Action Ascription and Mediation in Interaction: A CA-for-SCT Perspective

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Abstract

This article presents the use of conversation analysis (CA) in the context of sociocultural theory (SCT) driven research on L2 development, or CA-for-SCT. I focus specifically on the CA concept of action ascription as it applies to understanding the nature of mediation in interaction. I begin with an overview of the concept of action ascription before discussing the CA-for-SCT approach, and in particular Jim Lantolf's contribution to our understanding of the dialogic nature of graduated and contingent assistance in interaction. I then present several examples of interactions from SCT-based pedagogical enrichment programs to illustrate how mediation in interaction can be understood as action ascription. The discussion and conclusion then center on developing future research in this important domain.

Keywords: *Sociocultural Theory, Conversation Analysis, Action Ascription, Mediation*

[1]Introduction

The point of departure for this article is twofold. First, mediation in interaction—by which I mean the various micro-interventions a teacher or mediator might deploy in a classroom, a dynamic assessment, or any other kind of educational context to assist learners and support their development—is the result of a sort of *co-regulation* (van Compernolle, 2015) between all interactants who read one another's utterances in real time and analyze them as a means of pursuing a next appropriate *action*. The emphasis on *next action* is an important one because it centers our analytic focus on what gets done between people as they interact as opposed to

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attempting to assign meanings to isolated utterances. In other words, we are interested in *inter*-actions in a literal sense, actions that are accomplished *between* people. Second, while it is impossible to directly observe what a teacher, mediator, or learner is thinking or intending to do based solely on audio and video recordings of interactions, as third-party analysts we can make reasonable assumptions about the ways in which prior utterances are read and analyzed by interactants through the analysis of *action sequences* that span two or more turns-at-talk.

These two insights stem from the extension of conversation analysis (CA) to work carried out within Vygotskian sociocultural theory (SCT) (e.g., Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004; Ohta, 2001; van Compernolle, 2010, 2015, 2016). CA's methodological apparatus, including the detailed multimodal transcription of interactions and use of a so-called "next turn proof procedure" (Sacks et al., 1974), provides an empirically grounded approach to conducting an emic—or participant-relevant—analysis of the action sequences that are built up over the course of multiple turns-at-talk. In other words, we can rely on the data themselves to provide evidence of how speakers read and analyze each other's utterances without the need for exogenous theorization about or coding schemes for the meaning and functions of speech. As Sacks et al. (1974) put it:

> But while understandings of other turns' talk are displayed to co-participants, they are available as well to professional analysts, who are thereby afforded a proof criterion (and a search procedure) for the analysis of what a turn's talk is occupied with. Since it is the parties' understandings of prior turns' talk that is relevant to their construction of next turns, it is THEIR understandings that are wanted for analysis. The display of those understandings in the talk of subsequent turns affords both a resource for the analysis of prior turns and a proof procedure for professional analyses of prior turns – resources intrinsic to the data themselves. (p. 729)

A simple example of how this works is illustrated by an analysis excerpt 1, taken from a story-telling task between two advanced university-level learners of French (see appendix A for transcription conventions). Sally has asked Thérèse to tell the story of her visit to see John, the short title of which was written on a narrative prompt worksheet each participant had completed. Before Thérèse begins the story, Sally asks who John is (line 1).

Excerpt 1.

```
1     Sally:      =qui est John.
                   Who is John
2     Thérèse:    John est mon frère jumeau:,
                  John is my twin brother
3     Sally:      okay.
                  okay
4     Thérèse:    uh:: (0.6) #c'est un (   )#
                  Uh         it's a
5                 il est blond. (h)eh(h)heh
                  He is blond
6     Sally:      okay
                  okay
7     Thérèse:    um nous sommes (.) nous ne
                  Um we   are        we   NEG
8                 (nous sommes pas
```

```
            We    are    not
9           (.) ↑tout::) ↓mais::
                  totally    but
```

The sequential analysis of this short story opening goes like this: Thérèse treats Sally's utterance in line 1 as a question, the evidence of which is because Thérèse produces an answer in line 2 (John in my twin brother). In third-turn position (l. 3), Sally seems to acknowledge this answer as the relevant next action (i.e., okay). Subsequently, rather than closing this sequence and moving on to the story, which is a possible course of action, Thérèse expands it by providing a physical description of John (ll. 4-9). Thus, Sally's "okay" in line 3 may be analyzed as projecting sequence expansion based on what Thérèse does in the next turn (i.e., she expands the sequence as a response to Sally's "okay").

