

# Initiating Repair and Beyond: The Use of Two Repeat-Formatted Repair Initiations in Mandarin Conversation

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As part of a growing effort to understand the organization of repair across languages, this study examines 2 repeat-formatted other-initiated repair practices in Mandarin conversation. Using the methodology of conversation analysis as a central framework, this study shows that the 2 Mandarin repair initiations under examination, like other-initiation of repair in English, serve not only to initiate repair but also as vehicles for accomplishing additional negatively valenced actions, such as displaying a stance of disbelief or nonalignment. In further explicating the common sequential and activity contexts of these practices, this study shows that the division of labor between these 2 repair initiations in accomplishing additional negative actions is sensitive to 2 intertwining axes: the epistemic stance of the speaker who initiates the repair and the sequential context and positioning of the initiation of repair. It is argued that such a division of labor is consistent with, and is in fact carried over from, the basic meanings they index when serving as straightforward repair initiations.

In the past few decades, other-initiation of repair—the phenomenon in which participants in conversation indicate problems or trouble in hearing or understanding some prior talk by another<sup>1</sup>—has been the focus of sustained interest in the study

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<sup>1</sup>It may be useful to point out that *trouble in understanding* is a cover term for all kinds of trouble—including camouflaging alignment issues passed as understanding issues. In essence, other-initiations of repair serve to target something in the prior turn as a trouble-source, leaving it for the prior speaker to determine what its source and character are and how to deal with it (E. A. Schegloff, personal communication, July 19, 2005). For more discussions of repair organization and its operations, see, for example, Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977) and Schegloff (1979, 1992, 1995, 1997, 2000); for discussions of how *repair initiation* as an action should be carefully distinguished from the practices (e.g., *huh*, *what*, *what do you mean*, and repeats) that can, but do not necessarily, serve to implement the action of repair initiation, see Schegloff (1997).

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

One prominent theme along this second line of inquiry is the double-barreled nature of other-initiated repair—that is, its capability for, and frequent use in, implementing additional interactional projects while serving as repair initiation. Egbert (1997), for example, demonstrated how initiating repair in multiparty German conversation can be used strategically not only as an entry or exit device to such conversations, but also as a display of affiliation among conversational coparticipants. Selting (1988, 1992, 1996) demonstrated how prosodically marked other-initiation of repair in German can carry an emotive overtone of “astonishment” and indicate a problem of expectation on the part of the speaker. Drew (1997) focused on what he terms “open class” repair initiators in English (e.g., *paradon? sorry? what?*) and shows how their uses can embody the speaker’s treatment of the turn being targeted at as either topically or sequentially disjunctive or in some way inappropriate. The strong connection between the use of other-initiated repair and the display of incipient nonalignment on the part of its speaker has also been documented in several studies (e.g., Heritage, 1984; Kim, 1999; Schegloff, 1995, 1997, 2004; Schegloff et al., 1977). The following example, taken from Schegloff (1995, pp. 97–98), is a case in point:

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

Here, Ava initiates a repair (line 3) on Bee’s claim in a prior turn (line 1) about her emotional state. To this repair initiation, Bee responds in the next turn (line 4) with a simple reaffirmation. Although this response by Bee suggests that she is treating Ava’s repair initiation, *prima facie* at least, as involving a hearing or understanding problem, Ava’s subsequent disconfirmation (line 6) nonetheless retroactively indi-

cates that this prior repair initiation by her serves not merely to initiate a repair, but to portend disagreement as well.

This study pursues the second line of research and considers a similar phenomenon in Mandarin conversation as that illustrated in Excerpt 1. Specifically, this study focuses on two repeat-formatted other-initiated repair practices—question-intoned repeats and repeats suffixed with the final particle *a*. In this article, I will show how these two Mandarin practices, like other-initiation of repair in English, can serve as vehicles for accomplishing actions beyond initiating repair—actions such as displaying a stance of surprise, disbelief, or nonalignment.<sup>2</sup> However, in further explicating the common sequential and activity contexts of these two practices, I will also describe a previously undescribed division of labor between repair initiations and demonstrate how the use of these two Mandarin practices is sensitive to two intertwining axes: the epistemic stance of the speaker who initiates the repair, and the sequential context and positioning of the initiation of repair.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>*Nonalignment* does not refer to a negative interactive relationship between participants in conversation, but rather to a divergence in the perspectives or stances the participants are taking toward the matter at issue.

<sup>3</sup>One reviewer suggested that the candidate phenomenon discussed in this article might be reexamined and reconsidered from two different perspectives: as continuers—reactive tokens or as rhetorical questions. A clarification about how the candidate phenomenon differs from reactive tokens or rhetorical questions is thus in order.

In terms of reactive tokens in Mandarin, the only study based on real conversational data that I can locate is the article by Clancy, Thompson, Suzuki, and Tao (1996), in which they compare and contrast the use of reactive tokens in English, Japanese, and Mandarin, and in which they define *reactive tokens* as “a short utterance produced by an interlocutor who is playing a listener’s role during the other interlocutor’s speakership”—short utterances that “will normally not disrupt the primary speaker’s speakership, and do not in themselves claim the floor” (p. 356). Although repetition is one type of reactive token examined in Clancy et al., the Mandarin example provided there (see p. 362) is clearly *not* an instance of other-initiated repair, but one of information receipt. This can be evidenced by the fact that following the production of that repeat, neither does the repeat speaker await a repair-relevant response from the recipient, nor does the repeat recipient attempt to provide one. That instance of repeat is therefore different from the candidate phenomenon examined in this article, in which only exemplars of (question-intoned or *a*-suffixed) repeats followed by some repair-relevant responses (minimally a confirmation or disconfirmation) from the recipients are included and considered.

Given the potential multifunctionality of repeats (cf. Schegloff, 1996, 1997), it is not clear whether or not repeat-formatted other-initiated repairs were categorized as reactive tokens in the aforementioned study. In any case, while examining reactive tokens might be a worthy topic in itself, the phenomenon discussed in this study is clearly a much narrower, and more clearly delineated one that invites its own analytic inquiry, and that I suggest is best captured in terms of (repeat-formatted) other-initiated repairs within the conversation analysis framework.

In addition to reactive tokens, the reviewer also commented that “a lot of the turns under discussion may be called ‘rhetorical questions’ in the traditional linguistic terminology.” However, despite the extensive literature on rhetorical questions, the notion of rhetorical questions is far from well-defined, as several researchers have acknowledged (e.g., Frank, 1990; Ilie, 1994; Koshik, 2005; Schaffer, 2005, among others). In addition, as Frank convincingly demonstrated, given the pragmatic complexity involved in naturalistic data, rhetorical questions are not only difficult to define but difficult to identify as

The research presented in this article is thus intended not only as a contribution to an understanding of the operation of repair in Mandarin conversation (e.g., Chui, 1996; Tao, Fox, & De Garcia, 1999; Zhang, 1998), but also as part of a growing effort to understand the organization of repair across languages (e.g., Couper-Kuhlen, 1992; Egbert, 1996, 1997, 2004; Fox, Hayashi, & Jasperson, 1996; Fox & Jasperson, 1995; Kim, 1999, 2001; Moerman, 1977; Selting, 1988, 1992, 1996; Uhmann, 2001). In what follows, I will first briefly lay out a few initial observations of the use of these two Mandarin practices in clear-cut contexts of repair. I will then examine occasions in which they are used to implement actions beyond repair initiations and discuss how their differential uses in these occasions can be related to the basic properties they exhibit as repair initiators.

This article is conversation-analytic in orientation. The analysis of this study draws on a corpus of approximately 2 hr of audiotaped telephone conversations and 17 hr of videotaped face-to-face conversations among family members, friends, and acquaintances. Although the data were collected in the United States, Mainland China, and Taiwan, most of the data excerpts presented in this article are drawn from conversations recorded in Beijing, China.<sup>4</sup>

### INITIAL OBSERVATIONS OF REPAIR INITIATIONS FORMATTED WITH QUESTION-INTONED REPEATS AND A-SUFFIXED REPEATS

As in English conversation, repeat or partial repeat of the trouble source turn is by no means the only practice through which a repair can be initiated in Mandarin conversation. However, in initiating a repair through the use of repeat, a Mandarin speaker will have to select between at least two alternative practices—question-in-

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well. Given the diverse definitions of rhetorical questions and the difficulty in their identification, and given, more importantly, that the candidate phenomenon explored here is clearly more specific in its domain than rhetorical questions, I have decided to characterize the candidate phenomenon in terms of other-initiation repair, rather than subsume it under an undifferentiated class of “rhetorical questions.”

<sup>4</sup>The data fragments marked with CMC are from a corpus of approximately 7 hr of face-to-face conversations collected in Beijing, China by Monica Turk and her assistant during the 9 months (October 2001 through June 2002) of her Fulbright stay there. The other fragments are drawn from a corpus of approximately 12 hr of telephone and face-to-face conversations collected in Taiwan and the United States by myself in the 1990s. For a more detailed description of this second data set, see Wu (2004). All of the data excerpts employed in this article have been transcribed or retranscribed by me according to the conventions of conversation analysis. (See Appendix 1 for a list of transcription conventions.) The uses of these two repeat-formatted repair initiations discussed in this article are observed not only in the data collected in Beijing, China, but also in the data collected in Taiwan and the United States.

toned repeats<sup>5</sup> and repeats suffixed with the final particle *a*<sup>6</sup>—the latter of which appear to have no analogues in English.<sup>7</sup> These two practices commonly adumbrate different problems the speakers are having with respect to the trouble source turns and frequently implicate different types of responses from the recipients.

On the one hand, repeats suffixed with the final particle *a* are commonly heard as confirmation questions, that is, their uses make a recipient's confirmation or

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<sup>5</sup>Although in English question intonation is generally categorized as having a rising end and declarative intonation as having a falling end, the matter of what constitutes “question intonation” in a tonal language like Mandarin, in which possible interaction between tone and interaction exists, is much more complicated and remains unsettled. Over the years, different proposals, based mostly on the acoustic study of short, constructed sentences, have been made as to how question intonation is realized in Mandarin. These proposals, albeit not in complete agreement with each other, generally point to some exaggerated gestures with which question intonation is realized. Some scholars, for example, have argued that relative to statements, grammatically unmarked (yes–no) questions exhibit an overall higher register (e.g., Chang, 1998; De Francis, 1963; Ho, 1977; Shen, 1989; Tseng, 2003; Zeng, Martin, & Boulakia, 2002), whereas others have argued that a rising grid (e.g., Gårding, 1987) is characteristic of such questions. Still others have argued that the intonation of grammatically unmarked questions can be best described by a higher phrase curve and wider pitch swings (e.g., Yuan, Shih, & Kochanski, 2002) or by a high or lengthened boundary tone (e.g., Schack, 2000; Tseng, 2003).

In addition to these acoustic studies, several other studies, based on perception tests, have similarly demonstrated the complexity involved in distinguishing question intonation from statement intonation or exclamation intonation: Yuan and Shih (2004), for example, have shown that question intonation is more difficult to recognize than statement intonation, and that confusion or ambiguity may arise when the exaggerated gestures associated with question intonation are lacking or are weakly executed; Chang (1998) demonstrated that their subjects perceive the use of question intonation as a display of surprise on the part of the speaker, suggesting therefore that question intonation and surprise intonation are one and the same in Mandarin.

