

The Progression of a Recipient's Responses in Storytelling Sequences at the Workplace: A Preliminary Analysis

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Abstract

This paper examines naturally occurring conversations between two co-workers in a restaurant kitchen. Using conversation analysis, we show how the recipient's responses in storytelling sequences progressed from alignment to affiliation as the storytelling unfolded. Affiliation responses were also found to shift from weak forms to strong forms toward the end of the storytelling sequences. In light of the analysis, we discuss the implications for English language learning teaching and materials development.

Introduction

Storytelling can be an important part of workplace communication as a common practice to maintain personal relationships. McClellan (2004), for example, believed that storytelling within the workplace can encourage change, promote leadership, and support advocacy. While in the field of ESP (English for Specific Purposes), teachers and textbooks tend to focus on field-specific discourses (e.g., Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998), it is important to recognize that non-field specific conversations, such as storytelling, play an important role in workplace communication as well (e.g., Holmes, 2003). Within a storytelling sequence, knowing how to be a supportive recipient by effectively conveying alignment and affiliation is an essential part of the ability to use language appropriately in context, an important component of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1981). Since the typical methods for showing alignment and affiliation in the English language may not be intuitive to learners of English as a Second Language, a close analysis of these practices in conversations can be a useful starting point. This paper takes a step in this direction by examining naturally occurring data from a workplace setting, a restaurant kitchen, to demonstrate some methods co-workers use to show alignment and affiliation within storytelling sequences.



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Narratives in Conversations

Narratives differ from a typical conversation in that the usual turn-taking mechanism is suspended while a storyteller holds the floor, taking multi-unit turns (Sacks, 1974). The story is often strategically constructed through an organized series of sequences, such as: a launch, middle sequences comprising the background and climax, and a closing (Wong & Waring, 2010). The teller may launch the story with a single turn or a sequence (Jefferson, 1978; Sacks, 1974). These are often first initiated by the previous talk and then segued with a disjunctive marker or embedded repetition. Stories can also be launched via a sequence, such as a preface sequence, assisted story preface, or three-part series of turns. These assisted sequences are a form of collaborative storytelling. The next phase is the actual telling of the story. The main story segments tend to include the background, parenthesis, and the climax (Goodwin, 1984). More recent research into trouble-telling narratives has concluded that most narratives are initiated with an orientation and concluded with the coda, as indicated by discourse markers such as “so” and “well” (Ouellette, 2001).

Though the storyteller is the main speaker, the recipient has an active role in the construction of the story. The action or non-action of the recipient influences the unfolding of the main speaker's turns (Goodwin, 1984). Further, there are preferred and dispreferred methods for responding to a storyteller's turns. Preferred methods involve showing alignment with the storyteller by exhibiting talk that responds to the story in a similar manner and dispreferred methods involve displaying disagreement or disinterest in story continuation (Sacks, 1974). Examples of alignment and affiliation are response tokens, agreement with the speaker, upgrades of agreement, stating the upshot of the storytelling sequence for the teller, and repetition of prosody. Previous research established that response tokens with a slightly raised intonation, such as *uh huh*, or *yeah* are commonly used by recipients to show alignment (Sacks, 1974; Goodwin, 1984; Jefferson, 1978). This raised intonation acknowledges the story and invites more information from the teller. In contrast, the dispreferred method of non-action is silence or dropping intonation of the response token, which indicates disinterest and a lack of desire to hear more. According to Pomerantz (1984), upgrades are one of the typical methods for speakers to show alignment. An upgrade is defined as agreement to a prior turn with a stronger evaluation. Importantly, Stivers (2008) made the distinction between alignment and affiliation in story-telling responses. An aligning response simply displays understanding that a story is in progress and yields the floor to the teller. An affiliative response does more than that: it supports the teller's stance, such as with agreement or upgrades in which the assessment takes on a more marked degree of positivity or negativity that is in harmony with the teller's perspective. While researchers have recognized different response types (Spielmann, 1988; Stivers, 2008), no previous studies have examined the progression of response types in the course of a storytelling sequence.