This approach, while typical of CA-driven research, has come under some criticism from CA scholars recently. Drew (2022), for instance, notes that it is "unfortunate that Sacks et al. chose to refer [to it] as a *proof* procedure" (p. 58) because many (if not most) CA researchers have understood the claim to mean "that whatever particular action a recipient ascribes to the prior turn, as displayed in their response, *proves* that that is indeed *the* action that the speaker enacted or performed" (p. 58). This is, of course, impossible to verify empirically since we do not have access to speakers' real-time thinking processes or intentions and therefore cannot confirm whether Sally, for example, *intended* her "okay" in line 3 of excerpt 1 to be understood by Thérèse as an invitation to expand on her description of John. Instead, as Drew argues:

> The recipient's response displays the way she takes or chooses to understand that prior turn. The recipient is in effect *selecting*, from among some possible understandings of the prior turn, the action implication that they judge best suits their interactional purposes. (p. 58)

Thus, what Thérèse's sequence expansion (ll. 4-9) suggests is that she judged Sally's prior turn to be open enough to allow for an expansion of her talk about John. And how does such an expansion suit her interactional purposes? As third-party analysts, we might look to her original response ("he is my twin brother") as being possibly unexpected in some way (i.e., John is her *twin* brother but not identical) and requiring from Thérèse's perspective at least some account for her possibly unexpected identity as the female twin of her brother. Note that she appears to struggle to express herself in line 4 and can be seen on the video gesturing to herself as part of a word search before saying that John is blond (in contrast, Thérèse has dark brown hair) as a possible example of how they are not identical. She continues to say something about the two of them in line 7-9, which appears to involve some kind of additional contrast (*nous sommes pas tout* 'we are not totally'), possibly another attempt at expressing her status as a non-identical twin (e.g., 'we are not totally identical'). In this somewhat revised analysis, our job as analysts is to understand how Thérèse ascribes a relevant next action to Sally's prior utterance ("okay" in l. 3), not because it is *the* way Sally intended it but because it is *a* way that Thérèse was able understand it and pursue her interactional agenda of answering Sally's question and accounting for her status as a non-identical twin.

In the remainder of this article, I provide a brief overview of interaction in Vygotskian SCT second language (L2) development research before segueing into the underpinnings of what I

have referred to previously as CA-for-SCT (van Compernolle, 2016). The article then deals with the implications of understanding mediation in L2 development contexts as the *social action of action ascription* (Drew, 2022) through the analysis of selected excerpts from L2 instructional contexts. In concluding, I sketch out avenues for future scholarship, with an emphasis on L2 praxis.

Graduation and Contingency of Assistance in Interaction

The catalyst for much of the work on mediation in L2 interaction was Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994) study. Engaging with contemporary work on corrective feedback in cognitivist L2 acquisition (SLA) research, Aljaafreh and Lantolf drew on Vygotskian theory to examine interactions in tutoring sessions that focused on revising L2 English writing assignments, framing corrective feedback as regulation in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). A detailed discussion of the ZPD idea is beyond the scope of this article, but it suffices to say that it is a prospective construct for understanding a learner's developmental trajectory, what capacities are currently in the process of developing but still require assistance, or mediation, from the outside (e.g., help from a teacher) (Vygotsky, 1978). Aljaafreh and Lantolf emphasized the role of *graduated* and *contingent* help as effective mechanisms for working within a learner's ZPD and helping the learner to gain greater control over the task of identifying and correcting errors in their writing (i.e., self-regulation). Here, *graduation* refers to "the minimum level of guidance required by the novice to successfully perform a given task" (p. 468), where assistance starts from "a highly strategic, or implicit, level and progressively becomes more specific, more concrete" (p. 468). *Contingency* is taken to mean that help is "offered only when it is needed, and withdrawn as soon as the novice shows signs of self-control and ability to function independently" (p. 468). As Aljaafreh and Lantolf point out, graduation and contingency work hand in hand as teachers, or mediators, and learners dialogically negotiate when assistance is required, what the minimum form of assistance might be, and when that assistance can ultimately be withdrawn.

