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Learner pragmatics at the discourse level: Staying "on topic" in a telecollaborative eTandem task

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ABSTRACT

The present paper examines topic management in the task-based interactions of German learners of English and their Irish English speaking partners. Specifically, the paper explores the resources employed by speakers to maintain cohesion in talk while transitioning topics via announcement turns. Two resources for maintaining cohesion are explored in detail: co-class membership relations and contrast relations. The quantitative results suggest that learners employ similar resources to the NS. The qualitative results reveal areas on the level of linguistic realisation of topic transitioning turns where learners exhibit some difficulty in alignment and in the use of discourse connectives.

Data for the present study is drawn from Language LINC, a corpus of telecollaborative eTandem interactions. Methodologically, the present paper applies tools from conversation analysis (CA) in a sequentially sensitive analysis of the collection of announcements. In addition to a careful qualitative analysis of each case, a quantitative analysis is presented in order to uncover variation in the methods employed by the learners as opposed to the expert speakers. This mixed method approach is considered with respect to its place in the CA research tradition (Stivers, 2015) and its fit for analyses of authentic, consequential interactions in the interlanguage pragmatic tradition.

Keywords: topic management, topic transitions, topic transitioning resources, announcements, mixed methods, telecollaboration, computer mediated communication

1. Introduction

Demonstrating an understanding of what an interlocutor has just said and providing a topically related next turn is a basic conversational skill. As Wong and Waring (2010, p. 103) put it, topic management is a "vital interactional practice that enable[s] us to partake,

appreciate, and take pleasure in the full experience of a conversation". Studies of language learners and their ability to engage topically, however, have often shown learners to fall short of their native speaking (NS) partners, being passive in terms of topic initiations (cf. e.g. Iwata, 2010; Long, 1983; Wilkinson, 2002), treating topics more briefly and superficially (cf. e.g. Iwata, 2010; Long, 1981; Meierkord, 2000), and choosing safe or uncontroversial topics (cf. e.g. Meierkord, 1998). A few studies, in contrast, have revealed learner participants to be interactionally competent in their topic management behaviour. Morris-Adams (2014), for example, finds learners to initiate topic to a similar extent as their NS partners. Additionally, proficiency and increased opportunities for interaction outside the classroom have been suggested to have a positive effect on topic management behaviour (cf. Barron & Black, 2015; Schwienhorst, 2004).

Broe (2003, p. 181) asserts that, "the achievement of conversational coherence is one of the main tasks speakers face when engaging in conversations." A number of methods of accomplishing a topic change (in which a boundary exists between two unrelated topics) or maintaining coherence in a topic transition (in which a new topic displays connection to the previous) (cf. Section 2.1), have been identified in the topic management practices of language learners. Among these, questions have been extensively investigated (e.g. Black, 2017; Iwata, 2010; Long, 1981; Morris-Adams, 2014; Schwienhorst, 2004) with various insights uncovered. Topic changes, and resources employed by learners to initiate topic changes, have also seen a fair amount of attention (e.g. Black, 2017; König, 2013; Morris-Adams, 2016). In terms of topic transitions, the most extensive exploration comes in Morris-Adams (2014), who identifies questions and announcements, lexical repetition or propositional links, and intercultural comparisons as resources employed by both learners

and NS to move conversation forward in a coherent fashion in everyday conversations. In this study, learners were found competent in their employment of the identified resources as compared to the native speakers (NS). Similarly, the present paper will focus on resources employed in topic transitions to maintain coherence; in contrast to Morris-Adams (2014), however, the data examined are task-oriented conversations. In these conversations, the focus will be on announcements – statements providing information presumed by the speaker to be news to the recipient (cf. Button & Casey, 1988; Maynard, 1980). Announcements are identified by Morris-Adams (2014) as effective in generating more talk while allowing the speaker to control the ensuing topical talk. Otherwise, announcements in the topic management practices of learners represent a research gap.

Research on topic management varies widely in terms of methodology, but has largely focused on elicited small talk, or naturally-occurring talk in daily life (e.g. Dings, 2007; Eerdmans & Di Candia, 2007; Garcia Garcia, 2015; Iwata, 2010; König, 2013; Long, 1981; Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984; Morris-Adams, 2013, 2014, 2016; Tryggvason, 2004; Wilkinson, 2002). The current study examines naturally occurring student interactions that were arranged as part of university level language classes. As part of a language classroom, the educational setting of the talk sets the data apart from the above studies; particularly in that the conversations are based on a task intended to elicit discussion on a controversial topic.

The literature examining topic management in the genre of educational task talk involving second language learners is scarce. Heyman (1986) explores topic formulations (descriptions/characterisations of the ongoing conversation) by teachers and students in an elementary school science lesson. The analysis looks at whole class interaction as the class

navigates a task in discussion with the teacher. Other investigations focus on topical boundaries: Hellermann (2007), for example, examines student openings to teacher-assigned tasks revealing that, over time, students move from using the language provided by the teacher to later demonstrating various strategies for establishing an interlocutor and launching the assigned task (see also Hellermann, 2006). In a further longitudinal investigation, Hellermann and Cole (2008) investigate one student's longitudinal development in task disengagements, showing subtle changes in the student's interactional routines over time. Finally, focussing on topic transitions and topic changes within the boundaries of a language learning discussion task between NS and learners, Black (2017) examines the employment of questions as topic transitioning and topic changing moves. The present study aims to contribute to this scant body of literature on topic management in an educational task setting with a focus on resources employed by participants to maintain cohesion in topic transitioning moves.

Announcements in the present study are identified in Skype conversations recorded between Irish English native speakers and German learners of English. Although guided by a discussion topic, students were given the freedom to discuss that topic as they wanted. The resulting data does not exhibit the high level of control attainable in more traditional methods employed in interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), such as Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) or role-plays (cf. e.g. Félix-Brasdefer & Hasler-Barker, 2017). Thus, the recordings held no guarantee that there would be sufficient occurrences of any particular phenomenon for analysis and, instead, the present analytical focus was developed inductively from close readings of the data following Conversation Analytic methodology. Conversation Analysis (CA) deals with each utterance in its sequential context, considering the contributions of all

interactants and how, they achieve (or not) joint action. It was here used in the examination of the collective achievement of cohesion in the topic transitioning moves, with the aim of identifying the resources employed by the learners and NS to achieve coherent topic transitions. Quantitative data will supplement this qualitative analysis, providing insight into the distribution of the topic transitioning resources between learners and NS.

The following paper focusses on coherence relations in announcement topic transitioning turns within a language learning discussion task. It begins with a definition of *topic* with an emphasis on topic transitions and coherence relations. The corpus will then be described with a focus on the sub-corpus used in the present analysis. CA will be presented as the primary method and will be discussed in relation to the mixed methods approach (Creswell, J. W., Plano-Clark, V. L., Gutmann, M. L., & Hanson, W. E. 2003) that involves quantification alongside a deeper qualitative CA analysis. The quantitative analysis will then be presented, followed by the qualitative analysis of co-class and contrast relations in announcements and accompanying discussion.