In this study, I have taken into consideration these findings while basing my identification of question-intoned repeats on my auditory perception after repeated listenings. The exaggerated gestures claimed in the literature to be associated with question intonation are often (though not necessarily) reflected in the transcripts in the forms of underlinings (e.g., Excerpts 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14, 16), upward-pointing arrows (e.g., Excerpts 6, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16), or left-facing arrows (e.g., Excerpts 8, 13). It should be noted, however, that the data in this study have been transcribed orthographically according to the conversation analysis conventions, rather than according to detailed phonetic conventions where prosodic features are systematically marked. It should also be noted that given that the study of Mandarin prosody in real conversation is still in its infancy, how the claims about question intonation in the aforementioned literature fare when examined against authentic conversational data remains an open question. More research is clearly needed before the issues of question intonation can be fully clarified.

<sup>6</sup>Over the years, various scholars have proposed different meanings for the final particle *a*. (For a brief review of the literature, see Wu, 2004.) In a more recent work, Wu (2004) demonstrated that final *a* in turn constructional unit-final position generally exhibits a “contrast-invoking” property, used to “mark a discrepancy in knowledge, expectation or perspective regarding some state of affairs between the current speaker (i.e., the *a* user) and the prior speaker” (p. 128).

<sup>7</sup>As one reviewer pointed out, there should be a third possibility in Mandarin for repeat-formatted repair initiations—namely, *a*-suffixed repeats produced with a question intonation. Although this possibility seems to exist (cf. line 9, Excerpt 12), there are very few instances of this kind in the data examined and even fewer in which such *a*-suffixed repeats serve to project negatively valenced action—the

disconfirmation relevant next. This is illustrated respectively in Excerpts 2 and 3, both taken from a conversation recorded in Beijing between two acquaintances. Immediately prior to Excerpt 2, M has just contested a comment by L about Beijing and has asserted that life in Beijing is boring. In Excerpt 3, the topic has turned to a neighborhood where M used to live:

(2) (CMC 05–05, 00:40, audio 243a)

1L: *suibian ni.*  
as:wish you  
'Whatever.'

2 (0.3)

3L:a → *chabuduo zhao ren jia le de le.*  
almost find person marry ASP get CRS  
'(I'll) just get married with some guy.'

4 (0.5)

5M:b → *zhao ren jia le de le a? =*  
find person marry ASP get CRS PRT  
'Just get married with some guy A?' =

6L:c → *=uh. =*  
PRT  
='Yeah.' =

7M:d → *=wo zher hen duo ren dasuan qu ne.*  
I here very many person plan marry PRT  
='I know lots of guys who are ready to marry.'

(3) (CMC 05–03, 01:45, audio 130a)

1M: *bu, yuanlai women jia zhu nar? <zhu dongcheng na kuair.*  
no originally we home live where live (place) that area  
'No, where did we live before? <(We) lived in the Dongcheng area.'

2M:a → *=[dongcheng liuyin jie na kuair.*  
(place) (place) street that area  
='Near Liuyin Street in Dongcheng.'

3L: *=[((clears throat))*

4 (0.5)

5L:b → *[[guyun jie a? =*  
(place) street PRT  
[['Guyun Street A?'] =

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phenomenon that is being explored here. In this corpus, the majority of the *a*-suffixed repeats serving as other initiations of repair are produced with a lower pitch or with a slightly falling intonation (cf. Chao, 1968; Wu, 2004). Although nothing conclusive can be said about *a*-suffixed repeats with a question intonation at this point, the data at hand suggest that these *a*-suffixed repeats seem to be used in a similar manner as non-question-intoned *a*-suffixed repeats, with the major difference being that relative to non-question-intoned *a*-suffixed repeats, those with a question intonation appear to embody a heightened sense of disbelief toward the matter being addressed on the part of the repeat speaker. This proposal, however, awaits further investigation and should be treated as impressionistic at present.

- 6M:    [[*shi* b-  
          be  
          [[‘(It) is-’  
7M:c → =*aiyahh*,        *liuyin jie*.  
          (exclamation) (place) street  
          =‘aarrgh! *Liuyin* Street.’  
      8    (.)  
9L:d → *ao*:.  
          PRT  
          ‘Oh:’

In each of these cases, a speaker displays a hearing or understanding problem with respect to a prior turn (arrow a) by initiating a repair through a partial repeat<sup>8</sup> suffixed with the final particle *a* (arrow b); and, in each case, this *a*-suffixed repeat is responded to with either a confirmation or disconfirmation (arrow c). That such a confirmatory type of response is adequate for repair initiations in the form of *a*-suffixed repeats can be evidenced by the repeat speakers’ subsequent moves (arrow d): They either proceed to produce a sequentially relevant pending response, as in Excerpt 2, and, by implication, treat the recipient’s confirmatory response as sufficient for their prior inquiries. Or, as in Excerpt 3, they receive the confirmation with a “success marker,” a free-standing *ao* ‘oh,’ which, by proposing a change in the speaker’s local state of information as a result of the response, reaffirms the status of the *a*-suffixed repeat as one that is meant to request a confirmation or disconfirmation.

By contrast, a confirmatory type of response is not always adequate for question-intoned repeats. In the database, although some of such repeats appear to be treated as candidate hearings offered for confirmation of a prior turn’s talk, the majority of such repeats turn out to involve recognition or understanding problems. Consider, for example, Excerpt 4 next, in which the participants are talking about a variety of foods in the northeast area of Mainland China.

(4) (CMC 01–01, 03:22, audio 034a)

- 1Z: → *ranhou ta nar (...) yi yang, dongbei de ming cai, jiao zuo guobaorou.*  
      then it there one C northeast ASSC famous dish call CP (dish)  
      ‘And there’s (also..) another famous northeastern dish, called “guobaorou.”’  
      2    (0.5)

<sup>8</sup>It should be noted that in Excerpt 3, even though L fails to correctly reproduce the name of the street, her turn in line 5 is still hearably and analyzably produced as a (partial) repeat of that which M has said in his prior turn (line 2). An exact match with some prior utterance, therefore, is not a strict criterion for the use of the term *repeat* hereby adopted. Following Schegloff (1997), the term *repeat* in this article refers to a speaker’s arguably intended reproduction of another’s prior utterance either in whole or in part. It allows for necessary deictic changes in temporal or personal reference but excludes paraphrases or other types of substantial rewordings of the targeted utterances.

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

In line 3, N initiates repair on the name of the food (*guobaorou*) just mentioned through a question-intoned repeat. Although Z’s response—a simple affirmative nodding (line 4)—displays her treatment of N’s repair initiation as possibly checking a candidate hearing, N’s immediate move to follow Z’s response with a further clarification question<sup>9</sup> (line 5) retrospectively marks that the trouble she has been proposing involves a recognition problem, rather than a hearing problem.

Excerpt 5 provides another instance in which the speaker’s production of a follow-up clarification question reinforces the sense that her prior question-intoned repeat was meant to propose a recognition (or understanding) problem. This excerpt begins with participant N’s inquiry about whether or not another participant, Z, has seen a movie that N has recently seen:

(5) (CMC 01–10, 03:49, audio 180b)

- 1N: *na tian zanmen kan- dianying ni kan le ma? =*  
 that day we see movie you see CRS Q  
 ‘The movie we saw that day, did you see it?’ =

<sup>9</sup>It is by now well-recognized that the term *questions* can be a quite confusing notion. As several researchers have shown, syntactic questions are not always used to accomplish the activity of asking questions (e.g., Heritage, 2002; Heritage, & Roth, 1995; Koshik, 2003, 2005; Schegloff, 1984); and, conversely, non-question-formatted declaratives can be heard as asking questions, especially when they are “B-event” statements (e.g., Heritage, & Roth, 1995; Labov, & Fanshel, 1977). To avoid the confusion in terminology, in this study I have reserved the terms *questions* or *clarification questions* to refer to grammatically constructed questions—that is, questions that are constructed with grammatical devices such as question words (e.g., *shenme* ‘what’; *nar* ‘where’), question particles (e.g., *ma*; *ba*), or the A-not-A structure. (For a brief discussion of question types in Mandarin, see Li & Thompson, 1981.) I have also limited my use of the relatively less well-defined term *confirmation questions*, and refer to the two target practices (which commonly make a recipient confirmation or disconfirmation relevant next) simply as “repeats suffixed with the particle *a*”/“*a*-suffixed repeats” and “repeats with a question intonation”/“question-intoned repeats.”

- 2N: =*jiu shi*, [%*beautiful- beautiful mind*%.]  
 just be (movie)  
 ='That is, [%*(A) beautiful- beautiful mind*%']
- 3Z: → [(...*shi*) <*ou*, *bu shi*, *na ge-* ] *na ge- nashi*.  
 be PRT N be that C that C (person)  
 ['(...) <Oh. No. The uh- ] The uh- *Nash*.'
- 4W: %*infla*[*tion*%. (reading an economics textbook)  
 inflation  
 '%*infla*[*tion*%'
- 5N: => [*°nashi? shenme nashi*°]=  
 (person) what (person)  
 [*°""Nash""? What's "Nash"?"*°]=
- 6Z: =*nei ge zhurengong jiao nashi*.  
 that C character call (person)  
 ='The character is named *Nash*.'

In overlap with N's explication of which movie is at issue (line 2), Z appears to address N's inquiry by offering a piece of independent information about that movie, that is, the major character's name (line 3). In response (line 5), N first repeats the word *nashi* ('Nash') and then immediately follows that repeat with a clarification question (*shenme nashi* 'what's "Nash"?'), making clear that she is having difficulty recognizing (or understanding) the word being repeated. In the next turn, Z then moves to remedy this problem through a clarification.

Although in the previous two excerpts, the question-intoned repeats are each subsequently followed by a clarification question, most of the question-intoned repeats in the database are not. However, these question-intoned repeats are nonetheless responded to in a way that treats them as embodying an understanding or recognition problem. Excerpt 6 provides a case in point. In this excerpt, the two participants are exchanging their views of the city of Chengdu, which both of them have been to.

(6) (CMC 05-02, 04:40, audio 105a)

- 1M: *ni lai nabanr:: (. ) ni zui xi(huan) chengdu shenme?*  
 you come there you most like (city) what  
 '(When) you came there:: (. ) what did you like most about Chengdu?'
- 2 (0.5)
- 3L: *chi de. qihou.= ou, wo zui xihuan qihou. qici shi chi de.*  
 eat NOM weather PRT I most like weather next be eat NOM  
 'Food. Weather. = Oh, I like its weather the best, and then the food.'
- 4M: *you tong gan. zhende.*  
 have same feeling really  
 '(I) feel the same. Really.'
- 5M: → *nar qihou jianzhi tai lan le. =zhende.*  
 there weather truly too bad CRS really  
 'The weather there is just too bad. =Really.'

- 6 (.)  
 7M: <na zhong- [na zhong-  
       that kind that kind  
       <'The kind of-[the kind of-'  
 8L: => [↑ qihou tai lan le?  
           weather too bad CRS  
       [↑'The weather is too bad?'
- 9 (0.3)  
 10M: → ni shuo- ni (tian tian jian zhao taiyang mei zai nar)?  
       you say you day day see CP sun N at there  
       'Tell me- did you (see the sun every day there)?'
- 11 (0.7)  
 12L: <↑a; wo jiu xihuan mei taiyang a.  
       PRT I just like N sun PRT  
       <↑'Ah::, I just like (the fact) that the sun does not come out (every day).'