Building on Aljaafreh and Lantolf's (1994) study, L2 SCT interaction work proliferated in the 1990s and early 2000s. Ohta's (2001) research on mediation in classroom interaction provided detailed analyses of the ways in which graduation and contingency were accomplished between teachers and students as well as among peers working in small groups. Poehner's doctoral work and the later of expansion of it (Poehner, 2008) laid the groundwork for codifying mediator strategies for providing graduated and contingent assistance during dynamic assessment (DA) interactions. This represented an important departure from previous SCT work, which used the theory as a lens through which to interpret interactional data, and toward a praxis approach to using the theory as the foundation for designing and implementing educational interventions within which fundamental research questions are addressed (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). The detailed typology of mediator moves in DA interactions presented in Poehner's (2008) work not only elucidated the ways in which graduated and contingent assistance is negotiated but also provided concrete guiding principles for teachers and other mediators to follow in designing and carrying out their own DA practices in the decade that followed (see, e.g., Davin, 2018; Poehner, 2018).

In parallel and sometimes intersecting ways, additional work, including my own, has at times implicitly but often explicitly drawn on CA as a means of understanding the interactive

practices by which graduated and contingent assistance is negotiated as a social action accomplished between people. Ohta's (2001) work is such an example as is the research of Mondada and Pekarek Doehler (2004) who proposed as a strong socio-interactionist approach to understanding mediation that centered interaction as constitutive of, and not simply ancillary to, L2 developmental processes. Van Compernolle (2010) used CA to trace incidental microgenesis during a speaking assessment and demonstrated how the mechanism of conversational repair sequences can foster L2 growth. Similarly, van Compernolle (2013) proposed the mediation sequence as an analytic unit for L2 DA, drawing on the CA notion of side sequences that involve openings and closings, such as repair, in contrast to the typical focus on individual utterances in DA research. These ideas were subsequently elaborated in van Compernolle (2015, 2016) under the label CA-for-SCT.

Here, I want to take a moment to reflect on the nomenclature of CA-for-SCT, offer some background to the use of the preposition "for," and provide a much-needed acknowledgement of Jim Lantolf's influence on this line of inquiry that extends beyond his publications. When I first began working with CA, I did so under the assumption that CA and SCT were at least partially commensurable (Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004) and could therefore complement each other inasmuch as it was possible to do CA work and more or less interpret the data using SCT terminology. This is of course not a unique issue within CA-inspired SCT work since the lion's share of SCT work up until about 2005 used the theory as a lens for *interpreting* data rather than as a method for designing research studies (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008). Happily for me, I was a doctoral student at the Pennsylvania State University at the time, employed as a research assistant by Jim Lantolf and Matt Poehner as part of a team working on developing a computerized DA of reading and listening comprehension, and therefore had many opportunities to ask questions, debate issues of theory and method, collaborate on research, and of course ask Jim to serve on my dissertation committee. Although I know we do not always see eye to eye on the utility of CA in SCT research, and I fully expect that he will disagree with some of things I say in this article, he has always been supportive and capable of seeing the contribution of my work, sometimes in ways that were not immediately visible to me.

As a case in point, as I was finalizing the manuscript for my 2015 book, *Interaction and L2 Development: A Vygotskian Perspective*, I asked Jim if he would be willing to review the manuscript and write up a short promotional blurb for the publisher. He agreed and wrote a nice review for the back cover. But in a private email exchange he also engaged more critically with what I was saying in the book. His take away, at least as I noted down and what has stuck with me ever since as an aspirational goal, was that while at first he thought I was continuing down the line of using SCT to interpret interactions otherwise analyzed using CA methods, he subsequently understood that I was proposing CA as a way of understanding SCT-driven praxis (e.g., DA and concept-based language instruction), a view that I had not explicitly articulated. And that comment, made in a simple email exchange with Jim, is the reason I started arguing for the use of CA "as one of several analytic tools to be used in the service of our [i.e., SCT researchers] larger research goals" by "leveraging CA's focus on the organization of action at the microinteractional level as a means of examining such processes as mediation and microgenesis as they occur between people" (van Compernolle, 2016, p. 177). In other words, this is CA specifically *for* SCT research. This more active stance toward using CA in the service

of SCT, both as a *method* for data analysis and often as *source for pedagogical design* has been central to my work and the work carried out by several of my doctoral students ever since (Adams, 2020; Ballesteros Soria, 2022; DeSalvo, 2024; Dolce, 2019; Johnson, 2024). Thanks, Jim!