2. Topic

The following section will first define *topic* before the focus turns to topic transitions in particular and, subsequently, potential coherence relations involved in topical talk.

2.1 Defining topic

The present paper will examine participants who are discussing a 'topic' predefined by the discussion task. The analysis, however, is concerned not with this discussion topic but, rather, with how participants are going about continuing talk on the pre-established topic.

Topic can be varyingly defined and operationalised. In local, sentential senses of topic (cf. e.g. van Dijk, 1977), the sentential topic is determined via "word-order, specific morphemes or phrases, stress and intonation" (ibid., p. 50) and is the (noun) phrase that a sentence can be said to be about. A sentential notion of topic can also be mobilised to define topic on a discourse level where topic is defined as a linear series of references to a particular (main) discourse referent (cf. e.g. McLaughlin, 1984; van Dijk, 1977). Such approaches are also reflected in the top-down approach to coherence as developed in *discourse analysis* (e.g. Brown & Yule, 1983) where "topic organisation is connected to the notion of *aboutness*" (Geluykens, 1999, p. 35). Proponents of this 'about' approach to topic operationalise topic as 'talk on a nameable topic'.

In contrast to these approaches, Sacks (1992) envisions topic as an emergent feature born from the preference that each utterance be coherent with the preceding utterance – where participants design each utterance to fit that which came before (Holt & Drew, 2005, p. 41), that is, participants *do* staying on topic. As Sacks (1992, p. 762) puts it, "[t]alking topically constitutes ways of talking which involve attention to 'topical coherence.'" The present paper takes this view of topic – topic as expressed in the coherence relations between one utterance and the next, with a focus on how topic transitioning turns achieve a shift of topic while maintaining a fit to the prior talk. Most studies on the discourse or pragmatic level that follow this 'action' approach focus on topical boundaries: i.e. where topics are introduced (cf. e.g. Button & Casey, 1985; Geluykens, 1999), changed (cf. e.g. Maynard, 1980; Morris-Adams, 2016), closed down (cf. e.g. Antaki, 2002; Holt, 2010), or temporarily suspended in order to deal with some other business (cf. e.g. Morris-Adams, 2013; Stokoe, 2000). Terminology for the boundary point at which a topic changes varies in the literature. In the current study the

umbrella term *topic shift* is further divided into *topic changes* and *topic transitions* (Barron & Black, 2015; Morris-Adams, 2014). Topic changes are clearly boundaried (Button & Casey, 1984) and maintain no coherence relations with the previous utterance/topic. The boundary that is the change in topic may be marked with discourse markers such as 'so', 'anyway', 'by the way', etc., or, the change may be disjunct, occurring without recognisable closure of the previous topic (Morris-Adams, 2016, p. 5). Topic transitions, the focus of the present paper, do not exhibit clear boundaries, but maintain coherence with the previous topic/utterance.

2.2 Operationalising topic: Topic transitions

Topic transitions have been defined in the literature as: occurring "when topics are shifted in a gradual and coherent manner resulting in a smooth conversational flow over one or more turns" (Morris-Adams, 2016, p. 3). This 'smooth conversational flow' emerges from the tendency for participants to "link each new matter to the previous such that a range of matters may be discussed without any overt termination of one prior to the introduction of a next" (Holt & Drew, 2005, p. 41). This is demonstrated in Excerpt (1) where the questions 'When was Uber (the car service) introduced into Germany?' (line 1) and 'who is the company who has Uber, is it Google?' (lines 4-5) are topic transitions. The stretch of conversation before the example has been concerning Uber and these questions function to expand this prior talk by initiating further talk on one particular aspect of that which came before. Uber remains as a propositional connection and different aspects of the greater topic, Uber, are explored with each subsequent question. Though Uber remains as a consistent propositional connection here, following this excerpt this propositional connection shifts to Google, then satellite

images of the students' homes on Google Maps, and so on. The sense of the stretch of conversation being *about* Uber, thus, quickly falls apart, but the overall coherence exhibited in the connections between one turn and the next remains intact.

EXCERPT 1 Uber

1	→	I146:		How ↑when was (.) Uber introduced (.) into Germany.
2			(0.8)	
3	→	G146:		G146: Ah (.) I am (.) do not really know¿ (1.2) Ahm
4				(0.4) tch (.) Who is the the company who s- who (.) ah:
5	→			(1.3) has Uber is it Googl:e? (0.3) Right? Or or.
6			(0.8)	
7		I146:		Ah: I think so? (2.3) I'm not sure I don't know.=
8		G146:		=Yeah.
9		I146:		To be honest.

Stokoe (2000, p. 195) states that:

> "[t]reating topics as discrete, identifiable units is problematic because defining topics is highly subjective and may be different for all the participants, as well as for the analyst. Most topics do not have identifiable boundaries; topics flow with indistinguishable breaks and several can be pursued simultaneously."

The operationalisation of topic transitions is challenging particularly because of this gradual, coherent shifting from one topic to another without any termination; boundaries between topics are difficult to precisely determine. The literature is united on the difficulty of identifying topic transitions but largely vague on the exact identification of them beyond statements such as topic transitions being "found to contain an element of coherence with the ongoing talk" (Morris-Adams, 2014, p. 154). Some studies do describe specific devices that

can be employed in the work of tying each turn to the previous and maintaining coherence. Jefferson (1984), for example, names the pivotal utterance, which remains recognisably on topic, but that simultaneously has its own topical potential (see also figurative pivots in Holt & Drew, 2005). Similarly, Eerdmans and Di Candia (2007) outline idiomatic expressions as a potential signal for an upcoming topic transition.