Research Question

This paper aims to explore the sequential environments of different types of responses that a recipient may produce in the development of storytelling sequences. Following Stivers (2008), we consider alignment to be any response from the recipient that aligns with the ongoing action of storytelling. Affiliative responses are those that share the storyteller's perspective. We are interested in two intertwined questions: (1) What types of response did

the recipient produce in the course of a given storytelling sequence? and (2) What are the sequential context of each type of response?

Methodology

The data was collected from a small restaurant in Honolulu on five separate occasions, which produced over ten hours of audio recording. The participants were Liz (pseudonym), who was the chef and owner of the restaurant, and Kev (pseudonym), who was the sous chef. This particular restaurant is primarily known for its baked goods and lunchtime menu, so much of the data was collected during early morning hours. Liz and Kev had had a working relationship for over a year by the time of data collection. They spent a significant amount of their time alone together partaking in restaurant preparatory work prior to the lunch rush, which consisted of taking orders, preparing and serving the meals. One of the authors convened in the restaurant kitchen and recorded the participants while taking notes relating to action specific phenomena that accompanied the conversations.

In keeping with the principles of Conversation Analysis, the data was collected with an unmotivated eye. There was no intention to support a specific conversational phenomenon, only to observe and identify common features of the co-workers' daily interactions. Afterward, the data was transcribed in the Jefferson notational system (Jefferson, 2004; see Appendix). A preliminary analysis of the data revealed that the conversations contained several storytelling sequences. Two stories stood out due to their completeness and audio quality: one about Liz's shrimp and the other about customers' deaths. These two stories spread out in five sequences—bursts of talk that were separated by silence or kitchen actions. In both stories, Liz was the storyteller and Kev was the recipient.

Also in accordance with the principles of conversation analysis, the data analyses were conducted in an emic approach, that is, the researchers analyze the data from the perspectives of the participants. Each turn is examined *in situ*, having meaning and significance for having occurred at that particular point in the conversation. No external data concerning the nature of the relationship between the participants or opinions about their relationship outside of the conversation were factored in to the analysis. That is, if an interpretation cannot be supported by evidence from within that conversation, it is not permitted.

Analysis

From Alignment to Affiliation

In the five story sequences analyzed, Kev routinely responded first with alignment then affiliation. In excerpt 1.1, the storytelling is launched by Liz, in a pattern similar to the *first saying + insertion + second saying* storytelling technique (Wong & Waring, 2010, p. 132). She launches her story with an initial characterization of the story (lines 1, 2), which she later also ends her story with (line 54).

Excerpt 1: Shrimp 1

1 Liz: my baby shrimps are ↑dy↓ing I don't know
2 what happe:ned (.4)
3 some (.2) something polluted the ↓wate:r
4 (.5)
5 Kev: → where's that,
6 Lz: at at my ho↓use, (.3) °the baby shrimps°

7 Kev: really?
8 Liz: I h(h)ad (.2) and I (.) I started out
9 with um twe↑lve 8 (.4)
10 and got em up tuh (.3) by doing a nat↑ural
11 environment (.)
12 let them go not >ya know< (.2)
13 in the conta:iners that everybody (.2)
14 >ya know< has em i:n an' °>ya know<° very
15 sterile °little baby lil tiny shrimp°
16 (.7)
17 Liz: >so awesome I watched em have babies
18 and ↑every↓thing and have live
19 babi[es<
20 Kev: → [ar so are they ↑pets?
21 (1.0)
22 Liz: ↑↓YEah=
23 Kev: → =or are they ↓food.
24 (.4)
25 Liz: no they're PETS.
26 Kev: oh ok (.2) I I didnt know I never
26 hearda (.2)
27 Liz: (.3) oh they're (.2) they're TINY
28 but they're awe:some [they're they're(.2)=
29 Kev: → [cool
30 Liz: =baby baby (.2)shri[mp (.3) they:'re(.2)
31 Kev: → [that sounds awesome
32 Liz: >ya know< bigger than th:at=
33 Liz: ((gestures with hand to indicate size))
34 Kev: ok, really sma[ll
35 Liz: [and yeah (.2) and so you
36 put em in a closed environment (.) of
37 sea water (.3) and they live >for like<
38 ten years
39 Kev: ↑wha[a?
40 Liz: [>in fact they live about ten and
41 dey (.) dey have babies and ↑st:uff >and
42 they have live babies and you can see
43 inside< so mi:ne (.) were so happy that
44 they they >ya know the next thing I know<
45 I've gotta couple hundred in der
46 Kev: who::oa
47 (30:20)
48 Liz: it was awesome I gave some to some
49 people whatever but I
50 Kev: but something's going wrong, huh?
51 Liz: yeah something's going wrong I'm down
52 to like four
53 and I I changed the water I don't know
54 whats going on man (.6) they're they're dying
55 Kev: that sucks
56 Liz: it's horrible