Mediation as the Social Action of Action Ascription

Let us now turn to some empirical examples of the way in which CA-for-SCT can help us understand the nature of mediation in interaction. Building on Drew's (2022) argument that action ascription is itself a form of social action, my argument is that interventions made by a mediator in interaction—the kinds of graduated and contingent forms of assistance discussed above—demonstrate mediators' real-time analyses of learners' prior turns and their moment-to-moment reasoning and decision making with regard to suspected sources of trouble during a task and possible next actions for guiding learners toward a solution. While I follow CA's heavily empiricist approach to data analysis, including the avoidance of psychologizing intentions, feelings, and so on, it is important to remember that just as third-party analysts cannot directly observe inside-the-head processes, neither can the interactants themselves as they negotiate action trajectories in real time. What we can observe, and what interactants actually attend to, are the externalized behaviors that respond to prior turns-at-talk and project possible next actions. This is what Maynard (2006) referred to as "cognition on the ground" (p. 106; van Compernolle, 2016)—thinking processes externalized in real-time interaction. Thus, while the idea of analyzing mediation as social action may appear at first blush to eschew a psychological orientation to human behavior, we are in fact deeply committed to understanding cognitive processes as they are manifested between people during developmental activity, a position that to my mind aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) genetic law of development, which asserts that psychological processes first appear between people as inter-mental (i.e., social) actions before they are internalized as intra-mental actions.

A first example is provided in excerpt 2. The excerpt is taken from data collected for my doctoral work (van Compernolle, 2012, 2014) on concept-based pragmatics instruction. Here, the student, Pierre (P), and his mediator (M) are collaborating on an appropriateness judgment task (AJT) in which Pierre is asked to choose between the French second-person pronouns *tu* and *vous* in a series of social situations and to explain his reasoning in relation to the concepts of self-presentation, social distance, and power that he has been learning. Pierre and the mediator are sitting at a conference table with the AJT, pedagogical diagrams depicting the concepts as images, and concept cards that explain the concepts in written form (figure 1). The situation they are working on is an interaction between Pierre, a college student, and a middle-aged woman who is the director of a study abroad program Pierre would like to participate in. Lines are interest are designated by an arrow in the transcript, beginning at line 24.

