing overlapping talk is arguably an unexpected outcome from Mary's perspective and is not something that Mary's *ei*-prefaced turn was designed to address in the first place.[9] In this regard, Mary's choice of the *ei*-preface format is perfectly in line with the routine use of the turn design and shouldn't be treated as a deviant case.

Having illustrated what's not counted as a deviant case despite a prima facie resemblance, we can turn now to a brief discussion of the deviant cases.

4.1. "Type 1" deviant cases

As noted earlier, with "Type 1" deviant cases, the speaker latches an *ei*-preface onto the additional turn component when his or her entry of the turn occurs at a possible transition-relevance place. Interactionally, such a move could create an impression that the speaker is "rushing" to enter into a turn space when in fact there is no visible competition at that moment or immediately thereafter. Whereas the occurrence of such cases may be an outcome of an individual style or preference, such occurrences are notably often connected with how parties have interacted with each other on a given occasion. That is, such a "rushy" turn entry may occur when there had been some apparent trouble, including tension to compete for the floor, in the just-prior interaction. A possible case in point is the following, from the same conversation as (13) and (14), where the focus of the talk has been on health issues. Prior to this excerpt, Lisa (L) had just complained about being especially susceptible to catching cold this year. The deviant use of the *ei*-preface turn format occurs in line 26.

(16) (Cao_6_12_06_C6_15:34:00)
1   (1.0)
2C: *ganmao shi- jiu shi qingwei de   ne*=
      cold   be   just be mild   NOM PRT
      '(When you had) a cold- was it mild'=
3C: =[*haishi hai   you   fasha*=   (to L)
      or   also have fever
      =['or was it also (accompanied by) a fever?'=
4M:-> [*qishi   wo ba[[bude   ganmao ne*   (to L)
      actually I   desperate:for cold   PRT
      ['Actually   I've been <u>de</u>[[sperate to catch a cold.'

---

[8] As it turns out, Mary's intended inquiry, when finally produced in the clear, concerns the salary of Diane's daughter.

[9] It may be relevant to note that prior to and upon producing her utterance in line 16, Mary is sitting in "body torque" position (Schegloff, 1998), with her back facing Cathy.

5L: =[[buguo ye   hen   lihai   de=   (to C)
                 but   also very serious NOM
                          =[['But (they) were also very serious.'=

6C: =a[:
      PRT
     ='O[h:.'

7M:->   [ei=   wo lao   bu ganmao te   zhaoji= (to C)
           PRT I   always N cold   special anxious
        ['ei=I'm so anxious about not getting a cold,'=

8M: =ni   zhidao ma
      you know   Q
     ='y'know?'

9M: [>ye   bu fashao bu ganmao=
       also N   fever   N cold
     [>'(If you) don't have a fever or get a cold,'=

10C: [bu- (shi zhe ge-)
      N   be   this C
     ['No- (it's the uh-')

11C: >bu shi,   [(...baozhi)   shuo ma yi   nian ganmao <u>yi:</u>ci=
      N   be   newspaper say PRT one year cold   once
     >'No, [(...newspaper) says that getting a cold <u>on</u>ce a year,'=

12M: =[(...) mei you   dikangli
                N   have immunity
          ='[(...you'll) have no immunity.'

13C: =[ting   hao (...ta shuo) na ge   fashao keyi-
      pretty good 3sg   say that C fever   can
     =['is a good thing. (.it says that) the uh- fever can-'

14L: [dui. ganmao liang:ci. haoxiang.
      right cold   twice   seem
     ['Right. Getting a cold twice. (It) seems.'

15C: shenme hai shao si   ai   xibao- shenme=
     what   also burn dead cancer cell   what
     'kill cancerous cells- or what.'=

16M: =dui   dui. [shi zheyang
      right right be   this:way
     ='Right. Right.   [(That)'s right.'

17L: [shi a
                be   PRT
               ['(That's) right.'

18C: um:.
     PRT
     'Yeh:.'

19   (.)

20L: wo   yi   you hao ji   nian dou bu fashao=
     I   already have good several year all   N fever
     'I've not had a fever for a good many years.'=

21L: =yiqian wo yi   fashao jiu- d- jiu shi sanshijiu du   wu
      before I   once fever   then then be 39   degree 5
     ='In the past if I had a fever then- then- I'd reach 39.5°.'