Kev's first responses to the story are repair initiations (line 5, “where’s that,” and lines 20-23, “so are they pets?” “or are they food?”), which align with Liz's storytelling activity. After Liz provides the repair by responding to Kev’s question (line 20), Kev provides an account for the repair. By providing an account, Kev is possibly trying not to offend Liz by

questioning whether or not her pets were food, thus aligning with her perspective and showing his affiliation.

When Liz later pivots the story to provide more background information about the nature of shrimp as pets (line 26-30), Kev responds with assessments (“cool,” line 29 and “that sounds awesome,” line 31), sharing her perspective and displaying affiliation.

This progression from alignment to affiliation is also seen in the other storytelling sequences in the recorded conversations. The next excerpts exemplify this pattern.

In Excerpt 2, Kev's initial response is a minimal token (line 5) to acknowledge prior talk and invite further talk, hence indicating alignment. In line 6-18, Liz gives more story background concerning the customer's dire situation and then, in line 9, Liz delivers the climax of the story: “literally we're watching her deteriorate.” At this point, Kev initiates repair in line 11, “you're watching her what?” This repair shows his alignment with the storytelling action. Kev's response in line 13 is an elongated “oh” with up and down pitch, indicating his understanding; however, he does not offer any assessment at this point. Only later does he produce assessments (lines 16, 18), which share Liz's perspective and display affiliation.

Excerpt 2: Deaths 1

1 Liz: ya know one of our customers is gonna die over there. it's
2 so horrible (.) six months ago she was like (.) perfect
3 (.2) ok and she's got this inso- insi- inilstatial,
4 um (.) lung disease?
5 Kev: → uh huh,
6 Liz: and it just came o:n really sudden, (.) a:nd (.) she she
7 can't breathe and they got her on so much prednazo:ne (.2)
8 that it's just really screwing her up, she falls down a lot
9 and literally we're °watching her °°deteriorate°°.
10 ((washing dishes))
11 Kev: you're watching her what?
12 Liz: deterior[ate
13 Kev: → [↑↓o::h.
14 Liz: it's horrible (.) because now her face is s::o
15 big [and puffy (.)
16 Kev: → [that's just bad
17 Liz: I mean it's [horrible
18 Kev: → [what do you do? that's like (.2) it's the worst
19 Liz: ya know? (.) and ya know I consider her a friend, (.7) °I hate
20 when my customers die°,

In Excerpt 3, Kev's initial response is also a repair initiation (line 3), then minimal token (line 7), and only later does he produce assessments (lines 12, 14-15, 20). As the story continues, while Kev continues to produce alignment responses in the form of minimal tokens (lines 25, 34), he only states the upshot of Liz's story later (lines 36-37). This upshot statement is an affiliative response since it shares the storyteller's perspective.

Excerpt 3: Deaths 2

1 Liz: I've had a BUNch of >across the street< (1.0)
2 one died in an elevator. (.7)
3 Kev: → over at the towers?
4 Liz: yep, (.9) ↑↓yep I wondered where, >his name was Alan<(.)
5 °I first opened° (.3) he'd do (.4) >chicken white meat no

gives assessments (lines 10, 12, 14)—responses that display shared perspective and thus constitute affiliation.