Figure 1

Pierre and Mediator Sitting at the Conference Table
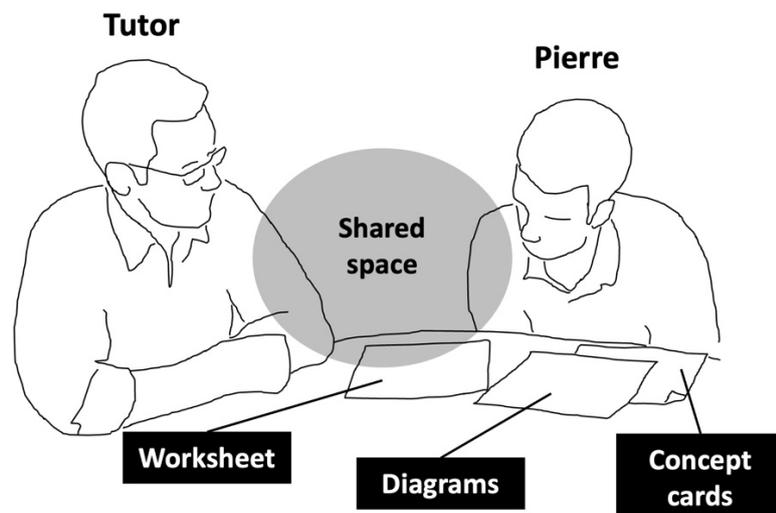
Excerpt 2.

```
01    M:    wh_at about the second one.
02          (7.5)
03    P:    U:m. (2.5) I: wou::ld, u(h):se, vou:s,
04          (0.4)
05          in that case.
06          (0.6)
07          o↑ne, b↓ecau::se (1.4) °(it) doesn't say tha::t
08          (1.2) #I: I don-# I'm just kinda under the
09          impr_ession that I haven't m_et her befo::re,°
10    M:    m(h)Hm,
11    P:    a:::nd (0.4) #u:m (0.2) even like# (.) the
12          d_istance. is like. #fa:r.# (0.4) too.
13          i- it's just like (1.4) I haven't m_e::t you:::,
14          like- and she::'s i- in ch_ar:ge of: (.)
15          she's a progr_am dire_ctor, so she obviously
16          has some (0.4) kind of authority,
17    M:    m(h)Hm,
18    P:    and so I would use VOUS. in that case.
19          to just be respectful,
20          (cuz) like she's taking time to like (0.2)
21          ca:ll me for an interview too:.
22          so you'd wanna be:: (.) #make sure that like
23          you're poli:te, (.) a::nd grateful for her time.#
24  → M:    okay. an: whadda-
25          but what is that [also poi:nting to. {right,
26          ((Directs gaze at P))}
27    P:                    [((Leans back in chair and faces M))
28          UM::
29  → M:    cuz remember re- resp↑ect, is {kind of (0.6) ((Leans
30          back in chair facing P))}
31          this outside judgment. that people make on things.
32          (0.4)
33          but what is it (0.4) do_ing.
34    P:    it's (0.6) #um:# (3.2) {°sSh(h)i:: p(h)° ((Glances down
35          in the direction of diagrams))}
36  → M:    we:ll, {think about your diagra[ms.      ] ((Gestures
37          toward diagrams))}
38    P:                                    [#yeah.#. ]=
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```
39 →  M:     =espe:cially {<the: se::con:::d a:::n> yeah.
40            two and three:: here.
41            I mean: what are you (0.4) °hHe (.) rip that ap↑art,°
42            ((Grabs diagrams and pulls out staples to arrange
43            two pages in front of P))}
44    P:     {um::: ((Leans forward over diagrams))}
45 →  M:     I mean: whadda y- what are you: do::ing.=which can
46            the::n be interpreted as respect. or whate:ver.
47    P:     um:: (2.0) I think. this, (.) suit and tie:: (0.4)
48            making yourself. (.) professional::
49 →  M:     okay,
```

Lines 1-23 shows Pierre's initial response to the AJT. The mediator's only contribution at this point is to provide two continuers (ll. 10, 17) that allow Pierre to expand his response. In line 24, though, the mediator begins to intervene. An important question is: why intervene here? Let's return to the continuers offered in lines 10 and 17. Note that they are interjected at the end of turn constructional units (TCUs), the basic building blocks of turns-at-talk that are lexically, grammatically, or pragmatically "complete" and therefore mark possible transition relevance places (TRPs) where a next speaker could begin a new turn. However, both of Pierre's prior turns end in slightly rising intonation (i.e., *befo::re,* in l. 9 and *authority,* in l. 16), which can be heard as part of a yet-to-be-completed turn. Indeed, the *m(h)Hm,* in lines 10 and 17 show the mediator's analysis of Pierre's priors turns as not yet complete, and allowing him to expand his response may reasonably be analyzed as best suiting the mediator's interactional purpose (Drew, 2022): performing an initial assessment of Pierre's reasoning behind the choice of *vous* in this situation. What is different in the mediator's initiation of a mediation sequence (van Compernolle, 2013, 2015) in line 23 is that it demonstrates an analysis of Pierre's prior turn as projecting a response closure, as evidenced by the final falling intonation of *a::nd grateful for her time.* in line 23.

So, what kind of intervention, or graduated and contingent assistance, is oriented to as relevant by the mediator? Initially, there is a rather implicit or strategic intervention asking Pierre to consider what his choice is *poi:nting to.* (l. 25), which solicits only an *UM::* (l. 26) from Pierre, analyzed as insufficient knowledge by the mediator when he offers a short explanation and recasts his assistance as the question: *but what is it (0.4) doing.* (ll. 29-33). This is a form of action ascription—ascribing to Pierre's *UM::* the action of claiming insufficient knowledge. Note that Pierre's turn in lines 34-35 is also analyzed as problematic in the sense that he is unable to articulate a response. However, and importantly, he also directs his gaze at the concept diagrams in front of him, indicating that he knows where a possible solution may be found. The mediator picks up on this, acknowledging that the diagrams are the appropriate mediating artifacts to solve the problem at hand, and then continues to provide Pierre support in appropriately using them to articulate a satisfactory solution to the problem (ll. 36-49). The point here is that the mediator's interactional agenda was to lead Pierre to use the diagrams, and therefore the pedagogical concepts around which the teaching was centered, in order to complete the task, but this only became possible through the moment-to-moment analysis and assessment of Pierre's turns-at-talk and ascribing relevant actions to those turns in a way that best suited his instructional goals.