In order to identify transitioning turns more generally, the current study takes a turn-by-turn approach. In CA terms, conversation is constructed using a basic, sequential building block - the adjacency pair (AP), that can be expanded in a number of ways[1]. Each subsequent (expanded) adjacency pair sequence in the present conversational data is identified and examined in order to identify the cohesion strategies used to connect it with that which came prior. Instances where a new AP sequence is boundaried and bears no apparent propositional relation to the prior sequence are considered topic changes, while instances where a relation is apparent are considered topic transitions, the focus of the present paper. Certainly, this approach contains an element of 'aboutness' in the identification of coherence relations from one AP to the next. The discrete units, however, are identified based on sequential relations inherent in the AP sequence. The procedure for identifying topic transitions can be seen in Excerpt (1), where the first topic transition, at line 1, is a question that functions as a first pair part (FPP). The second pair part (SPP) answer comes at line 3 and, in this case, this is

[1] The adjacency pair (AP) is a basic sequence composed of two turns at talk: the first pair part (FPP) and the second pair part (SPP). The FPP is an action that sets up the expectation that the SPP will be produced, "given the first, the second is expectable; upon its non-occurrence it can be seen to be officially absent" (Schegloff, 1968, p. 1083). A question, for example, sets up the expectation that a response will follow. The AP can be expanded in various ways. A pre-expansion does preliminary work for the FPP, a pre-invitation can, for example, determine if the invitee will be available. An insert-expansion can initiate repair of the FPP or be itself preliminary to the SPP. A post-expansion can offer a reaction or response to the SPP and may also initiate a post-expansion sequence (cf. e.g. Sidnell, 2010)

the end of the sequence – there are no further expansions. The next AP sequence begins at line 4 with the next question. This AP sequence features a minor post expansion in the form of a third position response token at line 8. This represents a very restricted view of topic, considering the slight shift of focus from one AP to the next to represent a topic transition. Simultaneously, however, a much broader view of topic is mobilised. The discussion task itself is considered the superordinate unit of analysis, hereafter referred to as the macro topic, and within the boundaries of this macro topic (women in management, cf. Section 3.1.2), topic changing FPPs and topic transitioning FPPs are identified. These FPPs can be questions or announcements, the latter of which is the present focus.

2.2.1 *Announcements*

Announcements are "items which are produced as a report by some deliverer as not known to some recipient" (Maynard, 1980, p. 283), and are then "interactionally ratified by the recipient as news to them" (Terasaki, 2004, p. 213). In elicited conversations between English NS, Maynard (1980) found announcements to be more common as topic changing moves among acquainted participants, while questions were more common among unacquainted participants. Announcements are self-oriented in nature and allow the speaker to maintain control of topic development with varying levels of engagement from the hearer. Campion and Langdon (2004) contend that announcements are candidate topics, which become ratified topics when acknowledged by the interlocutor. Announcements are a FPP, inviting an acknowledgement, at the least, as a SPP response (Stivers, 2013). Further development is determinable by the hearer's response, which can be a simple acknowledgement, a more

interactional assessment, or a topic developing (transitioning) question (see Excerpt 1, line 4-5), or an announcement that begins a new AP sequence (cf. Section 2.2.2) (Maynard, 1980).

2.2.2 *Cohesion resources*

Resources employed by speakers in the FPP announcements that further develop the prior AP sequence were examined and categorised in an inductive fashion. Two such resources, *co-class members* and *contrast relations*, are the focus of the following analysis. They are not to be understood as discrete categories, as in any one utterance a speaker may be seen to be drawing on one or more of the identified cohesion resources. Additionally, the two categories do not encompass all topic transitioning moves identified in the data. They were, however, among the most prevalent.

The first of these resources is the *co-class member*. Sacks (1992, p. 768) argues that

> [o]ne routine task of participants to a conversation is to be able to show that they understood something another said. (…) And one large source of things to be used to show that one understands are 'things you already know about,' i.e., things that you are reminded of.

This seems an intuitive reality of conversation. One can easily imagine the moment in conversation where one thinks 'oh that reminds me of…' and the conversation then turns to that thing you were reminded of. These moves belong to a category of moves that Sacks (1992, p. 757) calls co-class members, arguing that

> In fact, one of the most general ways that attention to topic is done is via the use of co-class membership. It's a perfectly obvious sort of thing, once one sees it, by virtue of reasons like: The various objects that are members of lists of classes can have co-class membership as the most obvious way in which any given items may be related, where, then, presenting a second after a first, one shows some attention to the first.

A class may be, for example, ‘things you did last night’. Thus, in a case where one speaker says ‘I went to the movies last night’ it is perfectly plausible – and topically cohesive – for the next speaker to respond with ‘I had to work last night’. Both utterances are obvious in their membership to the class ‘things you did last night’. Morris-Adams (2014) refers to co-class members also as ‘parallels’ (pp. 159, 161–2) and ‘associative shifts of focus’ (pp. 154, 159), although not in specific reference to announcements. She also identifies ‘intercultural comparisons’ within a category she labels ‘interpersonal strategies’; they involve comparisons between countries or cultures, or indeed, personal experiences of countries or cultures. Morris-Adams (2014, pp. 161–3) observes this particular subset of co-class relations as being mobilised by both learners and NS as a resource for topic development in conversation.

The second category of cohesion resources identified are *contrast relations*. These are transitioning turns that set up a contrast between the previous contribution and the one that the speaker is about to offer. These transitioning turns are explicitly marked as contrasting and begin with a but-preface, or other similar discourse connective, such as ‘on the other hand’. In these cases, the conjunction ‘but’ can be employed to link turns rather than to link units within a turn. Such a “sequential conjunction gives an indication of the current turn’s relationship to the preceding talk” (Mazeland & Huiskes, 2001, p. 142). The conjunction can also come after what is a direct response to, or acknowledgement of, the previous turn and introduces the speaker’s new, contrasting contribution. Speakers then follow this initial contrast set-up with a further explanation or solution supporting their pole of the marked contrast. Ford (2000, p. 285) finds that “contrasts are treated as needing resolution in subsequent talk; that is, they are regular building blocks for larger actions

involving explanations or solutions for problematic states of affairs." Jung (2009) distinguished between sequential and propositional contrast in her analysis of conversations between Korean learners of English and their American English partners. She found the learners to focus on the contrastive function of 'but' and use it accordingly – even when 'but' was used as a sequential marker. The NS participants, on the other hand, often employed the sequential 'but' to mark "the higher significance of the new subtopic than the preceding one" (Jung, 2009, p. 143), or the next step in topic development. In addition, when used to mark a contrast, the learners more often did so in an adversarial manner, while the NS tended towards but-prefaced statements that were attempts at alignment.

3. Methodology

The following sections describe both the greater corpus and the sub-corpus examined in the present study. Then, CA is outlined as the primary method and discussed in the context of the present mixed methods study design, which is a sequential exploratory design using quantitative methods to elaborate upon and assist in the interpretation of a qualitative analysis (QUAL→quan) (Creswell et al., 2003).

3.1 The corpus: Language LINC

Data for the present study comes from the Language LINC (Language Learners in Interaction Corpus) (Barron & Black, 2015; Black, 2017), a corpus of telecollaborative eTandem interactions between German learners of English at the Leuphana University of Lüneburg and Irish English learners of German at Trinity College Dublin. Tandem language learning partnerships bring together learners in reciprocal language learning relationships that

promote learner autonomy (cf. Brammerts, 1996; O'Rourke, 2007) and can range from relatively informal arrangements between friends/colleagues to formal partnerships organised as an integral part of a language classroom. In the present case, students from a language class at each university were paired for the duration of the semester and met approximately every second week for a total of five to six Skype meetings. Each student had a task to complete during their meetings; in one half of each meeting the German students completed their task in English and in the other half the Irish students completed their task in German. Students arranged the exact times and locations for their meetings on their own and recorded them using the freely available *Callnote* software, submitting their recordings to the researcher afterwards. While the meetings were all carried out via video call, students only voluntarily recorded the video portion of their calls. The resulting corpus is a mix of audio and video recordings.