Excerpt 5: Shrimp 2

1 Liz: =and there was seaweed that got in and
2 I think it just polluted the water
3 Kev: → yeah yeah,
4 Liz: ((coughs)) so anyway,
5 Kev: screwed up their environment
6 Liz: YES tota:lly screwed up an an I'm looking
7 the other night and (.4) it's like
8 they're dead they're all floating (.3) oh
9 my
10 Kev: → ah that's ↑terr↓ible
11 Liz: ↑trau↓matizing
12 Kev: → yeah traumatizing
13 Liz: hhhh °traumatized was traumatized°
14 Kev: → my shr:imps (1.)
15 (5.0)

In sum, the five excerpts above show that in responding to Liz's stories, Kev moved from alignment responses that supported her storytelling to affiliative responses that shared her perspective. When we re-examined Kev's affiliative responses more closely, we found that they also progressed from weak forms of affiliation to strong forms of affiliation as the story developed.

From Weak Affiliation to Strong Affiliation

In Excerpt 1 (reproduced from above), Kev's affiliative responses were in the form of assessments, but these assessments show different degrees of affiliation.

Excerpt 1: Shrimp 1

27 Liz: (.3) oh they're (.2) they're TINY
28 but they're awe:some [they're they're(.2)=
29 Kev: → [cool
30 Liz: =baby baby (.2)shri[mp (.3) they:'re(.2)
31 Kev: → [that sounds awesome
32 Liz: >ya know< bigger than th:at=
33 Liz: ((gestures with hand to indicate size))
34 Kev: → ok, really sma[ll
35 Liz: [and yeah (.2) and so you
36 put em in a closed environment (.) of
37 sea water (.3) and they live >for like<
38 ten years
39 Kev: → ↑wha[a?
40 Liz: [>in fact they live about ten and
41 dey (.) dey have babies and ↑st:uff >and
42 they have live babies and you can see
43 inside< so mi:ne (.) were so happy that
44 they they >ya know the next thing I know<
45 I've gotta couple hundred in der
46 Kev: → who::oa
47 (30:20)
48 Liz: it was awesome I gave some to some
49 people whatever but I

50 Kev: but something's going wrong, huh?
 51 Liz: yeah something's going wrong I'm down
 52 to like four
 53 and I I changed the water I don't know
 54 whats going on man (.6) they're they're dying
 55 Kev: → that sucks
 56 Liz: it's horrible

Kev's assessment in line 29, though positive, is not markedly positive, and thus can be heard as a weak affiliation. Kev's next response, "that sounds awesome" (line 31) also serves as affiliation since it shares Liz's perspective. Notably, Kev recycles the exact same word in Liz's assessment ("awesome"). Since agreement is often expressed by an upgraded assessment (Pomerantz, 1984), the lack of an upgraded assessment here may suggest a weak affiliation.

In line 31 and 33, Liz is giving Kev information about pet shrimp by showing Kev the size of pet shrimp, to which Kev responds with a display of understanding, "ok, really small" (line 34). This is hearable as a weak affiliative response since it simply shares Liz's perspective.

Kev's next response to Liz's story is in line 39, when he shows alignment with "wha?" This response token acts as a news mark and sign of interest, as indicated by the raised pitch and intonation. Kev's response is an alignment with Liz's ongoing storytelling activity. Kev's subsequent response is in line 46, with the token "whoa." This "whoa" is delivered with prosodic pitch changes, displaying surprise and inviting further conversation. As such, it constitutes strong alignment. Kev's next response displays affiliation by returning to Liz's story earlier with a statement of its upshot, thus showing both his understanding and interest in her story. After Liz continues with the story about the dying shrimp, Kev affiliates with Liz with a strong assessment in line 55 ("that sucks") to which Liz upgrades to "it's horrible." The participants seem to be in strong mutual affiliation at this point.

The development of Kev's responses to Liz's story as it unfolds seems to go from alignment in the form of repairs to weak affiliation in the form of a statement of the upshot of the story, then strong affiliation in the form of a strong assessment. This progression is not linear; alignment responses continue later in the story as well, but strong affiliative responses only appear later in the story.

The same pattern is observed in the other storytelling sequences in the data. Excerpt 5 (reproduced from above) is an example.