A similar example is provided in excerpt 3, taken from the same study. Here, the student, Conrad (CO), and the mediator are discussing a *tu/vous* choice with a new classmate. While

Conrad has previously selected the normatively appropriate *tu* form, his response is oriented to as insufficient. The mediator begins to intervene in line 49, focusing on the *meaning* (l. 50) of Conrad's choice rather than the category of person (e.g., classmate, student) and a rule of thumb (cf. Conrad's rule of thumb in l. 45). Then, as in the previous example with Pierre, the mediator moves to explicitly orient to the pedagogical diagrams as the appropriate resource for solving the problem (ll. 57-69; figure 2). Note here that mediator appears to analyze Conrad's turn in line 55 as a lack of understanding, which therefore makes relevant the somewhat explicit strategy of pointing to and arranging the pedagogical diagrams in front of Conrad, which in turn leads Conrad and the mediator to collaboratively construct a response to the task that is deemed appropriate by the mediator inasmuch as it centers the pedagogical concepts and diagrams.

Excerpt 3.

```
43    CO:    =you know. he's a classmate.
44           (.)
45           and in general, if i was talking with classmate
46           i'd use (0.6) tu.
47           (0.4)
48           yea- i- so i see him y- (0.2)
49  → M:     but again, why.=
50           =what's that <mea:ning>.
51           (.)
52           it's not the examples,
53           it's not the types of peo↑ple, right?,
54           (0.6)
55    CO:    it's (0.2) th[e type of peo-] relationship.
56    M:                  [(            )]
57  →        li↑teral↓ly (.) {all you have to do really,
58           is follow (0.6) ((figure 2))} first whadda y- (.)
59           what's the choices. (.) that you have to make.
60           (0.4)
61           first of all::,
62           (.)
63    CO:    °um°=
64    M:     =how do you wanna be around this guy.
65           (0.2)
66    CO:    right. (.) so um: (0.2) i'm deciding that
67           i wanna be (.) #um# (0.4) more friendly around him?,
68           (0.2)
69    M:     or: just tee shirt and jeans type, (0.2)
70    CO:    right.=
71    M:     =cuz you don't have to,
72           if you don't want to,
73    CO:    right. right.
74    M:     °right?,°
75    CO:    so then i'm um (.)
76    M:     okay. and so the se[cond,]
77    CO:                       [it's ] also: (.)
78           by doing that i'm also deciding that (.)
79           i'm being more (.) close with him,
80    M:     right,
81    CO:    and then i'm also deciding that we are like (.)
82           on equal:: (0.2) ground.
83    M: right. yeah.
```

Figure 2

Mediator Orienting to Pedagogical Diagrams
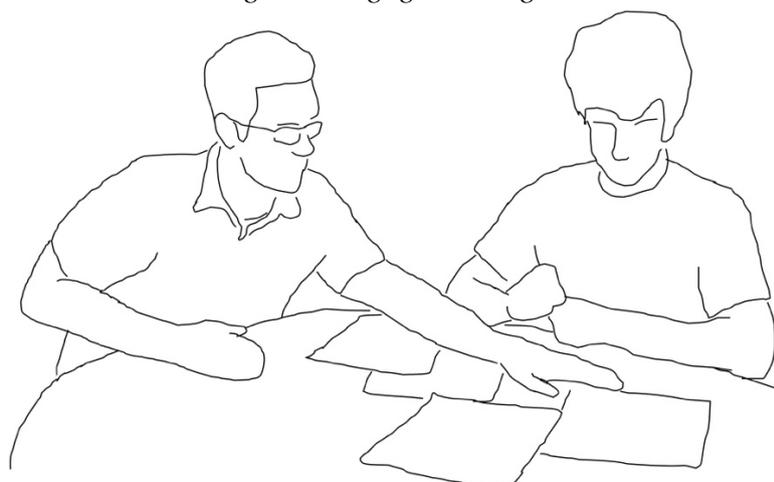
An example of L2 spoken discourse is provided in excerpt 4 and is also taken from my doctoral research. Here, a student and teacher are engaged in a dynamic strategic interaction scenario task (van Compernolle, 2014, 2015) in which they have previous planned for the sociolinguistic register appropriate for the scenario (two friends searching for a new apartment to rent). During the performance, the student uses the formal form of negation involving the preverbal particle *ne* (l. 8), which is contrary to the plan she discussed, where dropping the *ne* was seen as preferable since it is rarely used in everyday informal speech. The mediator hears this and begins to intervene in line 9 with a tilted head and raised eyebrow. It is unclear if the student saw the mediator's nonverbal behavior, but she continues with her utterance until the mediator begins a verbal intervention in line 13. This follow up shows his analysis of the student's prior utterance as having not seen or attended to his nonverbal behavior.