Here, as is typical of how he behaves in the remainder of this conversation, M interacts with L in a semi-ironic and semi-kidding manner. In line 4, M first emphatically aligns with L's displayed favorable stance toward the weather of the city, but then abruptly ends his responses with a sharp contrary view about this topic (line 5). To this unexpected twist, L, after a slight delay, reacts by repeating part of what M has just said with a raised pitch (↑*qihou tai lan le* '↑the weather is too bad?'; line 8). Note here that M's subsequent response (line 10), albeit with a shade of challenge, is clarificatory in nature and apparently treats L's prior repeat as displaying an understanding problem.

Contrasting Excerpts (4)–(6) with (2)–(3), we find that, whereas in all of these excerpts a party undertakes to claim some kind of trouble with a prior turn's talk through a repeat, these repeats, when formulated differently, are built with different sequential implications. When suffixed with the final particle *a*, the repeat is intended and understood as a candidate hearing or understanding of the trouble source turn, ordinarily making a recipient confirmation (or disconfirmation) relevant next. Without the *a*-sufficing and with a question intonation, however, the repeat is commonly offered not as what the speaker proposes to have understood, but as the speaker's momentary breakdown in comprehension of the element being repeated in its current sequential context.

Of particular relevance to our next discussion is that, as Excerpts 4 to 6 have also demonstrated, the speaker's displayed noncomprehension of the trouble source turn embodied in the use of a question-intoned repeat may arise not only from the repeat speaker's lack of familiarity with a reference previously mentioned (e.g., Excerpt 4), it may also arise from an apparent sense of abruptness and unexpectedness associated with how the trouble source turn figures in its sequential context (cf. Drew, 1997).

Thus, in Excerpt 5, it may be recalled that the target question-intoned repeat ('Nash?'; line 5) is produced in response to recipient Z's attempt to recollect

and report the name of the character (line 3) when asked whether or not she had seen the movie in question (line 1). Here, even though Z's recalling and offering this piece of information about the protagonist's name may have been triggered by the question N has just asked, this response by Z (line 3)—in providing neither an affirmative nor a negative answer made relevant by N's question (in line 1)—apparently departs from the way in which such a type of question is normally addressed. This departure, coupled with the fact that the response by Z is itself produced in overlap with a subsequent move by N to clarify the referenced movie (line 2), may thus give rise to a sense of unexpectedness to Z's response and hence to N's puzzlement.

Similarly, in Excerpt 6, as noted earlier, participant M begins his response to L's favorable view of the weather in Chengdu with an aligning response (line 4), which appears to be leading up to a subsequent reinforcing positive comment. However, just as this response by M appears to be on its way to completion, it takes an abrupt twist and ends with a contradictory comment about this subject (*nar qihou jianzhi tai lan le* 'the weather there is just too bad'; line 5). It is notable that L's subsequent repeat (line 8) targets just this seemingly incoherent part of the response by M, giving evidence that it is the unexpected twist manifested by this response that has caused her puzzlement.

As we will see in the following sections, this use of question-intoned repeats to mark what is being repeated as unexpected or having come out of the blue, illustrated in Excerpts 5 and 6, as well as the use of *a*-suffixed repeats to mark a relatively higher degree of speaker certainty about the knowledge or understanding of the matter at issue, are generic features of these two linguistic practices. These features and the different epistemic stances so instantiated are present not only in contexts in which these two practices serve straightforwardly to initiate repair, but also in contexts in which they accomplish actions beyond repair initiation. In the next section, we will turn to some of these latter contexts in which these two repair initiations figure prominently.

#### THE USE OF QUESTION-INTONED REPEATS AND A-SUFFIXED REPEATS IN THE SERVICE OF IMPLEMENTING NEGATIVELY VALENCED WORK

As previous conversation-analytic studies of English have demonstrated (e.g., Heritage, 1984; Jefferson, 1981; Pomerantz, 1984; Schegloff, 1995, 1997), repeats or partial repeats of a prior turn by another are frequently employed not only to initiate repair, but also as a vehicle for conveying a sense of predisagreement of some kind. A similar phenomenon is also observed in the use of question-intoned repeats and repeats suffixed with the final particle *a* in Mandarin conversation; both practices are commonly observed to accomplish additional negatively valenced interactional work while serving as repair initiations.

In the remainder of this article, I will focus on these uses of the two Mandarin repair initiations under examination. Specifically, I will offer a set of exemplars of sequences involving question-intoned or *a*-suffixed repeats that share the following features:

- The repeat is responded to with a repair-relevant response—which commonly (though not invariably) takes the form of a confirmation or clarification of the matter addressed by the repeat.<sup>10</sup>
- Although the repair-relevant response displays the repeat recipient’s treatment of the repeat, *prima facie* at least, as initiating a repair, namely, as indicating a hearing or understanding problem, the repeat speaker’s subsequent move suggests that his or her prior repeat is not merely repair-implicated.
- Commonly the repeat speaker follows the recipient’s response with a negatively valenced response regarding the matter being addressed—a move that suggests that the prior repeat-formatted repair initiation was employed (and

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<sup>10</sup>As Schegloff (1997) pointed out, some scholars, treating such confirmations as “routinized” confirmations, have been skeptical about the role of such exchanges as instances of repair. One reviewer of this article expressed similar reservations and doubt about the basis for treating these negatively valenced question-toned repeats and *a*-suffixed repeats as instances of repair initiations in the first place. It should be noted first that other-initiations of repair, in essence, serve to target something in the prior turn as a trouble-source, leaving it for the prior speaker to determine what its source and character are. Trouble in hearing and understanding are among the most common “diagnoses” of the trouble, but disalignment can be another. There is therefore nothing incompatible in dealing with a repair initiation as premonitoring something problematic in other than hearing or speaker terms and being nonetheless a repair initiator (E. A. Schegloff, personal communication, July 19, 2005).

In addition, although such negatively valenced repeats are routinely accepted with a confirmatory or clarificatory type of response in my data, this does not mean that providing such a response is a routinized or an automatic outcome without the activity of repair being possibly worked through in these instances. For one thing, these negatively valenced repeats have similar designs as repeats that serve merely to indicate a hearing or understanding problem. Not knowing whether the production of a question-intoned repeat or an *a*-suffixed repeat will turn out to be a straightforward repair initiation, or that it is to be followed by a subsequent negative response, the repeat recipients may genuinely respond to the repeats as initiations of repair (or may pretend to do so in order for the ambiguity to resolve itself as the sequence progresses.) On the other hand, the repeat speakers who subsequently produce a negative response may not always intend their prior repeats to be “pro-forma” only; they may have indeed intended their prior repeats to be repair initiations, used, for example, to seek a confirmation or clarification of a candidate hearing or understanding of the matters being addressed before launching a negative response. Thus, whether a question-intoned repeat or an *a*-suffixed repeat turns out to be followed by a negative response from the repeat speaker may well be a contingent result, the accomplishment of which commonly turns on the recognition of such repeats as other-initiated repairs in the first place (cf. Schegloff, 1997). This does not mean that repair initiation is the most important function of these repeats, and the projected negatively valenced actions secondary; what I am rather suggesting is that the negatively valenced actions are implemented through the basic use or recognition of such repeats as repair initiations in the Mandarin sequences discussed here.

perhaps exploited) in the service of, or as a vehicle for, projecting the follow-up negative response.

In the following sections, I will demonstrate that while *a*-suffixed repeats and question-intoned repeats both figure in such sequences, their division of labor here appears to be affected by two intertwining axes: the epistemic stance of the speaker who initiates the repair, and the sequential context and positioning of the initiation of repair. We will take up the matter in that order.

### THE EFFECT OF THE EPISTEMIC STANCE OF THE REPEAT SPEAKER

Earlier we have seen that compared to question-intoned repeats, repair initiations in the form of an *a*-suffixed repeat commonly adumbrate a stronger epistemic stance on the part of the repeat speaker; that is, they commonly index the speaker's firmer grasp of another's less than fully transparent talk in a prior turn. Such a difference in epistemic stance is also visible when the use of these two practices implicates not merely a hearing or understanding problem, but one of alignment.

To illustrate this difference, consider first the following two excerpts, both of which involve a question-intoned repeat that serves to do more than initiate repair. In Excerpt 7, the participants are talking about the expense of visiting Jiuzhaigou—a well-known scenic spot in China; and in Excerpt 8, speaker W is reporting a guy's romantic pursuit of her roommate, only to be informed later by an interlocutor that this guy was also engaged in frequent exchanges of text messages with another woman (Huihui<sup>11</sup>) at the same time.

(7) (CMC 05–06, 03:30, audio 368a)

1M: *jiuzhaigou, qu na bian, dei hua duoshao qian a?*  
(place) go that side must spend how:much money PRT  
'How much does it take to go (on a trip) to Jiuzhaigou?'

2 (.)

3L:a → *tch! wo juede liang qian yinggai gou le. yi ge ren.*  
I feel two thousand should enough CRS one C person  
'tch! I think two thousand should be enough, for one person.'

4L: [(clears throat)]

5M:b → *[yi (ge) ren liang qian?]*  
one C person two thousand  
['Two thousand for one person?']

<sup>11</sup>For the protection of the participants' privacy, their names have all been changed.

6L:c → =uh.

PRT

=‘Yeah.’

7M:d → *na jiu xia bei le.*

then just next life CRS

‘Then (wait) until next life.’

8 (1.0)

9L: ganma?

what

‘What?’

10M: *tai gui le.*

too expensive CRS

‘(It’s) too expensive!’

11L: ↑*gui ma?*

expensive Q

‘↑Is it?’

12M: *tai gui le. tai gui le.*

too expensive CRS too expensive CRS

‘(It’s) too expensive! Too expensive!’

(8) (CMC 01–12, 02:59, audio 307b)

1W: *ranhou jiu shi- ↑ji:hu: ↓tian tian ta dou da- dianhua lai.=*  
then just be almost day day he all call phone come  
‘Then it was like- ↑al:most: ↓every day, he called- here.’=

2W: =*ranhou jiu shuo, wo lai- wanr a, shenme shenme.*  
then just say I come play PRT what what  
=‘Then (he’d) just say, “Let me come- visit” and all that.’

3W: *ta jiu guolai [wanr.*  
he then come:over play  
‘Then he’d come [visit.’

4Z: [*wo juede ta:: zhe duan shijian=*  
I feel he this C time  
[‘I think during that period of time’=

5Z:a → =*lao he huihui- fa duanxin (a). hhh=*  
always and (person) send text:message PRT (laugh)  
=‘he:: always- sent Huihui- text messages hhh.’=

6N: =*[hng!*  
(exclamation)

=[‘hng!’

7W: =[(smiles first but then turns into a surprised expression))

8W:b → <↑*fa duanxin?*

send text:message

<‘↑Sent text messages?’

9Z:c → *uh:.*

PRT

‘Yeah:.’