22   (0.5)

23L: jieguo wo hao ji   nian bu fashao=
     result I   good several year N fever
     'Then I've not had a fever for a good many years.'=

24L: =jiu wo jinnian   fashao
      just I   this:year fever
     ='But this year I got a fever.'

```
25          (0.5)
26M:->>  ei=    ni    xianzai  kouqiang    zenmeyang
         PRT    you   now      oral:cavity  how
         'ei=how's your mouth now?'
27L:     xianzai  kouqiang     faner     hao    duo    le
         now      oral:cavity  reverse   good   much   ASP
         '(My) mouth is actually much better now.'
```

In broad stokes, this deviant use of the *ei*-preface turn format by Martha (M) (line 26) is launched after the sequence of talk among the three co-participants in lines 2–18 was brought to a close and when immediately thereafter (lines 20–24) Lisa proceeds to retopicalize the symptoms she was complaining about earlier. Specifically, this *ei*-prefaced turn is launched after 0.5 seconds of silence following Lisa's retopicalization of her symptoms (line 25). Prima facie, this is not a usual context motivating the use of such a tightly-woven turn format, wherein *ei* is prosodically latched onto the turn component it prefaces.

However, although there is no apparent competition for Martha's turn entry in line 26, she apparently exhibited great difficulty in launching her turn and the topic of her choice in the just-prior sequence. This difficulty can be seen in Martha's first try in line 4, where she proposed an alternative topic to Lisa, in competition with an inquiry by Cathy (C) in lines 2–3. Martha's attempt, however, clearly fails as it receives no subsequent recipient response or acknowledgement. In line 7, Martha re-enters and recycles this failed topic. This time, not only does she deploy a turn format well suited for competing for the floor (i.e., a turn prefaced by *ei* which is latched onto the additional component that follows), but her determination to claim and hold the turn space is also embodied in her continued effort to launch several turn-constructional units[10] elaborating on this topic (lines 9, 12). Nonetheless, this attempt by Martha is met with yet another round of competition (lines 10–11), over the course of which both Martha and Cathy appear to be unwilling to relinquish their turns to each other, though Cathy's turn eventually emerges into the clear and receives recipient acknowledgements (lines 16–17).

Given that Martha's deviant *ei*-prefaced turn occurs shortly after this competitive battle, the possibility can be entertained that Martha's seemingly premature deployment of this relatively aggressive turn format may be motivated by this just-prior encounter. That is, in view of the fact that her attempt to claim the next speakership was repeatedly trumped by Cathy's, Martha may have been gearing herself up for another possible round of competition, even at the risk of overdoing it by deploying a proactive turn-entry device at a seemingly non-competitive sequential position.

As further support for this possibility, it may be worth mentioning that similar "Type 1" deviant cases are observed five times, deployed either by Martha or by Cathy, in this rather turbulent one-hour conversation. There is a sense, then, that such seemingly deviant cases do not necessarily undercut the present analysis. Rather, as with other cases observed in section 3.2, this use of the *ei*-preface turn design, in these several cases at least, serves similarly to embody the would-be speaker's orientation to possible competition for claiming the next speakership.

4.2. "Type 2" deviant cases

If speakers in "Type 1" deviant cases may risk being viewed as "rushy" or even "pushy," the risk of "Type 2" deviant cases could be linked to the possibility that the turn being so initiated may turn out not to be sequentially implicative – as we've seen in example (14) (line 9).

However, further examination of the data suggests that "Type 2" deviant cases do not always occur as a result of interaction slips or misjudgment. Sometimes, their occurrences may well be a strategic design mobilized to address the sequential contingencies at that given moment.

Although space does not permit a comprehensive illustration of all such cases, one common use associated with the *ei*-preface turn design in the "type 2" deviant cases may be worth mentioning. In these cases, the speaker first produces an *ei*-preface, apparently to attract a recipient's attention while at the same time making visible that he or she has something to say. For various interactional reasons, however, the speaker then pauses and waits for the current ongoing talk to proceed a bit until he or she finds a proper sequential place to join in again, at which point he or she will then deliver what appears to be projected by the production of *ei*.[11] A common feature of these cases is that this deviant use of the

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[10] From a conversation-analytic perspective, turn-constructional units (TCUs) are considered the building blocks of turns and may take the forms of sentences, clauses, phrases or lexical items (Sacks et al., 1974). For further discussion on TCUs, see, for example, Sacks et al. (1974), Ford and Thompson (1996), and Schegloff (1996, 2007).