Excerpt 5: Shrimp 2

1 Liz: =and there was seaweed that got in and
 2 I think it just polluted the water
 3 Kev: yeah yeah,
 4 Liz: ((coughs)) so anyway,
 5 Kev: → screwed up their environment
 6 Liz: YES tota:lly screwed up an an I'm looking
 7 the other night and (.4) it's like
 8 they're dead they're all floating (.3) oh
 9 my
 10 Kev: → ah that's ↑te↓rrible
 11 Liz: ↑trauma↓tizing
 12 Kev: yeah traumatizing
 13 Liz: hhhh °traumatized was traumatized°
 14 Kev: my shr:imps (1.)
 15 (5.0)

Kev's second response shows affiliation by stating the upshot of Liz's story (line 5). While this response shares Liz's perspective, it simply displays his understanding. In contrast, when in line 8, Liz gives a bad news announcement, stating that all the shrimp are dead and floating, Kev shows a stronger form of affiliation with a negative assessment, "that's terrible" (line 10). This response is produced with an emotional "ah" and a marked change in pitch, which not only shares Liz's perspective but also expresses Kev's feelings that are in line with Liz's troubles-telling. In her next turn, Liz upgrades Kev's assessment from "terrible" to "traumatizing," with matching prosodic features, thus showing her agreement. Kev's response in the next turn shows a very strong form of affiliation, as he voices Liz in a direct reported speech, "my shrimps," thus completely taking Liz's point of view. Her reciprocal affiliation shows that the co-workers arrive at a higher level of mutual affiliation toward the end of this segment. Thus in this segment, Kev's responses progressed from alignment in the form of minimal tokens to weak affiliation in the form of a statement of the story's upshot to stronger affiliation in the form of emotion expression and animation of the teller's voice.

The progression from weak to strong affiliation is also seen in Excerpt 6, when the shrimp story continues.

Excerpt 6: Shrimp 3

1 Liz: I mean like mi::ne had babies and nobody
 2 else I knew had ever (.4) their their
 3 shrimp had babies cuz I left the
 4 environment natural (.8) and um ya know I
 5 let the water sit
 6 Kev: left it the way they like it
 7 Liz: ↑↓yeah (.7) the next thing ya kn:ow holy
 8 moly
 9 Kev:→ they really like it
 10 Liz: they REALLY like it (.4)
 11 () four or five have babies
 12 Kev:→ yah
 13 Liz: they like move inside the stomach=
 14 Kev: >yeah<
 15 Liz: =carry em around and [like =
 16 Kev: [yeah fascinating
 17 Liz: =a coupla weeks and then its like twelve
 18 ↓dots up (.3) by water line (.3) ya know
 19 just a litt:le movement °and it's like
 20 oh my god oh my god°
 21 Kev:→ I've created li:::fe
 22 Liz: [hhhhh it was (.3) it was
 23 kinda like dat you know
 24 Kev: big moment
 25 Liz: ↑ex↓a:ctly

In line 6, Kev responds with affiliation as he states the upshot of Liz's inserted story sequence, to which Liz responds with upgraded agreement in line 7. Kev then again shows affiliation with Liz (line 9) by completing Liz's sentence, showing his understanding of the upshot of the story up to this point. Kev's next response is an alignment response with "yeah" (line 12). His first assessment in this segment comes later, in line 16, showing a

stronger form of affiliation. He upgrades his affiliation in line 21, when he again voices Liz in a direct reported speech, “I’ve created life.” By voicing Liz, Kev displays a shared perspective with her. When Liz responds to this with laughter and agreement (line 22), Kev affiliates with her by summing up this point in her story as “a big moment,” to which Liz responds with a strong agreement (“exactly”). With this heightened level of mutual affiliation, Liz closes the story of the dying shrimp.

Throughout Liz’s telling of the story, Kev’s moved continually from alignment to weak affiliation, then to strong affiliation, and the participants achieved a mutually shared perspective. This pattern is further supported by Excerpts 2, 3 and 4 (reproduced from above), which will be described next.

In Excerpt 2, Kev’s affiliative responses are in the form of assessments that go from weak to strong.