- 10W:d → ↑*zhiyu ma?*  
 necessary Q  
 ‘↑(Was that really) necessary?’
- 11 [(phone rings)]
- 12W:d → /↑*tian a. [zheme jin.*  
 god PRT this close  
 [‘↑God, [(it’s) so close (from his place to here).’
- 13Z: [*haowan bei.*  
 fun PRT  
 [‘(I think it’s) just for fun.’
- 14N: *wo qu jie.*  
 I go pick  
 ‘Let me pick up (the phone).’
- 15 (.)
- 16Z: *ranhou-*  
 then  
 ‘Then-’
- 17W:d → *wo juede hao:: nei ge, (0.2) hao langfei qian ou. hhh*  
 I feel so that C so waste money PRT (laugh)  
 ‘I think (it’s) quite:: uh- (0.2) quite a waste of money. hh’

Here, it can be noted that in each instance, a speaker initiates repair (arrow b) through a partial repeat of an interlocutor’s prior turn (arrow a), and that in each case, the repeat-formatted repair initiation is followed up with a negatively valenced response produced by the repeat speaker (arrow d) after the information being targeted is confirmed (arrow c). In this regard, there is a strong sense that the use of the question-intoned repeats in these two excerpts, unlike the ones we have seen in Excerpts 4 to 6, serve not merely to locate a hearing or understanding problem, but rather to highlight a piece of information about which an upcoming negatively valenced response is about to be projected.

It is worth noting, however, that just as in contexts that involve only straightforward repair initiation, the selection of a question-intoned repeat over an *a*-suffixed repeat in contexts involving negatively valenced work frequently adumbrates an epistemically weakened stance on the part of the speaker. In Excerpts 7 and 8, for example, we can note that, whereas the repeat speakers subsequently display a less-than-embracing stance toward the information being targeted, they do not challenge or contest the information itself. Rather, in both instances, the production of the question-intoned repeats appears to have more to do with the speaker’s display of a sense of unexpectedness toward the information: In Excerpt 7, this sense of unexpectedness is embodied in M’s production of a cry of dismay (*na jiu xia bei le* ‘then (wait) until next life’; line 7), which, like his subsequent comments (*tai gui le* ‘too expensive’) in lines 10 and 12, apparently treats the reported estimated travel expense as excessively high, rather than untrue; and in Excerpt 8, repeat speaker W, although producing a series of

subsequent responses (lines 10, 12, 17) that highlight the problematic nature of the event being reported, does not question the accuracy of the report of the event.

Whereas in Excerpts 7 and 8, the repeat speakers do not subsequently contest the information checked by the question-intoned repeats, many instances in this corpus nonetheless show that the use of question-intoned repeats can be disagreement-implicated. In most of these instances, however, even though the repeat speakers' subsequent moves convey a sense of doubt about the truth-value of the information being targeted, they commonly design and deliver their subsequent queries in an epistemically downgraded fashion. A case in point is Excerpt 9, where the two participants, L and M, are talking about a friend of M's, whose girlfriend was L's former classmate for several years at a university in Chengdu.

(9) (CMC 05-09, 00:55, audio 096b)

1L: *wo dou hai mei jian guo ta.*  
I all still N see ASP he  
'I haven't met him yet.'

2 (.)

3M: *mei jian guo ta ma?=  
N see ASP he Q  
'Haven't met him?'*=

4L: → =*<wo zai chengdu de:shihou jiu lao tingshuo.=*  
I at (city) when then always hear  
=‘I heard about him a lot when I was in Chengdu.’=

5L: =*ranhou (yao) dao beijing ye chang tingshuo.*  
than will come (city) also often hear  
=‘And then I also heard about him a lot in Beijing.’

6 (.)

7M: [*ni-*  
you  
[‘You-’

8L: [*jiu wen da ming.*  
long hear big name  
[‘Have heard his name for a long time,’

9L: *ranhou mei jian guo ren.*  
then N see ASP person  
‘but have never met him in person.’

10M: => ↑*ni zai chengdu lao tingshuo guo? tamen liang=*  
you at (city) always hear ASP they two  
‘↑You heard about him a lot in Chengdu? Didn't they’=

11M: → =*[bu shi zai, chengdu bu shi renshi, bu shi hen chang shijian (ma)?*  
N be at (city) N be know N be very long time Q  
=‘[in Chengdu- didn't (they) know- (each other) not for a long time?’

- 12L: =/wo tingshuo guo.  
 I hear ASP  
 =['I did.]
- 13L: zen::me bu shi hen chang?=  
 how N be very long  
 'How: couldn't (they have known each other) for a long time?'
- 14L: =dasan jiu renshi le ba.  
 junior then know CRS PRT  
 ='(I think) they knew each other since (they were) juniors.'
- 15L: yi nian duo me.  
 one year more PRT  
 '(They've known each other) for more than a year.'
- 16M: shi ma?  
 be Q  
 'Have they?'

Here, L's claim of having frequently heard about this man in Chengdu (line 4) suggests that the romantic relationship between this man and L's former classmate had already been kindled and had even become stable back then. To this information and implication, M launches a question-intoned repeat ( $\uparrow$ ni zai chengdu lao tingshuo guo ' $\uparrow$ you heard about him a lot in Chengdu?'; line 10), which is subsequently responded to with an affirmation (line 12).

That this question-intoned repeat by M serves more than to initiate repair can be evidenced by the fact that immediately following this question-intoned repeat, and without even awaiting a responsive affirmation, M launches a question (tamen liang bu shi zai, chengdu bu shi renshi, bu shi hen chang shijian (ma) 'didn't they in Chengdu- didn't they know- (each other) not for a long time?'; lines 10–11) that can be, and is in fact, heard as a challenge to the validity of L's prior claim (cf. L's rebuttal in line 13). Note, however, that although this follow-up question by M is challenge-implicated, it is delivered and designed in an epistemically weakened fashion: Not only is the question delivered with many hesitations and disfluencies, but the final shape it takes—a double negative construction (... bu shi renshi bu shi hen chang shijian (ma) '...**didn't** (they) know each other **not** for a long time?')—is epistemically much weaker than its affirmative version would be (...bu shi (zhi) renshi hen duan de shijian (ma) '...**didn't** (they) know each other **for a short period of time** (only)?').

A similar phenomenon of a question-intoned repeat followed by a challenge-implicated query that is nonetheless epistemically weakened can also be observed in Excerpt 10 next. Prior to this excerpt, the participants were jokingly urging L to join the Communist Party and to contribute to it by paying the membership fee, which is calculated based on a certain percentage of one's salary. Following an ensuing lapse after that sequence of talk is brought to a close, S renews the talk by announcing the membership fee he is paying.

- (10) (CMC 08, audio 003b/vtape-06:47:28; S-yellow, M-rightmost, L-middle.)
- 1S: *weile::: (.) weile nei shenme, =*  
 for:the:sake for:the:sake that what  
 ‘For the sake of:: (.) For the sake of the uh-’=
- 2S: *=wo xianzai yi ge yue de dang fei shi::: (.) shier kuaiqian.*  
 I now one C month ASSC party fee be twelve dollar  
 =‘now my membership fee is:: (.) twelve dollars a month.’
- 3 (0.5)
- 4M: → ↑ *ei*:::?  
 PRT  
 ‘↑*ei*:::?’
- 5S: [*ersh*i *kuaiqian*.  
 twenty dollar  
 [‘Twenty dollars.’
- 6S: [[*ersh*i *kuaiqian*.  
 twenty dollar  
 [[‘Twenty dollars.’
- 7L: [[*bu shi wushi kuai*.  
 N be fifty dollar  
 [[‘Isn’t (it) fifty dollars?’
- 8M: => *yi ge yue, (.) ershi kuaiqian?*=  
 one C month twenty dollar  
 ‘Twenty dollars- (.) for A month?’=
- 9S: =*uh*.  
 PRT  
 =‘Yeah.’
- 10M: → *dang fei zhan baifen zhi duoshao? (... a?)*  
 party fee occupy percent of how:much PRT  
 ‘What’s- the percentage for calculating the membership fee? (Is it/did you...?)’
- 11S: *meiyou. wo ba wode dangan fang (dang de rencai).*  
 N I BA my file put party ASSC personnel  
 ‘No. I placed my file under “personnel.”’
- 12 (0.5)
- 13S: *meiyou fang dao [(%(fastco)%]*  
 N put to (section title)  
 ‘(I) didn’t place it under [“(%(fastco)%.”)’
- 14M: [*nei ni nei ge::: (.) nei ni fuli ne?*  
 then you that C then you benefit PRT  
 [‘Then your:: (.) Then how about your benefits?’

Here, in response to the monthly dues that S reports that he is paying (line 2), M first produces a “response cry” (Goffman, 1981), that is, a high-pitched, doubt-implicated *ei* (line 4). After S self-corrects the amount of his membership fee (lines 5 and 6), M then initiates a question-intoned repeat (line 8).

Here, as with Excerpt 9, evidence that this question-intoned repeat is not merely repair-relevant but is rather doubt-implicated is provided by the repeat speaker's subsequent move: In line 10, the repeat speaker launches a query (*dangfei zhan baifen zhi duoshao*-‘what’s- the percentage for calculating the membership fee?’) that underscores an aspect involved that can potentially jeopardize the validity of S’s prior claim.<sup>12</sup> Note, however, that as with Excerpt 9, this query, although doubt-implicated, is delivered in an epistemically downgraded manner—cast in the format of a simple question-word question and apparently launched as a genuine pursuit of information (cf. M’s subsequent effort, in line 14, to pursue further information).

In both Excerpts 9 and 10, then, there is evidence that even though the question-intoned repeats embody a certain degree of doubt on the parts of the repeat speakers toward the information just received, such a stance, as in many other similar instances in the corpus, is substantially weakened and mitigated. In fact, if we consider the question-intoned repeats examined earlier (e.g., Excerpts 5 to 8), and the fact that across these instances, a predominant usage of question-intoned repeats is to embody a sense of unexpectedness on the part of the speaker, there is a sense that the uses of the question-intoned repeats in Excerpts 9 and 10 are strategic in nature. That is, by launching a question-intoned repeat, and thereby invoking a sense of the unexpectedness commonly associated with its use, the repeat speaker in effect marks the newly received information as less than expected and in need of clarification, rather than as less than truthful and in need of correction.

This difference, between marking a piece of information as less than expected versus marking it as less than truthful, can be more clearly demonstrated if we compare Excerpts 7 to 10 with those involving an *a*-suffixed repeat in similar negatively valenced contexts. In these latter instances, the repeat speakers commonly follow their *a*-suffixed repeats with a statement or query that in some way contradicts or compromises the information just received, and commonly displays a stronger epistemic stance toward the matter being addressed. Excerpts 11 and 12 illustrate.

Excerpt 11 comes from the same conversation as Excerpt 9, which, it may be recalled, contains a discussion of a romantic relationship between two mutual friends. Whereas in both excerpts speaker M initiates repair through a partial repeat of what his interlocutor has said in a prior turn, in Excerpt 11, next, M suffixes his repeat with the final particle *a* (line 2), in contrast to what he does (in line 10) in Excerpt 9.

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<sup>12</sup>Indeed, M’s displayed sense of doubt, embodied in his question-intoned repeat (line 8) and the subsequent query (line 10), seems to be justified: As S’s subsequent responses (lines 11, 13) reveal, the amount of the membership fee that S claims to be paying seems to be due to a special circumstance related to where he had filed his membership application.