The present analysis focuses on the German students' task in their third tandem session and, accordingly, the analysis is limited to the English portion of each recording. Focussing on a single task means that in each recording examined, students are discussing the same macro topic corresponding to the same task instructions. A total of five recordings exist for this particular task, three of which are audio only and two of which include the video recording. All five recordings were transcribed using CA conventions (see Appendix) and these audio transcripts form the basis of this study. Video recordings were not excluded from the analysis, but as they were not available for the entire data set, the focus is on the linguistic interactions with the acknowledgement that the reduction of the data may ignore relevant features of the topic management practices under discussion. The multimodal aspects available for analysis in the two video recordings provide material for further, in depth, case

study research on this subject. The English portion of these recordings ranges from 22 to 28 minutes in length for a total of 138 minutes, and the task portions of the conversations range from 12 to 27 minutes for a total of 100 minutes.

The discussion topic (macro topic) for this session, "The Taboo of Women in Management", asked students to discuss the merits of two positions and decide which position they agree with. On the one side is a hypothetical American company that offers numerous family-friendly employee benefits and working arrangements, but also has a practice of excluding female partners from accounts based in countries where women are not openly welcomed in the negotiation process. Assigning women to such accounts, the company claims, can mean losing the contract. On the other side, critics assert that change will never come about unless other business cultures are forced to adapt to standards such as those the company promotes on American soil. Students were asked to read the short text that outlined the situation and discuss the two positions with their partner. Instructions were purely task oriented with no additional language-related guidance.

3.2 The methodological approach: Mixed methods with a focus on conversation analysis

The methodological approach taken is a sequential exploratory design wherein quantitative methods elaborate upon and assist in the interpretation of results in what is otherwise a qualitative study (QUAL→quan) (Creswell et al., 2003). Qualitative methods are given priority with an emphasis "on description and with a thematic focus on understanding [the] central phenomenon" (ibid., p. 174). Quantitative results are considered secondary and give an overview of the participants and the similarities/differences between the learner and native

speaker groups. Importantly, quantitative results are not to be understood as having any statistical significance as the total numbers are too small to allow any statistical measures.

The qualitative analysis uses CA, which focusses on single case analysis[2] and deals with each individual utterance in its sequential context, considering the contributions of all interactants and how they achieve (or not) joint action. This qualitative approach is not always considered to be compatible with quantitative analyses. Schegloff (1993) cautions that one has to be very careful in the quantification of interaction, arguing that, "in examining large amounts of data, we are studying multiples or aggregates of single instances. Quantitative analysis is, in this sense, not an alternative to single case analysis, but rather is built on its back" (Schegloff, 1993, p. 102); thus any analytic claims must be grounded in qualitative analyses of the individual cases that make up the aggregate. An advantage of employing quantitative evidence in studies of interaction, as Stivers (2015, p. 8) asserts, is the ability to assess "relationships between interactional practices and/or between these practices and sociodemographic, attitudinal, or other variables exogenous to the interaction". It is for distributional observations between NS and learners as well as between individual speakers that quantitative evidence is applied to the present qualitative study.

Quantitative results in the present study accomplish two tasks. First, the choice of coherence resources to be examined was based on those appearing most frequently in the corpus. These frequencies, in turn, were only determined after a qualitative analysis had already elicited an analytic sense in the authors that this was the case (Schegloff, 1993, p. 119). The second way in which quantification is used in the present study is the comparison

[2] A single case analysis is the detailed analysis of a segment of conversation in order to identify the "devices and strategies used by participants to accomplish a particular action" (Liddicoat, 2011, p. 10).

of speaker groups: the learners versus the NS. The questions that the quantitative results address are: whether there are recognisable, quantitative differences between speaker groups and if so, what is revealed about these differences in the qualitative examination of single cases? In a qualitative analysis, careful consideration must also be paid to the relevance of the learner and NS categories. Questions to be considered are whether these differences in speaker performance are attributable to fluency difficulties in the learners, to other membership categories relevant in the interaction, or to the sequential contingencies of the individual interactions.

4. Analysis

The proceeding analysis begins with a quantitative overview of the cohesive topic transitioning resources. Then two cohesive resources employed in topic transitioning turns – co-class membership and contrast relations – are explored in further depth in the qualitative analysis. Before turning the focus to topic transitions, it should be noted that in terms of overall topic transitions versus topic changes, the NS use 95% topic transitions (42 total topic transitions, 2 topic changes), while the learners use only 70% (43 total topic transitions, 18 topic changes), meaning a higher percentage of the learner topic shifts are less cohesive topic changes.

4.1 A quantitative overview of cohesive resources in topic transitions

The most common resources employed to link a new, transitioning utterance to the prior talk are to rely on co-class membership (e.g. bringing up a taxi app in Ireland that allows one to choose a female driver after discussions of female taxi drivers in Japan, Excerpt 2, line 26-

29), to offer a contrasting opinion or contrasting information (contrast relations, e.g. adding that women having children is not only hard for them, but also hard for the companies they work for, Excerpt 5, line 31), or to ask follow-up questions (cf. Table 1). Follow-up questions function to expand the prior talk by displaying interest in what came before and inviting further elaboration (Svennevig, 2014). Within topic transitions overall, announcements were almost three times as common as questions (63 announcements, 22 questions). Though among the most frequent categories of topic transitions, follow-up questions will not form a part of the present analysis (for a more extensive discussion of questions in the same data set see Black 2017). The remaining two categories, contrast relations and co-class membership, fall into the category of announcements and are brought into focus in the present paper. These three categories together account for 76% of the total topic transitions identified. The remaining 24%, categorised as other, include transitions that summarise or restate the prior talk (Button, 1991), transitions where the speaker's meaning is not immediately clear (at times due to recording quality), reciprocal questions where the same question is asked back to the original asker (Morris-Adams, 2014), and transitions that link back to a previous point of discussion (de Stefani & Horlacher, 2010) or greater project.

There are no remarkable differences between speaker groups in the use of the different cohesion resources, though individual differences are certainly visible. G141, for example, makes the most frequent use of contrast relations (7 in total) in comparison to the other learners, thus, accounting for the higher use of contrast relations by the learners overall. When normalised to a per minute calculation, G141 uses contrast relations 0.25 times per minute and the next highest learner is G148 with 0.1 times per minute. Similarly, the higher number of follow-up questions in the NS participants can be traced to one speaker, I146 (7

instances). When normalised to a per minute calculation, I146 uses 0.37 follow-up questions per minute of talk, the next highest NS is I143 with 0.16 follow-up questions per minute. Thus, the differences in the distribution of contrast relations and follow-up questions between speaker groups that is apparent at first glance evaporates. Rather, the analysis suggests that differences are attributable to individual conversational style.