Excerpt 2: Deaths 1

1 Liz: ya know one of our customers is gonna die over there. it’s
 2 so horrible (.) six months ago she was like (.) perfect
 3 (.)2) ok and she’s got this inso- insi- inilstatial,
 4 um (.) lung disease?
 5 Kev: uh huh,
 6 Liz: and it just came o:n really sudden, (.) a:nd (.) she she
 7 can’t breathe and they got her on so much prednazo:ne (.)
 8 that it’s just really screwing her up, she falls down a lot
 9 and literally we’re °watching her °°deteriorate°°.
 10 ((washing dishes))
 11 Kev: you’re watching her what?
 12 Liz: deterior[ate
 13 Kev: [↑↓o::h.
 14 Liz: it’s horrible (.) because now her face is s::o
 15 big [and puffy (.)
 16 Kev:→ [that’s just bad
 17 Liz: I mean it’s [horrible
 18 Kev:→ [what do you do? that’s like (.) it’s the worst
 19 Liz: ya know? (.) and ya know I consider her a friend, (.)7) °I hate
 20 when my customers die°,

In line 14, Liz continues her story by expanding it with another assessment: “it’s horrible because now her face is so big and puffy.” Only then does Kev respond in line 16 with an assessment, “that’s just bad.” While this shares Liz’s perspective, the adjective “bad” is not as strong as Liz’s “horrible,” making this response a weak affiliation. Liz then upgrades Kev’s assessment, from “bad” back to her original “horrible.” At this point, Kev responds with an upgrade, “it’s the worst,” (line 18) finally producing a strong affiliation with Liz. With this mutual affiliation achieved, Liz closes her story.

In the next storytelling sequence (Excerpt 3, reproduced from above), Kev again moved from weak to strong affiliation.

Excerpt 3: Deaths 2

1 Liz: I’ve had a BUNch of >across the street< (1.0)
 2 one died in an elevator. (.)7)
 3 Kev: over at the towers?
 4 Liz: yep, (.)9) ↑↓yep I wondered where, >his name was Alan<(.)
 5 °I first opened° (.)3) he’d do (.)4) >chicken white meat no
 6 sauce<(.)8)a:n he had he always came in with his (.) oxygen.

7 Kev: yea[h.
8 Liz: [ok >↑re↓latively young man< (.) but he had ro:bbed >when
9 he was young< (.3) he he'd been involved with a company that
10 ro:bbed the state school fund for <nine years> (.) so the
11 kids suffer why were makin money flippin that money
12 Kev: → oh ↑↓yeah that's real nice
13 Liz: oh YEah oh YEah (.) i[t's a-
14 Kev: [almos-that almost makes ya feel like he
15 kinda got what he de↑ser↓ved (.) yeah
16 Liz: exactly. right? ho ho dats why karma
17 Kev: → uh huh.
18 Liz: so anyway (.) couple of days he's not there. one of the
19 guards came and he died he died in the elevator
20 Kev: → ↑↓shit.
21 (.8)
22 Liz: hhhh. gee::zz
23 Kev: yeah that's-
24 Liz: ↑OKAY.
25 Kev: ↑al↓right
26 Liz: ↑al↓right Allen.(.4) ↑al↓right
27 Kev: guess [that's (xx)
28 Liz: all the- an and that's affordable places, and he was
29 ended up alone. (.2) with no friends
30 (.) an all those people that he he ripped off and
31 that made money with him (.) none of them were around at
32 at at that time.
33 (.7)
34 Kev: yeah.
35 Liz: so it makes it wors[e-
36 Kev: [that sorta like sounds like- that almost
37 sounds like a parable, ya know?
38 Liz: yeah
39 (3.0)
40 Liz: I mean, I'm talking millions °in stolen properties°.
41 Kev: yeah
42 Liz: ↑MI↓LLIONS
43 Kev: kinda livin off the suffering of others.
44 Liz: oh YEAH
45 Kev: yeah
46 Liz: → ya ↑know? (.) my children, \$ok\$?
47 Kev: if if the world is a good place, that's gonna come back
48 a↑↓round.
48 Liz: yep. (.2)

Kev's first affiliative response is an assessment in the form of an emphatic and sarcastic “oh yeah, that’s real nice” (line 12). Liz upgrades Kev’s sarcastic assessment by agreeing louder and with more emphasis on each “oh yeah” (line 13). Kev then shows affiliation by stating the upshot of Liz’s story about Alan. Liz agrees strongly with “exactly” (line 16) and upgrades Kev’s comment about “getting what he deserved” by rephrasing it with a statement about karma. To this, Kev only agrees in the form of a minimal response token, “uh huh.” (line 17).