(11) (CMC 05-06, 00:20, audio 315a)

- 1L: *hai, hebei jiu mei shenme hao difang.*  
 (sigh) (province) just N what good place  
 ‘((sighs)) There are not many good places in Hebei.’
- 2M: => *hebei a? =*  
 (province) PRT  
 ‘Hebei A?’ =
- 3L: =*uh.*  
 PRT  
 =‘Yeah.’ =
- 4 (0.5)
- 5M: → *langfang hai xing.*  
 (place) still OK  
 ‘Langfang is OK.’
- 6L: *uh::? (.) bu hui ba. =*  
 (PRT) N likely PRT  
 ‘Mm::? (.) Are (you) serious?’ =
- 7M: =*langfang yinwei xianzai yao jian yi daxue cheng.*  
 (place) because now will build one college town  
 =‘Because now (they) plan to build a college town in Langfang.’
- 8L: *diang. (na) xia zhao le. =*  
 (exclamation) that scare CP CRS  
 ‘Right! How impressive!’ =
- 9M: =*jiu shi li beijing jin. =*  
 just be away:from (city) close  
 =‘(It’s) just very close to Beijing.’ =
- 10L: =*wo dangnian kao- daxue de:shihou,*  
 I that:year test college when  
 =‘The year when I applied to- colleges.’
- 11L: *wo bao le yi ge- wujing kexue yuan.*  
 I apply ASP one C police science college  
 ‘I applied to- the Police Academy.’
- 12 (0.5)
- 13L: *qu nar mianshi, <wo jiu faxian, .hhh =*  
 go there interview I then find  
 ‘(I) went there for an interview. < Then I found out (that) .hhh’ =
- 14L: =*langfang hai meiyou (chengdu) xiancheng-(.) ganjing (.) zhengjie-(.) da.*  
 (place) yet N (place) county clean tidy big  
 =‘Langfang wasn’t as clean- (.) tidy- (.) or as big as (Chengdu) county.’
- 15M: *langfang nar mei ren guan. =*  
 (place) there N person take:charge  
 ‘Nobody is in charge in Langfang.’ =
- 16M: → =*xiao shihou wo ye zai langfang dai guo. =*  
 little when I also at (place) stay ASP  
 =‘When (I) was little, I also stayed in Langfang.’ =

- 17M: → =*dai guo ji ge yue.*  
           stay ASP one C month  
           =‘Stayed for several months.’  
 18     ((The storytelling continues.))

Here, in response to L’s comment (in line 1) about the lack of good places in the province of Hebei, M first repeats the name of the province and suffixes it with the final particle *a* (line 2). Following a responsive affirmation of this *a*-suffixed repeat (line 3) and a slight ensuing pause (line 4), M then produces a disagreeing response (line 5), in which he introduces an exception to M’s just-proffered negative evaluation of Hebei by claiming that one of its cities—that is, Langfang—is OK. Notice that compared with the negatively valenced response that M produces subsequent to his question-intoned repeat in Excerpt 9, this disagreeing response by M (in line 5) is designed and delivered with a much stronger epistemic stance: Not only is this disagreeing response delivered in a straightforward manner without much hesitation or disfluency, but it is also cast as a straightforward assertion that presents information contradictory to that which is being targeted, rather than as a query displaying weaker epistemic strength, as in Excerpt 9.

What is additionally noteworthy in Excerpt 11 is that, as is apparent from the ensuing talk (lines 7, 9, 15 to 18), not only does M have prior first-hand knowledge and experience concerning the city of Langfang, but it is precisely by reference to this knowledge and experience that he finds L’s prior comment in line 1 problematic. In this respect, therefore, M’s subsequent delivery of firmly asserted information that is contrastive with what L has just said, as well as his move to invoke his prior independent experience of this matter, are compatible with his selection of an *a*-suffixed repeat as a preindicative repair initiation; all of these actions display a stronger epistemic stance on the part of the speaker toward the matter being addressed.

Excerpt 12, from a conversation between two college roommates, provides a similar instance in which the speaker of an *a*-suffixed repeat subsequently moves to question the validity of the information being targeted. Where this excerpt begins, speaker H is in the midst of reporting an incident she saw on her way to school one day. In line 6, D interrupts H’s story-telling by first launching a repair initiation clarifying the place where this incident took place. After the place reference is clarified (lines 7 and 8), D then retrieves a piece of information that H had reported earlier (line 1), by repeating part of that information and suffixing it with the final particle *a* (line 9).

(12) (CMC 09 audio 150a)

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

- 2H: *.h ranhou faxian libian de nü de-*  
 then find inside ASSC female NOM  
 ‘hhh then (I) found the lady inside-’
- 3H: *↑zhang de hao yanshou [ou.*  
 look CSC very familiar PRT  
 ‘↑looked really famili[ar.’
- 4D: *[↑hhheng::*  
 (exclamation)  
*[↑hhheng::’*
- 5H: *xiang xiang xiang xiang, ↑a::[(...)*  
 think think think think (exclamation)  
 ‘(I) kept thinking and thinking and thinking and thinking, ↑ then [(...)’
- 6D: *[ (... ) zai nar a?*  
 at where PRT  
 [‘(...) where?’
- 7H: *jiu- jiu zai na- zanmen xuexiao na ge- (0.3) lu shang.*  
 just just at that we school that C road on  
 ‘(It was) just- just on- the road- (0.3) in the school’
- 8H: *xuexiao de lu shang.*  
 school ASSC road on  
 ‘On the road in the school.’
- 9D: => *↑huang se chuzuche a?*  
 yellow color taxi PRT  
 ‘↑A yellow cab A?’
- 10H: *um.=*  
 PRT  
 ‘Yeah.’=
- 11D: → *=xiali a?*  
 (cab company) PRT  
 =‘A Xiali (cab)?’
- 12H: *bu shi. huang se de.*  
 N be yellow color NOM  
 ‘No. (It was) a yellow one.’
- 13 (0.5)
- 14D: → *↑zher nar: you huang se de chuzuche [a?*  
 here where have yellow color ASSC taxi PRT  
 ‘↑How can there be yellow cabs [here?’
- 15H: *[you.=*  
 have  
 [‘There are.’=
- 16H: *=shang bian yi banr shi huang de, yi banr (bie ...)*  
 top side one half be yellow NOM one half other  
 =‘The top of the cab was half yellow,(and) half (another...)’
- 17D: *ou::.*  
 PRT  
 ‘Oh::.’

In response to H's affirmation (line 10) of the *a*-suffixed repeat, D initiates another repair by producing an understanding check (*xiali a* 'a Xiali (cab)?'; line 11), which takes the form of a best guess about the specific cab company that owns the yellow cab in question.<sup>13</sup> This understanding check is disconfirmed by H (line 12), who goes on to reaffirm the color of the cab, and, by implication, the validity of her prior report as well. In answer to this disconfirmation, D produces a question ( $\uparrow$ *zher nar: you huang se de chuzuche a* 'how can there be yellow cabs here?'; line 14), which is designed with the question word *nar* 'where,'<sup>14</sup> with slight stretching, as well as stress on the word *huang* 'yellow,' which represents the issue in question. In and through this design, the question can be heard as "pro-forma" in nature. That is, it is not meant to request new information but to challenge a prior utterance by conveying a corresponding negative assertion (cf. Koshik, 2003), namely, the assertion that there are no yellow cabs at all here. Clearly, this is what the interlocutor H interprets: In the next turn, she moves to confirm the accuracy of her report (*you* 'there are'; line 15), though in the meantime backing down with a modification of her prior claim (line 16).

Excerpt 12, then, offers us another instance in which the speaker of an *a*-suffixed repeat displays an orientation to independent knowledge and experience concerning the matter being addressed—and an instance in which the repeat speaker subsequently produces a challenge-implicated disaligning response that displays a stronger epistemic stance. If an epistemically weakened follow-up query, as argued earlier, retrospectively marks the prior question-intoned repeat as the speaker's display of a sense of unexpectedness toward the information just received (e.g., Excerpts 9 and 10), then the subsequent challenge-implicated response produced by D here, as well as her invocation of prior knowledge on the matter, can be seen as indicating that her previous *a*-suffixed repeat is not only unexpectedness-implicated, but is in fact disagreement-implicated.

In this section, we have examined cases in which question-intoned repeats and *a*-suffixed repeats are used not only to initiate repair but also to serve as vehicles for the accomplishment of negatively valenced interactional work. As I have dem-

<sup>13</sup>"Xiali" is the name of a cab company whose cabs, however, are red.

<sup>14</sup>In this question, D chooses to design the question with the question word *nar*, which literally means "where" in English. Although this question can possibly mean "Where (can one) find a yellow cab here" in some appropriate contexts, this apparently is not what is conveyed here, as can be evidenced by interlocutor H's subsequent response (line 15), which provides a reconfirmation, rather than the information about where a yellow cab can be found. Instead, this *nar* question apparently should be interpreted along another usage of *nar*, which does not denote the sense of *where*, but serves rather to convey a corresponding negative statement of the "pro-forma" question. That is, in saying "*zher nar you huang se de chuzuche a* ('how can there be yellow cabs here?')", what D in effect conveys is "There are no yellow cabs at all here." It should also be noted that in this particular context, D could have asked the question without *nar* (i.e., *zher you huang se de chuzuche a* 'there are yellow cabs here A?') or could have asked the question with the use of a question particle, *ma*, instead (i.e., *zher you huang se de chuzuche ma* 'are there yellow cabs here?'). Both versions, although still capable of serving as queries, are epistemically much weaker than the version with *nar* that D chooses.

onstrated, the choice between these two practices in this context is commonly determined by, and itself embodies, the epistemic stance of the speaker toward the information in question: Whereas the use of a question-intoned repeat is commonly accompanied by a follow-up negatively valenced response that is epistemically weakened or unexpectedness-implicated, an *a*-suffixed repeat is ordinarily followed by a negative response that displays the speaker's orientation to prior knowledge or experience of the matter at issue and that is often built with a stronger epistemic stance. Such a difference in the use of these two practices, I have also suggested, is consistent with the features these two practices exhibit in the context of straightforward repair initiation, in which the selection of an *a*-suffixed repeat over a question-intoned repeat similarly embodies a stronger epistemic stance on the part of the repeat speaker in the face of an information gap.

Having discussed the effect of the repeat speaker's epistemic stance toward the matter being addressed on their choice between these two repair initiations, we can turn now to the other axis relevant to the division of labor between these two practices: the sequential context and positioning of the initiation of repair.

### THE EFFECT OF THE SEQUENTIAL CONTEXT AND POSITIONING OF THE INITIATION OF REPAIR

In the previous section, I have shown how the epistemic stance of a repeat speaker toward the information being targeted can play a role in his or her selection of the repair initiation in implementing negatively implicated action. I have also shown that in contrast to a question-intoned repeat, an *a*-suffixed repeat ordinarily displays the speaker's stronger epistemic stance, which is commonly associated with some prior knowledge or experience whose validity or believability the speaker takes as over and above what the interlocutor has just claimed about the matter involved.

However, speaker epistemic stance is not the only axis relevant to the selection between these two repair initiations. This becomes clear if we examine a subset of cases that involves a question-intoned repeat but in which its speaker—just as what the speaker of an *a*-suffixed repeat commonly does (e.g., Excerpts 11 and 12)—subsequently moves to invoke prior knowledge or experience regarding the information being targeted. A unique feature of the majority of these cases is that such question-intoned repeats almost always occur in a sequentially disjunctive position; that is, either they are produced to address a prior turn by another that appears to have been abruptly launched or ill-fitted in its sequential context from the perspectives of the repeat speakers, or the very question-intoned repeats are produced in a sequentially abrupt manner. What this subset of cases suggests, then, is that question-intoned repeats can be, and indeed frequently are, chosen over *a*-suffixed repeats in sequentially disjunctive contexts. This usage of a question-intoned repeat, I would suggest, is consistent with its use to mark that which is being repeated

as unexpected or having come out of the blue, as we have observed in earlier examples (e.g., Excerpts 5 to 8).