4.2 A qualitative view of cohesive resources in topic transitions

The following qualitative analysis presents two single case analyses for each of the cohesive resources: co-class membership (4.2.1) and contrast relations (4.2.2). The excerpts present at least one learner example and one NS example.

4.2.1 *Co-class membership*

The announcement sequence presented in Excerpt 2 exhibits an example of a co-class membership turn by a NS. The excerpt begins with G146 telling his partner about a particular taxi service in Japan that caters to women. This multi-turn unit begins with a topic change at line 1, the taxi story being analysably discontinuous with the prior discussion of quotas of women in management. The new topic is introduced at line 1 with the pre-announcement 'did you hear?', after which I146 makes no move to provide a go-ahead response. The announcement then begins with 'In in Japan…' and extends to line 24 with I146 providing listenership tokens functioning as continuers and reactions to the unfolding telling. At line 17, a 1.1 second pause suggests a possible ending to the telling, but with no forthcoming response from I146, G146 repeats the information about pink lights indicating a female driver. The repeated information and the final intonation at Line 24 (unlike the rising intonation of

the previous possible completion at line 17) provide two signals that the telling has come to an end. Nevertheless, a 2 second gap follows at line 25. I146 then breaks the silence at line 26.

EXCERPT 2 It's called Halo

1	G146:		Well ahm (0.6) did you hear? (0.6) In in Japan there
2			are (1.9) taxis:,
3		(1.6)	
4	I146:		°mm ye[ah°
5	G146:		[with with ah pink light on it¿ (0.7) and (.)
6			with the pink light (0.2) ah you can see that the
7			driver is a woman¿
8	I146:		↑oh.=
9	G146:		=Because (0.4) ah very often? (0.3) the women ah go in
10			attacks or (0.3) stuff like this¿ (2.5) w- ah will not
11			in cars with mens (0.3) because often there were ah
12			attacks or (0.3) stuff like this¿
13		(0.5)	
14	I146:		Oh ↑yeah.
15		(0.8)	
16	G146:		And after this a lot of (0.3) w- w- women started in
17			the ah ah (0.4) taxi business? (1.1) And they put a a
18			pink light?
19		(0.6)	
20	I146:		Yea[h
21	G146:		[On top so that (0.4) ah (0.7) someone can see that

22			there's a (0.3) women (1.0) wh[[o is=
23		I146:	[[Oh.
24		G146:	=drive the car.
25		(2.0)	
26	→	I146:	In Ireland there's an app, (0.3) it's called Halo? .hh
27			and it it lets you (.) call a taxi? and you can (0.3)
28			when you order the taxi through that you can say if
29			you want a woman or a man driver?

At line 26 there is not as yet any indication that I146's turn is in any way connected to G146's telling, but the connection is soon made apparent and the turn is analysably 'touched off' by the previous sequence. Co-class member relations contain some repeated propositional content, in this case 'taxis', 'woman drivers' and the ability to exercise some level of choice in the sex of your driver. Interestingly, this conversation continues with a series of these type of connections and soon the pair is talking about the car service Uber, then whether Uber is owned by Google (see also Excerpt 1, which occurs after Excerpt 2), and eventually the availability of street view on Google Maps. This sequence of co-class member relationships, where one topic is touched off by the previous, demonstrates how through a series of cohesive, stepwise topic transitions, a conversation can end up a long distance from where it began, and in this case, the conversation ends well off the macro topic of women in management and participants must change topic to return to the discussion task.

Excerpt 3 exhibits a similar transition, this time by a German learner. I148 has been saying that there are very few women in politics in Ireland and that, while in Europe or America the differences between men and women may not be as obvious as in 'other'

countries, there are still indications that men and women are not equal. This leads to lines 11-16 where she continues with the example of job interview questions about marriage and children, and eventually, her conclusion at lines 18-23 that inequality between men and women still exists. During this multi-turn telling, G148 has participated with acknowledgement/continuer listenership tokens. With the topic transitioning announcement starting at line 25, G148 recognises I148's prior contribution as a concluding statement and switches to an agreeing/confirming 'That's right' followed by an in-breath and 'So an:'. She then introduces the topic of female quotas. The 17 intervening lines not shown are a negotiation of the exact term for 'female quotas' in English, after which G143 returns to the topic to offer further explanation. The topic itself is a repeating theme in the conversations as it was discussed in the classroom prior to the Skype meetings and is put forward as at least a brief talking point in four of the five conversations. G148, in this instance, has found a way to weave the introduction of this particular topic into conversation as a topic transition. The repeating propositional content forming the co-class relationship between AP sequences is present, with the percentage of men and women in politics being the primary theme of the prior AP sequence (lines 1-24), and the percentage of women in higher positions being the primary theme in the following AP sequence (starting line 25). The topic transition to 'female quotas' at lines 25-28 immediately follows I143's concluding statement that inequality between men and women remains an issue (lines 18-23). On the surface, the topic of female quotas, thus, could be considered to have been 'touched off' by the topic in the prior sequence. The additional information available here, that the topic was one that G148 was likely to bring up eventually, underlines co-class membership as a resource at the disposal of

conversationalists. The sequence initial ‘so’ at line 25 lends weight to the analysis. ‘So’[3] as a sequence initial discourse marker has been said to “convey the sense that what follows has been “on the speaker’s mind” or “on the speaker’s agenda” for some time rather than has just occurred to him/her” (Bolden, 2006, p. 664). The previous sequence has touched off this new topic that G143 has been planning to bring up.

EXCERPT 3 Do you say women quote?

1	I148:		=( ) (0.4) S:o. and there’s definitely a hu:ge, (0.7)
2			a:hm a much bigger percentage of men
3	G148:		= ° M[hm°
4	I148:		[than of women in polit[[ics,=
5	G148:		[[Mhm:
6	I148:		=.hh So you can still see it. (0.4) it mightn’t as
7			obvious here. (.) but you can still see it,
8		(0.2)	
9	G148:		Yeah.=
10	I148:		=Ah:m (0.6) tch between the difference between men and
11			women. .hh And also with things like (0.5) for jo:bs
12			(0.4) ahm people can often get asked in interviews oh
13			are you married.=

[3] English ‘so’ is, on the surface, similar to German ‘so’. Both have been shown to have sequence connecting functions, however, “in English there seems to be a clear link between so and the following interactional move, while German so appears to have a closer connection to the prior action” (Barske & Golato, 2010, p. 248). That is, the German version is sequence final, marking the previous action as complete, while the English version is sequence initial in topic initiating utterances. Though one might question whether it is the English sense being deployed by the German student, in this instance ‘so’ is clearly sequence initiating, and thus, analysed as the English sense.