When Liz continues with the details about the customer’s death, Kev responds with a swear word that functions as a strong assessment, “shit” (line 20). Liz responds with laughter and agreement “geez” (line 22). In the closing of the story, Kev offers the upshot of the moral of the story in two full turns (line 46). Stating the moral of a story is a strong

way to indicate understanding and shared perspective with the teller, thus displaying heightened affiliation.

In sum, when Kev's affiliative responses are examined further, a pattern emerges: he seemed to progress from weak to strong affiliation as the sequence developed. This progression appears consistent with his movement from alignment to affiliation described in the previous section.

Discussion and Conclusion

This analysis is based on conversations between only one dyad. As such, the patterns reported in the findings need to be confirmed with further research. As a preliminary analysis of the sequential progression of a recipient's responses in storytelling sequences at a workplace, this paper offers some interesting insights. It seems that in the storytelling sequences examined, Kev's responses to Liz's storytelling sequences progressed from alignment (in the form of minimal tokens and repairs) to weak affiliation (in the form of non-upgraded assessments and statements of the story's upshot), then to strong affiliation (in the form of upgraded assessments, voicing of the teller's speech or thought, and strong assessments sometimes with swear words). The analysis shows that recipients to storytelling can take a variety of formats in different degrees of support of the ongoing action of storytelling and the storyteller. Further, the data suggest that a recipient's responses in storytelling sequences also evolve and have a certain trajectory throughout the development of the story.

The specific trajectory of Kev's responses may not be random. It may be that at the early stage of a story, the recipient's orientation to the just-launched story is relevant to establish in talk, and thus Kev produced alignment responses more at the beginning of the storytelling sequences. Also, repair initiations solicit the factual information necessary for comprehension of the narrative. At the same time, in order to show shared perspective with the storyteller, the story has to unfold enough for the recipient to see the teller's perspective. The progression from weak to strong affiliation may also be a reflection and renewal of the broader context of the relationship between Kev and Liz. First, their relationship was largely determined by the workplace: it was the shared job duties that brought them together in these conversations, not necessarily by choice. Second, it is worth noting that all of the stories in the data collected were told by Liz, not Kev. In other words, Kev performed the role of the recipient without initiating stories himself. This lack of story initiation may be consistent with the delayed nature of Kev's strong affiliative responses. It is thus plausible that Kev's forms of responses from weak to strong affiliation index the social web in which the participants were. In any case, the progression of Kev's responses suggest that in these conversations, affiliation was something the participants worked up to rather than something that was present from the start. It also showed that achieving a mutually shared perspective was something of value among these co-workers.

The findings from this data are relevant and important for language teaching because they provide samples of authentic conversations, demonstrating how co-workers communicate in the workplace. This information can be used to assist others who may want to build similar workplace relationships through the management of everyday conversations, of which storytelling is an important part. Learners can be shown the various possible forms

of responses to storytelling so that they can make informed choices when it comes to them taking their own stances in naturally occurring conversations.

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Appendix

Transcription notations (based on Jefferson, 2004)

.	: falling intonation
?	: rising intonation
,	: slightly rising intonation
↑	: rising pitch in the next phrase
↓	: falling pitch in the next phrase
↑↓	: pitch rises and falls within the next word
:	: lengthened speech
=	: latching speech
-	: cut off word
<u>underlined</u>	: stressed syllable
CAPITALIZED	: higher volume
degree signs °	: beginning and end of quieter speech
in <i>italics</i>	: nonverbal actions accompanying speech
(())	: vocal effect accompanying speech
xxxxx	: unintelligible talk
(guess)	: the transcriber's best guess at an unclear utterance
[: beginning of overlap of speech, or speech and nonverbal action
> <	: sped up speech
< >	: slowed down speech
.hh	: in-breath. The more h's, the longer the breath
hh.	: out-breath (often heard as laughter). The more h's the longer the breath.
!	: animated or emphatic tone
(number)	: duration of silence in tenths of seconds
<i>italics</i>	: non-verbal actions accompanying verbal actions in the line above
\$: smiley voice
→	: specific parts of transcript discussed in analysis

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