Consider Excerpt 13, from a telephone conversation between two friends who practice a Chinese martial art together at the same association (the “Wulun” Association). Prior to this excerpt, B, who had been absent from classes for several days, has just told F that she does not know how to get to the sessions due to a recent change in bus schedules. This excerpt begins with B’s reiteration of her problem with transportation, which appears to be produced here as an implicit request for information, but which apparently is treated by F as an account for B’s absence and is merely responded to with an information receipt (line 4).

(13) (T-mom & bo 165)

- 1B: *dao na ge (wulun) chang a,*  
arrive that C (name) field PRT  
'(As for) how to get to the (Wulun) Association'
- 2F: *um.*  
PRT  
'Uh huh.'
- 3B: *zuo shenme lu hai bu zhidao lei.*  
sit what road still N know PRT  
'(I) don't know which bus to take yet.'
- 4F: *ou, zhe yangzi ou.*  
PRT this manner PRT  
'Oh, I see.'
- 5B:  $\uparrow$ *wu:lao kongpa y- .hhh ta- ta ye bu zhidao ba?*  
(person) afraid he he also N know PRT  
' $\uparrow$ Mr. Wu probably also- .hh He- he doesn't know either, right?'
- 6 (1.0)
- 7F:  $\rightarrow$  *wulun:: chang: wo- (0.5)*  
(name) field I  
'The Wulun:: Association: I- (0.5)'
- 8B:  $\rightarrow$   $\uparrow$ *bu shi, =*  
N be  
' $\uparrow$ No, '=
- 9F: *=ta xianzai shi zuo- (.) haoxiang zuo yibai lu.*  
he now be sit seem sit one:hundred road  
'=Now he takes- (.) seems to take Bus 100.'
- 10 (.)
- 11B:  $\Rightarrow$  *<yibai lu!>*  
one:hundred road  
<'Bus 100!>
- 12F: *dui. wu:lao shi zuo yibai.*  
right (person) be sit one:hundred  
'Yes. Mr. Wu takes 100.'

- 13 (1.2)  
 14B: → ou:?  
 PRT  
 ‘Yeah?’  
 15F: *en ehnhh* ((smile voice))  
 PRT PRT  
 ‘Uh huh.’  
 16B: → *oh, ta xianzai gai le yibai lu.*=  
 PRT he now change ASP one:hundred road  
 ‘Oh, now he’s changed to Bus 100.’=  
 17F: =dui::.  
 right  
 =‘Right::.’  
 18B: → *bu shi shiyi lu.*  
 N be eleven road  
 ‘Not Bus 11?’  
 19F: *dui, bu shi.*  
 right N be  
 ‘That’s right. No.’  
 20B: *haha*  
 (laugh)  
 ‘haha’

Here, not having been provided with any information on the proposed transportation problem, and possibly also taking F’s reaction (in line 4) as a sign of her not having a solution, B brings up the name of another fellow practitioner (*Wu Lao* ‘Mr. Wu’) and inquires about whether he may have knowledge about how to get to the association with the new bus schedules (line 5). Whereas this question by B in line 5 is designed in such a way that requires (minimally) only a confirmation or disconfirmation from the recipient, F appears to exhibit some difficulty in giving a response: Following B’s question, there is first a 1-s pause (line 6); thereafter, F attempts to provide a response, which nonetheless ends with yet another pause before reaching a possible completion point (line 7).

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

Indeed, this seems to be what happens here. In line 8, apparently to remedy such a perceived misunderstanding on F’s part, B undertakes to initiate what Schegloff (1992) terms a *third position repair*, which regularly takes the form, “No, I don’t

mean X. I mean Y.” However, just as B finishes producing the first component, *bu shi* ‘no,’ and is apparently on her way to completing this third position repair, she is interrupted by F, who moves at this point to resume her earlier suspended response (line 9). It is to this interruptive response by F that B launches a question-intoned repeat (*yibai lu!* ‘bus 100!’; line 11).

It should be noted that F’s response in line 9 (*ta xianzai shi zuo- (.) haoxiang zuo yibai lu* ‘now he takes- (.) seems to take Bus 100’) not only is interruptive of B’s prior turn in progress (line 8), but also shifts away from the line of response introduced (yet not completed) in F’s own prior turn (*wulun:: chang: wo-* ‘the Wulun:: Association: I-’; line 7). In this regard, F’s response can be seen, from B’s perspective, as “doubly disjunctive” and hence may strike B as having come out of the blue. I would suggest that it is just this (dual) sense of the unexpectedness of the occurrence of F’s response at this point in interaction that has prompted B—who otherwise appears to have some prior knowledge of the matter being inquired about (cf. her reactions in lines 14, 16, and 18)—to choose a question-intoned repeat, rather than an *a*-suffixed repeat, in initiating the repair.

Excerpt 14, from a conversation recorded in Beijing, provides another instance in which a question-intoned repeat is launched to respond to an utterance that from the perspective of the repeat speaker seems to have come unexpectedly. At this point in talk, the participants are eating watermelon served by host S.

(14) (CMC 04–01, 01:38, audio 038a)

- 1W: *buguo wo juede beijing- bendi de gua,*  
but I feel (city) local ASSC melon  
‘But I think watermelons grown locally in Beijing-’
- 2W: *yiban dou ting hao.*  
generally all pretty good  
‘generally are all pretty good.’
- 3 (.)
- 4S: *un, (yingai dou shi.)*  
PRT should all be  
‘Yeah, ((they) all should be).’
- 5G: ((humming))
- 6W: *erqie haoxiang ye bu tai gui.*  
in: addition seem also N too expensive  
‘In addition, (they) don’t seem too expensive.’
- 7 (0.5)
- 8S: *xianzai: [: ] yi kuai.*  
now one dollar  
‘Now [: ](they’re) one dollar.’
- 9W: *[xianzai (wu::)]*  
now five  
[‘Now (they’re) (five: )’]

- 10W: => ↑*yi kuai?*  
one dollar  
'↑One dollar?'
- 11 (.)
- 12S: *yi kuai ba jiu mao, dou you.*  
one dollar eight nine ten:cents both have  
'One dollar and eighty cents or ninety cents, one of those.'
- 13W?: *uh- huh.*  
PRT PRT  
'Uh- huh.'
- 14S: *zhe tian yi re, ta jiu zhang (...)*  
this weather one hot it then rise  
'When it becomes hot, the price goes up (...)'
- 15S: *tianqi liang (dianr)/(qilai) a.=*  
weather cool a:bit ASP PRT  
'When it becomes (a bit) cooler'=
- 16?: =*ei-*  
PRT  
'Hey-'
- 17W: → *wo juede nei- nei- nei duan shijian,=*  
I feel that that that C time  
'I think during th- th- that time, '=
- 18W: → =*hai shi wu liu mao naxie.*  
still be five six ten:cents those  
'(they) were still like fifty or sixty cents, those prices.'
- 19S: *shenme shihou a?=  
what time PRT  
'When (was it)?! '=*
- 20G: =↑*nar name pianyi a?=  
where that cheap PRT  
'↑How can (they) be so cheap?! '=*
- 21S: =↑*mei you na[me pianyi de ba.*  
N have that cheap NOM PRT  
'↑Can't be [that cheap.'
- 22W: → [*wuyue gang kaishi. =wuyue.*  
May just start May  
['In the beginning of May. =In May.'
- 23 (.)
- 24S: *shi ma?*  
be Q  
'Was (it)?'
- 25G: *uh:.*  
PRT  
'Yeah:'

Here, W initiates a line of talk about watermelons in Beijing: She first produces an assessment of the general quality of the watermelons (lines 1–2), and then after host S agrees with that assessment (line 4), W proceeds with a second assessment, this time of their prices (line 6).

In turn, this second assessment by W attracts a response from S (line 8), who, as it turns out, attempts to provide a piece of information made relevant by W's assessment, namely, the price of watermelons. Note, however, that in the midst of completing her turn, and in an apparent search for the price, S exhibits some hesitation (*xianzai*: 'now::'; line 8) in finishing her utterance in progress. Note then that as S is engaged in the information search, W moves to produce a bit of talk (*xianzai* (*wu*::) 'now (they're) (five: )'; line 9), which apparently is projecting something about the price of watermelons as well.<sup>15</sup> However, before this projection by W is brought to a possible completion, S manages to complete her prior turn in progress with the sought-for information (i.e.,  $\uparrow$ *yi kuai* '↑one dollar'; line 8), intersecting what W is attempting to project. In response, W aborts her turn in progress and produces a question-intoned repeat of that information in the next turn ( $\uparrow$ *yi kuai?* '↑one dollar?'; line 10).

In Excerpt 14, then, the question-intoned repeat, as in Excerpt 13, is launched to address another's prior turn of talk that was produced while the repeat speaker was engaged in completing a turn in progress and that also introduced information not in complete congruence with that which the repeat speaker was about to project. Here, then, there is a basis for arguing that the occurrence of the prior talk at that particular interactional moment can appear unanticipated by the repeat speaker. Again, this sense of unexpectedness appears to result in the repeat speaker's choice of a question-intoned repeat over an *a*-suffixed repeat even though the repeat speaker, as the ensuing talk makes clear, in fact has first-hand access to the matter being discussed and apparently believes herself to have a stake in it (cf. W's responses in lines 17 to 18, and 22 in the ensuing disagreement sequence in Excerpt 14).<sup>16</sup>

In Excerpts 13 to 14, the question-intoned repeats are both launched to address a prior turn by another, which from the repeat speaker's perspective, has come abruptly and unexpectedly. However, question-intoned repeats are also observed in contexts where they themselves are brought up in a sequentially abrupt

<sup>15</sup>Indeed, as S's later talk (lines 17–18) suggests, what S may have been projecting and yet may have ended up aborting here is her version of the price of watermelons, namely, the sentence *xianzai* (*wu*::) *liu mao zuoyou* 'now (they're) about (fifty::) or sixty cents.'

<sup>16</sup>In this example, however, there may be a blurred boundary between the unexpectedness having to do with the way in which the trouble source turn is brought up, and the problem having to do with the information contained in the trouble source—namely, that the unexpectedness is related to a huge discrepancy between the target information and the repeat speaker's prior knowledge of it. Compare with the section, "Deviant Cases? Question-intoned Repeats in the Context of Intensified Nonalignment."

manner. Excerpt 15, taken from a conversation between two graduate roommates, provides a case in point. Prior to this excerpt, J was reminiscing about the day she took the national high-school entrance exam, telling X how she got up so early on the exam day that she ended up falling asleep while taking the English exam later that morning.

(15) (Roommates b122)

- 1J: *women laoshi shuo- zenyang,*  
we teacher say how's:that  
'My teacher said- "How did (you) do?"'
- 2J: *you mei you- bawo- bawo?*  
have N have confidence confidence  
'"Do you have- confidence- confidence?"'
- 3J: *wo shuo, °meiyou° [↑wo wan le.*  
I say N I dead CRS  
'I said, "°No.° [↑I am dead."'
- 4X: [hhh  
(laugh)  
[‘hhh’
- 5J: [(yin-)  
because  
[‘(Beca-)’
- 6X: [*keshi ni daodi you mei you xie wan ne?*  
but you on:earth have N have write finish PRT  
[‘But in the end, did you finish writing (the English exam)?’