G148: = Mm[m,

I148: [Or do you ( ) children because they know the woman might want to go on maternity lea:ve=

G148: [Yeah.

I148: =[or something like that. (.) .hh So they- they it's just to a different (.) it's on a different level but the: (0.7) it's the same kind of problem that inequ[ality=

G148: [mhmm

I148: =is still there between men and women.

(0.2)

→ G148: That's right, .hhh So an: in Germany we have the (.)a discussion about (0.3) .hh it's like (0.7) do you sa:y: woman quo:te? No: (.) Frauen Quote is like (.) you need special [p-

I148: [Th- (1.0) The: you need a minimum (.) number of women to wor[[k.

17 intervening lines

G148: Yeah. (0.5) So: and especially in higher positions ahm ((unidentified sound)) woops, (0.3) in higher positions they talk about these female quo:ta¿ .hhh (0.2) An:d ah some big companie:s maybe: (.) realise it and say ok we need, (.) I don't know. Five percent or fifty percent or (0.6) seventy percent and, .hhh *Yeah.* (0.3) So in Germany it's a big topic. and ahm it's in the news and yeah.

These two excerpts have exemplified co-class relations as turns that are analysably 'touched off' by the topic matter of the previous sequence and bear propositional relations to that previous sequence. These connections, however, are not immediately apparent in either excerpt and initially, the topic transitioning turns appear disjunct. In Excerpt 2, for example, the topic transitioning turn contains no initial discourse connectives to guide her partner as to the relationship of her turn with his prior telling; her turn is a cold start, 'In Ireland there's an app'. The co-class relation is not explicitly apparent to the analyst until line 28 when she clarifies that one can request a female driver through this app and uses the repeated lexical items 'taxi', 'woman', and 'driver'. In Excerpt 3, the relation to the previous sequence is also not immediately accessible. In contrast to Excerpt 2, however, the transition at line 25 is less disjunct, as G148 begins with 'That's right', which functions to acknowledge and signal agreement with the previous turn. Then, after an audible in breath signalling her intention to continue, she begins with the discourse connecting 'so an:'. 'So' has been described as a multi-functional discourse marker, including the functions of marking the boundaries of talk and switching topic (Fung & Carter, 2007) and Morris-Adams (2016) finds the discourse marker 'so' to be frequently employed in marked topic changes in conversations between learners and native speakers. Thus, although G148 employs a discourse connective, she employs one that marks a boundary and change in topic, potentially signalling to I148 that a brand-new topic is being introduced. Again, the eventual cohesive connection between the two sequences is delayed. This delay of the cohesive connection is, thus, not a feature of learner talk, nor of NS talk, but appears in both instances, and throughout the corpus.

Co-class relations offer these speakers a talk continuing resource that the two exemplified speakers employ in different situations, but with similar results – both co-class

relation examples are successful in continuing talk. In Excerpt 2, the co-class relation is employed at a moment where continuity of talk seems to be at risk; G146 has offered a delayed completion (starting at line 17) when no response from his partner is forthcoming, and after his second completion, there is a 2 second gap before his partner claims a turn. When she does, it is the co-class relation she employs to keep the conversation going. In Excerpt 3, the co-class relation is employed to connect a planned talking point on the learner's part to her partner's immediately prior telling. Excerpt 3 also demonstrates the learner's proficiency with topic transitioning skills, as she manages to weave what appears to be a pre-prepared discussion point into conversation as if the topic had been 'touched-off' by her partner's immediately prior telling. That this topic transition (starting at line 25) can also be analysed as a co-class member with the evidence in the transcript is a demonstration that the learner has a full grasp of the ability to transition from one topic to another in a step-wise fashion. This comes with the caveat that her choice of the discourse connective 'so' potentially signals to her partner a more disjunctive relation between her topic transition and the previous sequence.

4.2.2 *Contrast relations*

An example of a contrast relation topic transition by a learner is presented in Excerpt 4. Here, I141 has introduced a story that had been in the news at the time of recording, that Google and Apple have offered to freeze the eggs of their female employees in hopes of attracting more women to their workforce. Starting at line 1, G141 asks whether his partner thinks the companies should compensate women for such a procedure. I141's response follows between lines 8 – 25, his position being that the availability of more benefits can only be a good thing.

At line 23, a sign of potential disagreement appears with G141's 'but', which is continued at lines 27-8 where he states his stance that the practice is infringing the boundaries of privacy; this is the topic transition of interest. Significantly, in this turn, G141 offers a downgrade with 'a little bit' but otherwise does not show any alignment with his partner's position, launching instead directly into his contrasting opinion. This turn fits with Jung's (2009) findings that learners focus on the contrastive focus of 'but', and often in an adversarial manner. I141's initial reaction at line 29 shows recognition and acknowledgement of his partner's position, but at line 31 he begins what can be seen as an ongoing attempt to restore harmony after G141's seemingly adversarial topic transition. I141, at first continuing the multiple token acknowledgement 'yeah', then offers 'No that's just'; his 'no' preface to this contribution orients to his partner's contrasting opinion. 'No' as a discourse marker has multiple senses, but "there is a sense of *no* by which a speaker can address some misunderstanding or otherwise problematic issue in the discourse or conversational context" (Lee-Goldman, 2011, p. 2637). I141 does not yet get the chance, however, to address the issue as, starting at line 32, G141 launches his explanation. G141's explanation of his stance is interrupted at lines 46-47 by I141 who begins again with a 'no' prefaced turn, after which he successfully launches a further explanation of his stance. As Ford (2000, p. 285) finds, the contrast is treated as needing resolution, and in this case, both parties orient to this need for resolution by providing explanations or further information on their stances: G141 backing up his contrasting turn and I141 seemingly working towards the restoration of harmony by offering further insight into his previously stated stance. This contrast, set up at lines 27-28, launches numerous sequences of negotiation that carry the conversation forward beyond the presented excerpt.