[11] In my collection, the intra-turn pause between *ei*-preface and the additional turn component may range from a few tenths of a second to several turn-constructional units long.

ei-preface turn format normally occurs when the speaker proceeds to intrude into the space in an already-ongoing talk, rather than when the speaker is competing against multiple simultaneous starts for initial turn entry.

    Example (17) offers a case in point. Here, Lisa (L) has been complaining about her husband and children, who reportedly frequently choose to buy other brands of milk over the one she favors for economic or health reasons.

```
(17) (Cao_6_12_06_C6_35:54:00)
1L:    wo shuo-  wo jiu-z-  wo jiu   yao-  ha-
       I   say     I  just    I  just  want
       'I said- I just- t- I just wanted to- dri-'
2L:    he    nai  jiu  yuanyi  tiao zhe ge=
       drink milk just willing pick this C
       '(When I) drank (milk), I just wanted this (brand).'=
3L:    =[guan ta   you  yingyang mei yingyang=
        mind  3sg  have nutrition N  nutrition
       =['Who cares whether it has nutrition or not?!'=
4C:     [(laughs)
5L:    =yinwei  wo  haizi  lao    shuo mengniu mei yingyang,
       because  I   child  always say  (brand) N   nutrition
       ='cause my kids always say that Mengniu doesn't have nutrition,'
6L:    bu  hao
       N   good
       'not good.'
7C:    um::
       PRT
       'Uh huh.'
8      (.)
9L:    wo shuo hai,   lao le   jiu y- you- [[he   zhe ge=
       I  say  (sigh) old ASP  just   have  drink this C
       'I said, ''hai, getting old, (you) just- have- [drink this,'=
10                                    [[(M turns gaze toward C)
11M:->>                               [[ei↑
                                      PRT
                                          [ei↑
12        [(C turns gaze toward M)
13L:   =[juede nei  ge  shenme=
        feel   that C   what
       ='and feel the uh- what-do-you-call-it,'=
14        [(M turns gaze toward L)
15M:-> =[nimen ting shuo le    ma
        you   hear       ASP   Q
       ='Have you guys heard?'
16     (.)
17L:   shenme=
       what
       'What.'=
18M:   =niunai   bu yao  he    a
        milk     N  want drink PRT
       ='Don't drink milk!'
```

Note here that in the midst of Lisa's report, Martha (M) cuts in at line 11 with *ei*↑. The point at which she enters nonetheless is neither a possible completion point of the storytelling nor the end of the turn in progress – a sequential position normally primed for the use of *ei*-preface latched onto the additional turn component, as discussed in section 3.2. Here, however, Martha does not proceed with the additional turn component right away. Instead, she gazes toward Cathy with the production of *ei*↑ (line 10) and waits until she receives a reciprocal gaze from Cathy (line 12) before turning her gaze to Lisa (line 14) and resuming the delivery of the remaining turn component when Lisa's turn comes to a halt (line 13).