((4 turns omitted in which X clarifies that she did finish the test in the end but not with the usual quality she would have achieved.))

- 11J: *hhhh tch! hhh genben zhichi bu liao. (uh- na- j-)*  
(laugh) (laugh) base bear N CP  
'hhhh tch! hhh Just couldn't keep from falling asleep. (uh- then-)'
- 12J: *ranhou mei ci lihua de:hua, (.)*  
then every time Physics/Chemistry if  
'Then every time the Physics/Chemistry (exam), (.)'
- 13J: *ni zhuanchang de kemu dou zai xiawu kao.=*  
you specialty ASSC subject all at afternoon test  
'the subject you're particularly good at is always given in the afternoon.'=  
=uh:.  
PRT  
='Yeah:.'
- 15J: *lihua yiding dou pai xiawu de a.*  
Physics/Chemistry definitely both schedule afternoon NOM PRT  
'The Physics/Chemistry exam is definitely scheduled for the afternoon.'

- 16X: *dui a.*  
right PRT  
'(That's) right.'
- 17 (0.3)
- 18J: *wo na shihou dou hen lei a,*  
I that time all very tired PRT  
'I was very tired then.'
- 19J: *zhongwu you bu neng shuijiao.*  
noon further N can sleep  
'Plus, (we) couldn't take a nap during the lunch break.'
- 20X: => ↑*zhongwu bu neng shuijiao?*  
noon N can sleep  
'↑Couldn't take a nap during the lunch break?'
- 21J: *wo(men) qu nabian shuijiao (a)? wo(men) qu nabian shui(jiao)?*  
we go where sleep PRT we go where sleep  
'Where could (we)/(I) take a nap? Where could (we)/(I) take a nap?'
- 22X: → *a ni keyi-zai-jiaoshi limian shuijiao a.*  
PRT you can at classroom inside sleep PRT  
'You could- at- take a nap in a classroom.'

In lines 1 and 2, J proceeds with another episode of the story by reporting a dialogue she had with her teacher after the entrance exam was over. She first reports herself to have responded to her teacher's inquiry about her performance on the exam with negative news (line 3). Thereafter she goes on to continue the story, which apparently is begun with a (cut-off) *yinwei* 'because,' and is apparently projecting an account of some sort (line 5). This story, however, is interrupted by a clarification question launched by X at the same time (line 6). It is only several turns later when the issue in this question has been clarified that J begins to resume her story (line 11).

In resuming her story, it appears that J attempts to report on another factor that further contributed to her failure on the entrance exam: her (apparently worse-than-expected) performance on the Physics/Chemistry exam. We can note that in proceeding with this telling, J appears to try to first lay out some background information with regard to this Physics/Chemistry exam, including the information that this is the subject she is particularly good at (line 13), that this exam is always scheduled for the afternoon (line 15), and that she had become extremely tired by the time she took this exam, in part because she was unable to take a nap during the lunch break (lines 18 to 19). Whereas all this information apparently is given by J to set the stage for the punch line she seems to be projecting (namely, that she did poorly on this exam), before the punch line is delivered, X launches a question-intoned repeat (↑*zhongwu bu neng shuijiao* '↑couldn't take a nap during the lunch break?'; line 20), in effect interrupting the storytelling in progress. Here, it can be noted that this question-intoned repeat, like those observed in Excerpts 13

and 14, serves not merely to locate a hearing or understanding problem, but to project a disalignment-implicated response invoking some prior knowledge of the repeat speaker (line 22). Additionally, in this instance, as with Excerpts 13 and 14, the selection of a question-intoned repeat in contexts in which an *a*-suffixed repeat is otherwise commonplace apparently again serves to mark a sense of unexpectedness. In this case, though, what is being marked as unexpected is not so much in the trouble source turn as in the repair initiation itself; that is, the question-intoned repeat marks the sequential abruptness of the action being done through the repeat, embodying the repeat speaker's projection of the unexpectedness of his or her action for the interlocutor.

What Excerpt 15 allows us to see, then, is that disalignment-implicated question-intoned repeats, aside from their use to address a prior turn by another, which from the repeat speaker's perspective, has come abruptly, are also used as means by which a recipient undertakes to intervene in another's talk-in-progress in order to problematize a particular issue. This usage of question-intoned repeats stands in sharp contrast to the use of *a*-suffixed repeats in similar contexts. Excerpt 12, which we have examined earlier and which is partially reproduced here for convenience, offers one such instance:

(12) (CMC 09 audio 150a)

- 1H: =*jiu kan yi liang huang se chuzuche guo:qu le.*  
 then see one C yellow color taxi pass:by CRS  
 = 'and then (I) saw a yellow cab passing by,'
- 2H: .*hhh ranhou faxian libian de nũ de-*  
 then find inside ASSC female NOM  
 'hhh then (I) found the lady inside-'
- 3H: ↑*zhang de hao yanshou [ou.*  
 look CSC very familiar PRT  
 '↑looked really famili[ar.'
- 4D: [↑*hhheng::*  
 (exclamation)  
 [↑*hhheng::*']
- 5H: *xiang xiang xiang xiang, ↑a:: [(...)*  
 think think think PRT (exclamation)  
 '(I) kept thinking and thinking and thinking and thinking, then ↑ [(...)'
- 6D: [ (... ) *zai nar a?*  
 at where PRT  
 [ '(... ) where?'
- 7H: *jiu- jiu zai na- zanmen xuexiao na ge- (0.3) lu shang.*  
 just just at that we school that C road on  
 '(It was) just- just on- the road- (0.3) in the school'
- 8H: *xuexiao de lu shang.*  
 school ASSC road on  
 'On the road in the school.'

9D: => ↑*huang se chuzuche a?*  
 yellow color taxi PRT  
 ‘↑A yellow cab A?’

((4 lines omitted))

14D: → ↑*zher nar: you huang se de chuzuche [a?*  
 here where have yellow color ASSC taxi PRT  
 ‘↑How can there be yellow cabs [here?’

In this excerpt, we can see that even though it is clear from D’s subsequent moves (e.g., lines 9 and 14) that the color of the cab that H claims to have seen (line 1) appears questionable to D based on her prior knowledge and experience, D does not immediately initiate repair on it as a trouble-source. Here, D could have—as repeat speaker X in Excerpt 15 indeed does (in line 20)—initiated repair when the trouble-source turn came to a possible completion point (line 1). In doing so, however, D not only would have collided with H’s move to launch another component of the story (lines 2 and 3) but would also have, in effect, interrupted the story-in-progress—which is what X in fact does in Excerpt 15. Instead, we can note that not only does D not initiate repair directly following the trouble-source turn, she also passes on another opportunity to do so and provides a brief aligning response (i.e., *hhheng*, a newsmark; line 4) in its place when this second turn-constructive unit launched by H (lines 2 and 3) comes to a place of possible completion. It is only when H continues her telling with yet another on-topic turn-constructive unit (line 5) that D moves to put the sequence-in-progress on hold by use of a question (line 6).

Note here that whereas the question in line 6 apparently is launched by D to clarify the place where the incident happened, this does not seem to be the sole purpose of the use of this question. Rather, we can note that following H’s responses (lines 7–8) to this question, D, instead of registering the receipt of the information and thereby closing that sequence, moves to retrieve (and subsequently problematize) H’s earlier claim about the cab (line 1) through an *a*-suffixed partial repeat (line 9). In this regard, D’s question in line 6 can be seen as being employed as a preliminary to her follow-up repeat-formatted repair initiation; that is, it is meant to secure, on D’s part, a correct and complete understanding of the event being talked about before she follows up with a disagreement-implicated repair initiation. In effect, this preliminary question by D (line 6), though itself interruptive of H’s storytelling, provides the relevance for the production of the follow-up repeat-formatted repair initiation (line 9), exempting it from being interruptive in its sequential context. Note here that this “noninterruptive” repeat-formatted repair initiation, in contrast to the one we have observed in Excerpt 15, is *a*-suffixed.

In summary, I have demonstrated in this section that question-intoned repeats are commonly chosen over *a*-suffixed repeats in sequentially disjunctive contexts:

They may be used to address an interlocutor's prior turn that from the repeat speaker's perspective has been abruptly launched in its sequential context (e.g., Excerpts 13 and 14), or their own occurrences can be seen as sequentially disruptive (e.g., Excerpt 15). As I have also demonstrated, such an effect of sequential context and positioning on the choice between these two repeat-formatted repair initiations can, and often does, prevail in cases where the repeat speakers turn out to have independent prior access to the matter being addressed—cases in which an *a*-suffixed repeat would otherwise be commonplace, as demonstrated in the previous section. This suggests that although the selection of a question-intoned repeat versus an *a*-suffixed repeat is closely related to the distribution of knowledge between the repeat speaker and his or her interlocutor, what the selection encodes is not always how the state of knowledge is objectively distributed or the speaker's subjective evaluation of it, but can rather be a display by the speaker of how he or she perceives the trouble source turn or repair initiation to figure in its sequential context.

#### DEVIANT CASES? QUESTION-INTONED REPEATS IN THE CONTEXT OF INTENSIFIED NONALIGNMENT

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

However, question-intoned repeats are sometimes observed to occur in contexts that are neither sequentially disruptive nor in which the negatively valenced responses they project appear in any way mitigated. Although instances like this initially seem to conflict with the preceding account, on examination the use of question-intoned repeats in these cases appears to continue to mark “unexpectedness.” Excerpt 16, which is a continuation of the same sequence that we have seen in Excerpt 7, provides a case in point. In the following excerpt, the talk has turned to the issue of how long it takes to get from Beijing to the scenic spot, Jiuzhaigou, which is located in another province.

(16) (CMC 05–06, 04:02, audio 375a)

1M: *jiuzhaigou (nabianr), wo yizhi ting xiang qu de.*  
(place) there I always very want go NOM  
'I've been sort of wanting to visit Jiuzhaigou.'

- 2 (0.5)
- 3M: *dan wo zhe yunche bu xing.* =  
but I this car:sickness N work  
'But with me having car-sickness, (it just) won't work.' =
- 4M: *=tamen shuo jiuzaigou nar,*  
they say (place) there  
='They said (to get to) Jiuzhaigou,'
- 5M: *guang zuo qiche yao zuo wu ge zhongtou.*  
just sit car require sit five C hour  
'(it)'ll take five hours just by car.'
- 6M: *[xia si.*  
scare dead  
['Really scary.'
- 7L: => *[↑wu: ge zhongtou?*  
five C hour  
['↑Five:: hours?'
- 8 (.)
- 9M: *du che du te lihai.*  
jam car jam particular strong  
'Traffic (there) is really bad.'
- 10L: *du che du wu ge zhongtou hai chabu[duo.*  
jam car jam five C hour still about:right  
'(That you'll be) jammed in traffic for five hours is more [likely.'
- 11M: *[dui.*  
right  
['Right.'
- 12M: *jiu shi man manr yi:dianr yi:dianr zou,*  
just be slow slow a:little a:little walk  
'I mean (if the car) drives slowly bit by bit,'
- 13M: *cong zher dao mudidi, wu ge zhongtou.*  
from here to destination five C hour  
'it'll take five hours, from here to the destination.'
- 14L: → *zuo che wu ge zhongtou ke bu xing.* =  
sit car five C hour just N work  
'There is no way (you can arrive there) in five hours by car.' =
- 15L: → *=ta shuo yi tian.*  
she say one day  
='She said (it'll) take one day.'
- 16 (.)
- 17L: *chabuduo.*  
more:or:less  
'Or so.'
- 18 (0.5)
- 19L: → *[hen yuan, tebie yuan a.*  
very far particular far PRT  
['(It's) very far. Terribly far.'