EXCERPT 4 I would say it's a little bit too private

1	G141:		Maybe. (1.4) But ah (0.3) what position would you ah:m,
2			(0.4) agree on? (1.4) w- would you agree that the
3			company would s- (0.4) compensate the costs for this
4			ah:m, (0.9) yeah. (0.9) operation? or:=
5	I141:		=Oh.=
6	G141:		=call it?
7		(0.9)	
8	I141:		yeah ahm, (0.5) oh yeah I'd (.) ↑I'd think that like
9			(0.3) companies can on- (0.2) companies can only like
10			(1.0) like they should try and do their best to
11			accommodate their employees if you get me. (.) and the
12			fact that that benefit is there.
13	G141:		Mhmm
14	I141:		like, (0.6) they I suppose they don't people there
15			don't have to use it but like the fact that it's
16			available is (.) it can only be seen as a good thing.
17			(0.2) If you get me. (0.4) It doesn't [re( )=
18	G141:		[Yeah.
19		(0.2)	
20	I141:		= (right) it doesn't (0.2) take anything away from them
21			that they didn't have befo:re so then you have to,
22			(1.3) .hhh say then that (0.3) it['s:=
23	G141:		[but
24		(0.4)	
25	I141:		=positive

```
26              (0.5)
27  →  G141:    I would say it's (1.7) a little bit (0.7) to::: (0.7)
28             private.=
29     I141:    =↑A:::oh ok yeah yeah [yeah
30     G141:                          [Yeah
31     I141:    yeah yeah. (0.2) No that's [[just
32     G141:                              [[I mean I I I I[am=
33     I141:                                              [(of course)
34     G141:    =not a woman but [[ah
35     I141:                     [[yeah
36              (0.8)
37     G141:    If I am and ah (0.2) may Google or what else? ahm (0.8)
38             tch (0.4) I don't know if I talk with my ahm, (0.7) mm
39             boss e<h>heh (0.2) about eh (0.6) my (0.9) problems.
40              (0.6)
41     I141:    Yea:h yeah
42     G141:    I think this is too more my privacy and not,.hhh
43     I141:    Mhmm
44              (0.2)
45     G141:    To sha:re with the company (  ) [but
46     I141:                                    [No it I I I think
47             though that it's not even (1.1) about like (0.9)
```

The second example of contrast relations is shown in Excerpt 5, which begins partway into a conversation on women, age of pregnancy, and work. I144 has just pointed out that for her, at age 21, she still has time to establish herself in a company before wanting to have children. G144's turn beginning at line 1 is a topic transition that exemplifies both the

contrast categorisation and the co-class member categorisation. At line 1, G144 repeats I144's message that at 21, she has time to settle in a career before having children. G144 then offers her own parallel contribution about how her older age (26) alters this reality, setting up the contrast with a but-preface (line 5). The repeated propositional content is evident in the set-up of G144's turn; her repetition of I144's contribution further underlines the relation between her transition and the previous sequence with both belonging to the same co-class of women, age of pregnancy, and work. This setup, with G144 directly contrasting their two experiences, stands out from the other co-class relation examples in that the co-class relation is made relatively explicit.

In addition to the co-class relationship, this infrequent example of double categorisation sees G144 set up a contrast with 'but' and launch into an explanation of her contrasting contribution. Unlike Excerpt 4, the contrast here is not treated as problematic and in need of some sort of resolution. Instead, the two partners share personal connections to the topic and underline the differences that their five-year age difference makes in their eyes. Neither partner objects on record to the other's assessments of their own situations.

EXCERPT 5 But it's so hard for the companies as well

1	→	G144:	Yea:h, if you were finished with (.) ah twenty one or
2			somethin' like this you'd have s:o many years to work
3			before you:, [a h m =
4		I144:	[Y:eah:. hh
5		G144:	=can °become° (0.3) get pregnant¿ (0.5) ahm: (0.4) but

6 when I'm finished I'm twenty si:x¿ and ahm, (1.0) so:,
7 (0.2) I in my opinion I I nee:d ahm:, (1.0) a goo:d (.)
8 ahm (0.5) contract (0.3) with my: ahm=
9 I144: =Mhmm.
10 (0.7)
11 G144: company¿ that I, (0.5) °ahm yeah (.) how is it ahm° (.)
12 (4.6) it it should be not limited? (0.4)
13 [the contract¿ so just]=
14 I144: [Y:eah °yeah° unlimited]
15 G144: =just ( ) yeah should be unlimited¿ (0.5) [ahm=
16 I144: [°mhm°
17 G144: =so the::y (.) they're then safe¿ (0.7) th[[at I=
18 I144: [[Y:eah. yeah,
19 G144: =really know I have this job ah when I: (.) ah want to
20 come back, (0.4) after,
21 I144: Yeah.
22 (0.4)
23 G144: getting (0.3) children, (0.6) and ahm (0.4) yeah maybe
24 I I will have thes:e um contract with um thirty¿ (0.4)
25 ↑and then I:[maybe=
26 I144: [°mhm°
27 G144: =think ↑↑oh:, (.) the body and. (0.5) ↑to late no:w
28 and aah=
29 I144: =hhhh
30 G144: eheh .hh
31 → I144: I kn(h)ow ye(h)ah i- like it's (.) it definitely is
32 it's just .hh but it is it's so hard for the companies

as: well like .hh (0.3) it's it's not like all of a sudden their like ↑oh no: .hh (0.3) where like we're not thinking of women but i- (.) they have to think of it (.) as well: like they can't, .hh (0.3) take u- somebody o:n and then, .hh (0.3) six months later: she goes and she get's pregnant or whatever: she wants, (.) like she's even considering having children. .hh (0.2) and then .hh (.) they have to pay her lea:ve like her leave of absent, like say if i- she wants to ta:ke a couple of months o:ff, (0.3) things like that like that all has to be paid for¿ then they have to get a replacement, .hh (0.5) things like that. ↑It's very s- it's stressful on companies too. (.04) It's ha:rd. (0.3) But um (0.4) you ca- you can't really win anyway. .hh

G144: °Yeah.°=

I144: :=Cause everyone has just has different agendas and have different goals .hh like we have one goal an:d then they another so. (.) Everyone just has kind of has to compromise I think,

(0.5)

→ G144: °yeah. (0.3) yeah. Sometimes it's (.) it's° (1.6) really hard to look at because ahm one my co- (.) colleagues ahm: sh:e: was pregna:nt and then she comes to our department¿ (0.5) and ah me and m:y ahm (.) four collea:gues¿=

At line 31, I144's turn relies on the contrast relationship to carry the conversation forward. First, she shows her understanding by claiming to have access to the same knowledge with 'I know' and then starting on a trajectory that she does not complete with 'it definitely is'. Although this trajectory is incomplete, the intensifier 'definitely' indicates a strong alignment with G144. Then, in line 32 she sets up the contrasting view of the matter from the point of view of companies. This but-preface is here employed sequentially to mark a next logical step in development of the topic (Jung, 2009), which is itself a further contrasting viewpoint. Here, the but + explanation bears stronger similarity to that in lines 23-28 in Excerpt 4. I144's 'But, it is it's so hard for the companies as: well like' is a contrasting stance that requires further explanation. Unlike Excerpt 4, I144's turn here is uninterrupted; she proceeds to a lengthy explanation without any sign of disagreement or trouble from her partner save for one quiet 'yeah' token at line 48. After I144's apparent concluding statement on compromise between women's interests and the companies' interests at lines 51-52, G144 transitions into an anecdote about a pregnant colleague. At line 54 she first agrees, not treating I144's contrasting point as problematic, but still builds on her previous stance – that the prospect of balancing children with work puts women in a difficult position. Overall, this excerpt lacks the adversative negotiation of contrasting opinions existent in Excerpt 4.