Example (18) offers another instance. Earlier in the prior sequence, Mary (M) had talked about how her mother had repeatedly declined to accept the honor of "Superior Teacher" out of humility. Diane (D) misunderstood the event as having just happened recently, only to be teasingly reminded that Mary's mother had passed away a long time before. The following excerpt ensues after that clarification sequence comes to completion.

```
(18)    (Cao_6_11_06_C5_46:29)
1D:     xianzai- nar    you   ren    shuo=
        now      where  have  person say
        'Nowadays- how can anybody possibly like-'=
2D:     =bu dang teji      jiaoshi de     a
         N  serve superior teacher NOM   PRT
        ='decline the award of "Superior Teacher"?'
3       (.)
4D:     [keneng- bu tai   keneng
        possible  N  too  possible
        ['Likely- Not very likely.'
5M:     [na- na   ta- (.) [[ta    dang-
        that that 3sg       3sg   serve
        ['Then- then she- (.) [[she was awarded-'
6C:                        [[xianzai hai you teji      jiaoshi=
                             now     still have superior teacher
                               [['There're still "Superior Teachers" now?'=
7D:     =y[ou    a,    (na you-)
         have   PRT   that have
        ='Y[es. (There are-)'
8J:     [xianzai teji      jiaoshi ye   duo  le=
        now      superior teacher also many ASP
        ['There're a lot of "Superior Teachers" now.'=
9D:     =xianzai [you teji      jiaoshi,
         now      have superior teacher
        ='There [are "Superior Teachers" now.'
10J:            [(wo) neishihou bijiao    shao=      (to M)
                 I    then      relatively few
                ['There were fewer at my time.'=
11M:-> =[neishihou
         then
        =['At that time,'
12D:    =[teji     jiaoshi jiu  shi daiyu [shenme dou tebie    gao=
         superior teacher just be  pay   what   all  special high
        =["Superior  Teachers"  get  a really  [good salary and stuff like that.'=
13M:->>                                   [ei-
                                           PRT
                                             ['ei-'
14C:    =[a
         PRT
        =['Oh.'
15M:->   [neishihou
          then
         ['At that time,'
16D:    ta   bu dang [le
        3sg  N  serve ASP
        'She declined the awa[rd?!'
17M:->                  [neishihou feichang   shao=
                         then      extremely  few
                          ['At that time there were extremely few.'=
18M:    =gen xianzai bu shi- yi   ge gainian
```

```
with   now    N   be   one   C   concept
='Not the same as now.'
```

Here, the question-intoned display of surprise by Cathy (C) in line 6 triggers a round of overlapping responses from Diane and Jiana (J), both of whom press ahead as they talk competitively through the overlap (lines 7–10). In response to the information offered by Jiana in line 10 (i.e., that ''Superior Teachers'' were very rare in the past), Mary starts up a turn with *neishihou* 'at <u>that</u> time' (line 11), only to find her utterance colliding in overlap with another turn-constructional unit launched by Diane at that point (line 12). Mary aborts this just-initiated turn, apparently in favor of a revised turn-entry format with an *ei*-preface (line 13), which she then launches in overlap with Diane's turn in progress. Before pressed to completion, however, this *ei*-prefaced turn is aborted again, with the turn component that is arguably supposed to follow (line 15) delivered only when Diane's turn in line 12 is brought to completion.

Here, Mary's not projecting the *ei*-preface and the additional turn component within a single intonation contour, I'd argue, is a product of strategic design rather than of an interaction slip. Specifically, in the face of another co-participant's competitive already-ongoing talk, it appears that Mary opts not to press on with her intended talk via a tightly-woven *ei*-preface turn format, perhaps to avoid the risk of having her talk come out obscured or sequentially ineffective. Instead, she aborts her turn and waits for another opportunity for turn re-entry. This possibility appears to be supported by a similar next move by Mary in lines 15–18: Here, after her attempt to deliver the additional turn component in line 15 fails, Mary waits again until Diane's next turn comes to a recognizable completion (line 16), where Mary then re-enters in terminal overlap with the turn and finally says her piece in the clear (lines 17–18).

Thus, it seems clear that even though the majority of the would-be next speakers in my data tend to latch an *ei*-preface onto the additional turn component when claiming the turn space at a non-transition-relevance place, cases departing from this routine use do occur. These cases nonetheless are not always outcomes of individual preferences or interaction mishaps. Rather, as we've seen, there can be very fine-tuned orderly coordinations of turn entry, turn exit, and turn reentry with the recipient-designed use of the *ei*-preface turn format.

5. Concluding discussion

The moment-by-moment allocation of speaking turns is fundamental to the operation of any conversation. However, although the phenomenon of turn transfer is orderly, its achievement is not always as simple as it appears to be. In multiparty conversation, for example, as a turn is approaching its possible completion, there are oftentimes multiple sources of competition for the next speakership. To successfully claim and establish an incipient speakership, intending next speakers not only are pressured to project the turn at the earliest possible place; they are also required to plan its projection in such a way that its incipient entry can both indicate some relationship with the incumbent ongoing turn and emerge as a sequentially implicative turn.