What is interesting about this example is how the mediator initially orients to the student's use of *ne* as an error to be corrected since there would be no other reason to stop the interaction (the utterance is grammatically correct). Note however how this orientation shifts following the student's explanation in line 20 that she is attempting to stress or emphasize the negation, which was a sociolinguistic concept and appropriate use of *ne* that she had been learning about. Here, the mediation shifts from a morphosyntactic focus to a prosodic focus (ll. 23-27), where the mediator assesses the learner's need for an explanation and appropriate modeling of the *delivery* of her utterance rather than its form. The mediator's *ok↑a:y. so* in line 22, followed by an initial repetition with prosodic stress of the student's original utterance, provides evidence of the mediator's shift in focus and demonstrates action ascription: the student's explanation in line 20 is ascribed the action of accounting for the use of *ne*.

Excerpt 4. (Source: van Compernolle, 2015, pp. 36-37)

```
7     St:    #↓cher.# (.) ok↑ay. (0.4) il est très cher.
               Expensive  okay     it is very expensive
8            e :t (.) >je n'ai pas< l'argent pour ça.
             And    I [neg] have not the money for that
9   → T:     {.h (h)↑m, ((tilts  head down to the right
10           with left eyebrow raised))}
```

```
11                    (0.8)
12    St:    #pour le::s a(h):[:# ]
                for  the    ah
13 → T:                  {[wh]a↑t did y- ((makes
14            "rewind" gesture))}
15            <wha↑t did you want to say,
16    St:    #I don:'t have the mone:y for it.#
17 → T:    okay, (.) do you {wanna: ((makes rewind gesture))}
18                    (0.4)
19    St:    <j:e: ne::: °pl-° n'ai: pa::s l'argent,>=
                I    [neg] (pl)  [neg] have not the money
20            =>because I'm stressing that like<
21            I d↓o:n't #have the# °mone[y for the apartment°]
22    T:                              [o k ↑ a: y.   s o  ]
23 →          <je ↑n'ai: p↓a:s=
              I [neg] have not
24    St:    =#ye:ah.
25 → T:    you wanna stress that w[ith  yo]ur voice als↑o,
26    St:                          [ok↑ay. ]
27 → T:    <say it like (0.8) je ↑N'AI p↓a:s
                              I [neg] have not
28    St :  #yeah.#
29    T :   l'argent pour [ça.   ]
            the money for that
30    St:                  [okay.] (I w-) je n'ai: pa:s
                                    I [neg] have not
31            ((laughs)) l'argent. (.) pour #uh# (cet)
                the money     for   uh  this
32            appartement.
              Apartment
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The excerpts presented above provide illustrative examples of the way we can see mediation as action ascription in interaction by foregrounding the mediator's response to the prior turns of learners as an analysis of what actions they *could* possibly project. The response therefore demonstrates the social action of selecting from among several possible options an understanding of the turn that best suits his interactional objective (Drew, 2022) as he reasons his way through the interaction. This kind of analysis of cognition on the ground (Maynard, 2006; van Compernolle, 2016) focuses our attention as analysts on the inter-mental activity of mediators and learners as they negotiate the "meaning and functional significance" (Wertsch, 2007, p. 186) of the mediational means available to them (e.g., language forms, concepts). It also has the potential to help us understand the ways in which mediation may be graduated and contingent, not based on an a priori set of mediator moves but as a continuous process of action ascription that is dialogically negotiated from moment to moment. Indeed, this approach seems to me to provide a strong empirical grounding for the original argument made by Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) three decades ago and has ever since informed research on L2 interaction within SCT.

Discussion
I want to revisit the idea of CA-*for*-SCT in relation to the data excerpts presented above and offer some commentary on the ways in which the approach has informed additional L2 SCT research. As noted earlier, developing an understanding of mediation as the social action of action ascription is a way of using CA in the service of our SCT research prerogatives. In this

article, I have focused on how we might understand and provide a rigorous empirical account of the negotiation of graduated and contingent assistance. Moreover, the examples I have presented were taken from SCT-driven research, in this case, my doctoral work that explored concept-based pragmatics instruction (van Compernolle, 2012, 2014). The goal of CA-for-SCT in this research has been to understand the microinteractional mechanisms involved in guiding students to use the sociopragmatics concepts such as self-presentation, social distance, power, and emphasis to mediate the selection of relevant pragmalinguistic resources for their communicative purposes (e.g., second-person pronouns *tu/vous*, *ne* in negation). In other words, it is a method for elucidating the inter-mental actions that precede and may lead to the internalization of the concepts as intra-mention actions.