The contrast between excerpts 4 and 5 could be interpreted as being partially due to a difference in behaviour between learner and native speaker groups. Excerpt 4 is treated in an adversarial fashion. This originates with the learner who, at line 23, begins his contrasting turn in overlap with his partner. By line 27 he successfully launches this turn and states his contrasting opinion without showing any alignment with his partner's stance. I141, it seems,

attempts to re-establish harmony at lines 29, 31 and 33, by first acknowledging and showing understanding of his partner's position and then offering a no-prefaced turn indicating an attempt to address the problematic contrast. He does not successfully secure a turn to get this explanation on record until line 46 (not shown in full). Both speakers orient to their contrasting opinions as needing further explanation, but only one – the NS – shows alignment or agreement with their partner's stance. In juxtaposition, the lack of interactional negotiation in Excerpt 5 is noticeable. Here, both speakers demonstrate alignment with each other and allow their partner to complete their contributions without interruption. In Excerpt 5 the topic is treated as a multifaceted one. At line 1, G144 repeats I144's point demonstrating her agreement and alignment with her partner. Her subsequent contrast is a statement of a different perspective stemming from the fact that she is older than I144. Then, at line 31, I144 exhibits strong agreement with her partner's contribution before she offers another contrasting point of view, which is framed by the but-preface as a sequentially logical next step in the development of the multifaceted topic. She is then able, without interruption, to express her differing point. In response, G144 offers minimal agreement at line 54 before launching an anecdote that, in fact, still supports her prior position. The two different treatments of the contrast are constructed by the learners and their partners together in interaction and they represent two different possibilities as to how contrast can be co-constructed. The key difference between them, it seems, is the lack of alignment on the part of the learner in Excerpt 4, which makes his contrasting turn adversarial in nature and prompts his NS partner to attempt to restore harmony.

5. Conclusion

The preceding paper employed a mixed methods approach to conversational data that prioritised the qualitative analysis, but drew on the quantitative analysis to support the findings and to give an overview of the data. The quantitative results suggested that the learners demonstrate a high level of competency in topic management. Although, the caveat must be added that while coherent topic transitions make up 95% of the NS topic shifting turns, for the learners this falls to 70%, suggesting that the learners are not always able to successfully weave their contributions into the ongoing talk. In the topic transitions they do employ, however, the learners use similar resources to the NS to advance topic in a stepwise fashion; these resources are not used largely by one group and ignored by the other but, in this data set, are distributed approximately evenly. These skills would most certainly be a part of one's first language competence and there is evidence in the current data set that such competencies are being mobilised here. Levinson (2006, p. 44) asserts with his idea of a human "interaction engine" that there are "underlying universal properties of human interaction". Some of these properties have been empirically shown to hold across cultures, the timing between turns at talk, for example (Levinson, 2015). Intuitively, one could say that the various resources available to create cohesion in topic transitions would also be available cross-culturally and cross-linguistically. The quantitative results of the current study seem to offer a measure of support for such a theory. The German language data existent between the same pairs in the larger corpus also presents an opportunity for further research on this point, investigating whether similar cohesive resources were applied in the German conversations.

The qualitative results offer a finer grained view by looking at particular instances in greater detail and reveal areas where the learners still have something to learn. In Excerpt 3,

the learner's employment of the discourse marker 'so' suggests a disjunct topic shift when, in fact, she has demonstrated an attempt to link her topic transition to the preceding sequence. In Excerpt 4, the learner introduces a contrasting opinion, but his lack of alignment moves lends an adversarial tone to his transition and leads to his partner's attempt to restore harmony. The qualitative analysis, thus, revealed elements at the level of linguistic realisation where the learners experience difficulty. These two areas also represent topics for further research; an examination of the learner's and NS's employment of discourse connective in topic shifting turns, for example, could provide further, in depth insight into the topic management behaviour of language learners.

The present data set represents a departure from more traditional methods in ILP. The educational setting and common discussion task come with the advantage of a certain level of control and the ability to compare two speaker groups conversing in one context. The challenge with such data, however, is the difficulty in amassing a large collection of one particular linguistic or discourse feature in order to answer a pre-determined research question. The approach was, thus, an inductive one that placed the data first and began with general analyses in search of research questions arising from the data itself. The resulting analysis addresses a number of research gaps (cohesion resources employed by learners in announcement topic transitioning turns in task-based talk) and reveals a number of further possible questions that can be asked of the data set to increase our understanding of topic management behaviour of learners in this task-based setting.

Finally, the preceding study is not without its limitations. The data consists of mostly audio only recordings of video-based interactions. This means that various visual cues were available to the participants, but not available to the researchers. Consequently, the resulting

reduction of data may have obscured relevant multimodal features of the topic transitions examined. The video data that is available represents an opportunity to explore these possible multimodal features and to deepen the present analysis.

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Appendix

Transcription conventions

(0.5)	Indicates the length of a pause, measured in tenths of a second
=	Indicates “latching” between utterances
[ ]	Indicate the onset and end of speaker overlap
[[ ]]	Used to distinguish sequences of overlap
.hh	Speaker in-breath, the more h’s, the longer the in-breath
hh	Speaker out-breath, the more h’s, the longer the out-breath
soun-	Indicates sharp cut off of prior word
sou::nd	Indicates that the speaker has stretched a sound
( )	Incomprehensible speech
(tomorrow)	Transcriber uncertain of wording
word.	Indicates falling, stopping tone – not grammatical
word,	Indicates a “continuing” intonation – not grammatical
word?	Indicates a rising inflection – not grammatical
word¿	Indicates a rise stronger than a comma but weaker than a question mark
↑word	Indicates a higher than expected pitch on a word

TABLE 1: Cohesive resources in topic transitions (TT) and average number of topic transitions per minute of talk

	G141	I141	G143	I143	G144	I144	G146	I146	G148	I148	Total	Total Learner	Total NS
TT Co-class membership	2	3	2	2	2	1	3	4	3	2	24	12	12
TT Contrast relations	7	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	19	12	7
TT Follow-up questions	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	7	1	2	22	8	14
TT Other	6	6	0	1	3	3	1	0	1	0	21	11	10
Total Topic Transitions	**17**	**12**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**7**	**12**	**7**	**5**	**86**	**43**	**43**
Length in minutes	**28**		**12.5**		**21.5**		**19**		**20.5**				
Total TT per minute	**0.61**	**0.42**	**0.4**	**0.48**	**0.33**	**0.37**	**0.37**	**0.63**	**0.34**	**0.20**			
Together per minute	**1.03**		**0.88**		**0.70**		**1.0**		**0.54**				