The practice of Mandarin initial *ei,* as a disjunction marker and commonly attracting recipient attention accordingly, is well-suited for the sequential environment of incipient turn entry. In this article, I've described the use of two prosodically-different *ei*-preface turn designs in the management of turn entry and turn transfer in multiparty Mandarin conversation. As demonstrated, these two turn formats routinely occur at differential sequential positions in my data: Whereas speakers commonly deliver an *ei*-preface in an independent intonation contour when claiming the next speakership at a transition-relevance place, they tend to latch the *ei*-preface onto the turn component it prefaces if the attempt is made at a non-transition-relevance place. I've argued that this recurrent orderly distribution should not be viewed as an outcome pre-determined by the sequence's structure, but should rather be understood as an embodiment of the would-be next speakers' orientation to the fit between the incipient turn entry and the currently on-going talk.

Relatedly, treating this orderly occurrence of *ei* as an embodiment of participants' orientations to how their conduct is organized relative to one another, rather than as a product of the sequence's structure, has implications for research on the notion of ''topic'' in discourse. Over the past decades, although the notion ''topic'' has enjoyed great popularity in the literature, the difficulty of attempting to define and identify what a topic is has been widely acknowledged (see, Brown and Yule (1983), for a review). In general, previous work in this area has focused its discussion and treatment of ''topic'' almost exclusively in terms of ''content'' or ''form'' (cf. Brown and Yule, 1983). However, the analysis presented here suggests the possible benefit of viewing ''topic'' in terms of sequence organization in conversation (e.g., Schegloff, 2007, 2010; Robinson, 2013) – that is, in terms of ''[h]ow are actions implemented through successive turns formed up to be 'coherent' with the actions of the prior turn...and what is the nature of that coherence?'' (Schegloff, 2010:133). As Schegloff (2010:133) has remarked:

> Although topicality provides one grounding of coherence and the one most favored by the literature, what gets done in turns-at-talk is more generally describable as courses of action, of which topic-talking is only one type...There is an organization of practices for jointly building sequences of action in talk-in-interaction...and practices that

underlie the construction and recognition of bits of talk as possible actions – sequence organization and action formation, respectively.

In this article, by demonstrating how Mandarin speakers, in managing a turn entry in multiparty conversation, mobilize different *ei*-prefaced practices to both mark a disjunction and build a connection with another's prior turn, I hope to have offered data-driven evidence for Mandarin speakers' displayed orientation to, and management of, just this kind of sequentially-grounded coherence in talk-in-interaction.

Finally, before closing this article, it seems relevant to note that in some aspects, the differential use of the two variant Mandarin *ei*-preface turn formats as proposed here bears some resemblance to a few turn-management practices observed in English conversation, such as what Schegloff (1982) terms the ''rush-through'' technique and the ''phrasal break'' strategy noted by Goodwin (1979, 1980, 1981). The ''rush-through'' technique canonically occurs when an already-ongoing turn is approaching possible completion; at that point, the current speaker speeds up the talk and shapes the prosody so as to allow an immediate start-up of a next turn-constructional unit without the usual break that might otherwise have occurred at the possible completion point. In using the ''phrasal break'' strategy, a speaker restarts his or her ongoing talk mid-utterance to introduce a break that can request the gaze of a non-attending party. In both practices, a current speaker manipulates the occurrence or non-occurrence of a break within his or her turn-in-progress for the purposes of managing turn transfer or the participation framework. The two Mandarin *ei*-preface turn formats, on the other hand, similarly maneuver the occurrence or non-occurrence of an intra-turn break, though they are mainly resources available to *intending next speakers* for launching recipient-designed turn entry at differential sequential positions.[12]

The analysis presented here thus gives us a glimpse into a language-specific solution to the universal problem of turn management and provides insights into how turn management is locally achieved with resources available in a given language. It is hoped that this analysis, albeit only the tip of the iceberg, will prompt more research on conversation in Mandarin as well as across languages to further our understanding of how linguistic resources and recurrent interactional practices contribute to the management of turn entry and turn transfer in talk-in-interaction.

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[12] ''Rush-through'' has been discussed in Zhang (2012) using Mandarin data, though her focus is on its use to address some aspects in the immediately prior talk *of the same speaker*.

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