- 20M: [(um-)  
PRT  
[‘(Um-)’
- 21M: *bu shi zuo huoche, xia lai ma?*  
N be sit train down come Q  
‘Isn’t it true that (one can) take a train, to go down (there)?’
- 22L: *zuo huoche shi nar zuo huoche.=qiche.*  
sit train be where sit train car  
‘Where can you take a train?! =(It’s all) by car.’

If we begin the examination of this segment with the question-intoned repeat that L initiates in line 7 (↑*wu*: *ge zhongtou* ‘↑*five*:: hours?’), we see that this question-intoned repeat, though produced in overlap with a summary assessment by M (line 6), occurs arguably in a transition relevance place in which M’s report (lines 1–5) about his desire for, and concerns about, visiting this scenic spot can be seen as having been brought to a possible completion. As discussed earlier, in this sequential context, question-intoned repeats are commonly produced either as a speaker’s display of a lack of understanding of the element being repeated, or as a vehicle for projecting a negatively valenced response that is epistemically weakened or surprise-implicated.

In this excerpt, however, neither seems to be the case. Without going into too much detail in this very involved sequence,<sup>17</sup> we can note first that following L’s question-intoned repeat, recipient M produces two rounds of relevant accounts in the following turns (lines 9 and 12–13). While both rounds of accounts suggest that M is treating L’s question-intoned repeat as a display of L’s noncomprehension of the information being addressed, and possibly a display of puzzlement as to why it would take as long as 5 hr to reach the destination, L’s subsequent reactions (lines 10 and 14–19) nonetheless indicate that what is involved in her use of this question-intoned repeat is not merely a problem of noncomprehension but one of nonalignment—namely, that getting to this scenic

<sup>17</sup>There seem to be several levels of misunderstanding between M and L involved in their talk from line 7 to line 15. On one level, as is clear from the ensuing talk, while L’s question-intoned repeat embodies her stance that 5 hr is an extremely short amount of time to get to this scenic spot, M apparently takes L’s question-intoned repeat as a display that the claimed 5-hr travel time is unexpectedly long. This misunderstanding is related to, and seems to breed, a second misunderstanding: In line 9, apparently interpreting L’s question-intoned repeat as a display of not understanding why it would take as long as 5 hr to reach the scenic spot, M provides an account, explaining that this is due to the bad traffic. Although what M means in line 9 is that it will take 5 hr to reach this scenic spot because one would normally be stuck in bad traffic on the way there, L apparently takes what M has said in line 9 to mean that it would take a total of 5 hr alone stuck in bad traffic if one drives there. This second misunderstanding appears to become clear to L only after M’s second round of account (lines 12 to 13), following which L makes clear that it is out of the question to get to this scenic spot by car in 5 hr (lines 14 to 15, 17, 19).

spot by car within 5 hr, as M has just claimed, is out of the question. We can note further that unlike the other disalignment-implicated question-intoned repeats in nonsequentially disruptive contexts that we have seen earlier (e.g., Excerpts 9 and 10), the disaligning responses projected by L's question-intoned repeat here are produced not in a mitigated fashion but rather in the form of confidently asserted informing or counterinforming that either presents information contradictory to what L has just said (e.g., lines 14–15 and 19) or in some way undermines its tellability (line 10).

A unique feature of this excerpt, and cases like it in the present corpus, is that there always turns out to be some striking discrepancy between the information targeted by the question-intoned repeat and what the repeat speaker understands the issue to be. In this excerpt, for example, L subsequently reveals and contends that this scenic spot is not just “very far” (*hen yuan*) but “terribly far” (*tebie yuan*; line 19), and that in fact it is so far away that getting there by car will take 1 full day (lines 14 to 15). In light of this background information, M's reported estimated travel time (i.e., 5 hr) can thus be seen by L as so remotely possible that this newly reported information by M may appear initially to arrive out of the blue. Here, L's question-intoned repeat appears to embody just this kind of initial reaction—that is, marking a sense of unexpectedness on the part of the speaker. However, unlike the cases discussed in the previous section, the unexpectedness being so marked here concerns not so much the abruptness with which another's prior talk is brought up in the local context, but the strikingly big gap between the newly received information and the repeat speaker's prior knowledge and understanding of the matter being addressed.<sup>18</sup>

Before leaving this section, it may be worth registering that given the capacity of question-intoned repeats to mark that which is being repeated as utterly beyond expectation, the possibility can be entertained that this feature may make question-intoned repeats an apt and well-suited resource for projecting *intensified* or *outright* disagreement. That is, by (strategically) marking what another has said in a prior turn as having come out of the blue, the speaker can in effect problematize the target information while at the same time reinforcing the legitimacy or adequacy of the position he or she is holding. However, while such a usage seems

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<sup>18</sup>It should be noted that a question-intoned repeat could also serve to mark a dual sense of unexpectedness—that is, a sense of unexpectedness regarding not only the manner with which the information being repeated is brought up but also the information itself. A possible case in point is Excerpt 14, about the prices of watermelons in Beijing. As discussed earlier, the question-intoned repeat (↑*yi kuai?* ‘↑one dollar?’; line 10) in this excerpt embodies the repeat speaker's orientation to a sense of unexpectedness toward the occurrence of this information at that particular sequential moment. As we can now note, in view of the big discrepancy between the information being repeated (i.e., that the price of watermelon is one dollar) and the repeat speaker's prior knowledge of the price (i.e., fifty or sixty cents, lines 17–18), there is a sense that this question-intoned repeat may serve, in part, to embody a sense of unexpectedness toward the information itself as well.

plausible, and, on occasion, even familiar to the ear, there are no clear exemplars of this kind in the data at hand. This proposal thus awaits further investigation and should be treated as impressionistic at present.

## CONCLUSION

Over the years, other-initiation of repair has been a recurrent theme in conversation analysis and related fields, and is perhaps one of the most studied conversational phenomena that have been examined across languages. To contribute to this growing body of research, this study has examined, in detail, the use of two repeat-formatted other-initiated repair practices—namely, question-intoned repeats and repeats suffixed with the final particle *a*—in Mandarin conversation.

Using a conversation analytic framework, this study has first shown that like other-initiation of repair in English, the two target Mandarin repair initiations serve not only to initiate repair but also as vehicles for accomplishing additional negatively valenced actions, such as displaying a stance of surprise, disbelief or nonalignment. In further explicating the common sequential and activity contexts of their occurrences, this study has also shown that these two repair initiations, while occurring in seemingly overlapped contexts, exhibit a consistent fine-tuned division of labor—whether used as straightforward repair initiations or in the service of implementing additional negative actions.

Specifically, in contexts involving straightforward repair initiations, repeats suffixed with the final particle *a*—in comparison with question-intoned repeats—ordinarily embody a higher epistemic stance on the part of the speaker. This is evidenced by the fact that while *a*-suffixed repeats are commonly intended (and treated) as a candidate hearing or understanding of another's less than transparent talk and require (minimally) a recipient confirmation (or disconfirmation) only, question-intoned repeats commonly embody a recognition or understanding problem on the part of the speaker and frequently serve to mark that which is being repeated as unexpected or having come out of the blue from the speaker's perspective.

In contexts in which repair initiations serve as harbingers of upcoming negatively valenced responses, the division of labor between these two repair initiations was found to be sensitive to two intertwining axes: the epistemic stance of the speaker who initiates the repair and the sequential context and positioning of the initiation of repair. Here, we have observed that *a*-suffixed repeats are commonly followed by a negatively valenced response that either invokes some prior knowledge of the speaker concerning the matter at issue or is in some other way built with a relatively strong speaker epistemic stance. In contrast, question-intoned repeats are ordinarily the preferred choice in the following three contexts: (a) contexts in which the repeat speaker subsequently delivers a negatively

valenced response that is epistemically weakened or unexpectedness-implicated, (b) contexts in which the initiation of repair figures in a sequentially disjunctive location, and (c) contexts in which there turns out to be some striking discrepancy between the information targeted by the question-intoned repeat and what the repeat speaker understands the matter to be. I have argued that in all three contexts, what question-intoned repeats consistently embody is a sense of unexpectedness on the part of the speaker toward that which is being repeated. That is, in contrast to *a*-suffixed repeats, which ordinarily mark that which is being repeated as less than truthful or appropriate by reference to the repeat speaker's prior knowledge or experience, question-intoned repeats serve mainly (and strategically sometimes) to mark that which is being repeated as less than expected. Such a differential stance display, I have also argued, is consistent with, and is in fact carried over from, the basic meanings these two repair initiations index when serving as straightforward repair initiations.

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

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## APPENDIX 1

### Transcription Conventions

The transcription conventions used in this article follow those developed by Jefferson (1984), with some modifications (cf. Wu, 2004).

#### Overlapping Talk

- [ A left bracket indicates the point at which a current speaker's utterance is overlapped by the talk of another, which appears on the next line attributed to another speaker. If there is more than one left bracket in an utterance, then the second indicates where a second overlap begins. Both the utterance that is overlapped and the utterance that overlaps are indicated by this symbol.
- [[ In cases where confusion may arise due to high frequency of overlaps among conversational coparticipants, a double left bracket will be used to resolve the possible confusion.

#### Silence

- (0.5) Numbers in parentheses indicate silence, represented in tenths of a second.
- (.) A dot in parentheses indicates a “micropause.”

#### Code-Switching

- %oh% A pair of percentage signs indicates that the talk between them is produced in languages other than Mandarin, such as English or Taiwanese.

#### Various Aspects of Speech Delivery

- :: Colons are used to indicate the prolongation or stretching of the sound just preceding them. The more colons, the longer the stretching.
- Underlining is used to indicate some form of stress or emphasis.

- : Combinations of underlining and colons are used to indicate intonation contours.
- A hyphen after a word or part of a word indicates a cut-off or a self-interruption.
- .hhh Hearable aspiration is shown where it occurs in the talk by the letter *h*—the more *hs*, the more aspiration.
- < A left-facing arrow marks the onset where a stretch of talk is markedly rushed or compressed.
- > A right-facing arrow marks the onset where a stretch of talk is markedly slowed or drawn out.
- = Equal signs are used to mark that (a) there is no interval between adjacent utterances by different speakers, the second being latched immediately to the first; (b) different parts of a single speaker's utterance constitute a continuous flow of speech although they have been carried over to another line, by transcript design, to accommodate an intervening interruption.
- ↑ An upward-pointing arrow marks rising shifts in intonation.
- ↓ A downward-pointing arrow marks falling shifts in intonation.
- Double degree signs indicate that the talk between them is quieter than the surrounding talk.

### Other Notation

- () When all or part of an utterance is in parentheses, this indicates uncertainty on the transcriber's part.
- An arrow sign of this type specifies the target of focus in the transcription.
- => An arrow sign of this type specifies the primary target of focus in cases where an arrow sign has already been deployed to direct readers' attention to some turn structure in facilitating the interpretation of some overall sequential contexts.

## APPENDIX 2 Abbreviations

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