In my view, understanding inter-mental actions as the product of a series of turn-by-turn action ascriptions helps us to focus on the dialogicity of graduated and contingent interaction as proposed in Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) rather than seeing mediation as an action done solely *by* a mediator *to* a learner. In addition, because it is a way of conducting analyses of cognition on the ground (Maynard, 2006; van Compernolle, 2016), it serves to bolster the Vygotskian approach to understanding the unity of the social and the psychological. In other words, while we can and should approach the analysis of interactive discourse as social action, an emphasis on action ascription compels us to understand these social actions as both the tool and result of cognitive processes taking place in the moment-to-moment negotiation of turns-at-talk as interactants in a very real sense are trying to read each other's minds as they figure their way through an interaction in real time.

I want to turn attention now to a second generation of CA-for-SCT research spearheaded by several of my doctoral students that goes beyond using CA as an analytic tool and integrates its concepts and findings in L2 praxis. The distinction from the first generation is an important one because while my previous work (e.g., van Compernolle, 2014) was certainly an example of praxis—the unity of theory and practice (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014)—the use of CA was secondary inasmuch as its application was to data analysis after the study had been conducted. The second generation integrates CA as part of the research design from the outset, including as part of the kinds of pedagogical interventions that characterizes SCT's commitment to praxis.

A first example is the study by Dolce (2019). He used CA concepts and sample analyses as the basis of a teacher education intervention focused on expanding discourse options in advanced L2 Mandarin classroom interaction. In this sense, CA became a mediating artifact as the two instructors Dolce worked with learned how to conduct action-ascription-based analyses of their own classroom interactions, to identify how their turn-taking management afforded and constrained student discourse and learning opportunities, and eventually to change their strategies for interacting in ways that Dolce was able to pinpoint—using CA as a data analytic tool—as effective for creating better learning opportunities for their students.

A second example is a study by Ballesteros Soria (2022) that focused on using CA concepts in conjunction with DSIS tasks to develop L2 Spanish learners' interactional repertoires, with specific focus on practices for turn-taking and active listenership. In this way, CA provided the pedagogical content for a semester-long enrichment program as well as serving as the analytic lens through which to document L2 development over time during metacommunicative tasks and communicative performances. Ballesteros Soria's findings are encouraging for two

primary reasons. First, there is clear evidence that L2 learners are capable of recognizing turn-taking practices and incorporating them into their own interactions, but this requires the explicit teaching of CA concepts so that they become visible to learners. Second, improvements in learner performances did not take much time to observe. In fact, and as shown in van Compernolle and Ballesteros Soria (2022), because different student groups performed DSISs in the same class meeting, they were able to build on each other and integrate feedback from the teacher and classmates almost immediately in some cases. This suggests that development can be evoked in a relatively short period of time, an important finding for teachers and other educators who may be interested in integrating such pedagogical arrangements into their curricula but are concerned with time constraints.

Conclusion

As research in this domain continues, a greater focus on understanding of mediation as action ascription has the potential shed light on several questions. First, can we identify common interactive practices or action sequences in which mediation is negotiated? Second, how does action ascription develop for mediators and learners who work together for an extended period (e.g., several tasks, longitudinally)? Exploring these questions may provide much need insights for designing SCT research and engaging in L2 praxis in which mediation in interaction is a central component.

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