

**JYX**



**This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.**

**Author(s):** Duran, Derya; Jakonen, Teppo

**Title:** Mobilizing 'context' : Vocabulary checks in ESL tutoring sessions

**Year:** 2022

**Version:** Accepted version (Final draft)

**Copyright:** © 2022 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

**Rights:** CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

**Rights url:** <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

**Please cite the original version:**

Duran, D., & Jakonen, T. (2022). Mobilizing 'context' : Vocabulary checks in ESL tutoring sessions. *System*, 107, Article 102816. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2022.102816>

**Authors:** Derya Duran\_a & Teppo Jakonen\_b

a. Department of Language and Communication Studies, University of Jyväskylä, Finland  
[deryadrnn@gmail.com](mailto:deryadrnn@gmail.com)

b. School of Languages and Translation Studies, University of Turku, Finland  
[teppo.jakonen@utu.fi](mailto:teppo.jakonen@utu.fi)

**Title:** Mobilizing ‘context’: Vocabulary checks in ESL tutoring sessions

**Year:** 2022

**Journal:** System/Elsevier

## **Abstract**

This study investigates the practice of unplanned and emergent vocabulary checks, i.e. turns through which a speaker explicitly checks whether the recipient knows a word, in small-group tutorial instruction. The data are video-recorded English as a second language (ESL) tutoring sessions between a native English speaker tutor and ESL students at an urban community college in the United States. By drawing on conversation analysis, we analyze how vocabulary checks emerge sequentially and with the help of contextual interactional resources. Findings suggest that vocabulary checks constitute a practice for managing both shared understanding and pedagogical concerns. By singling out a vocabulary item as possibly unknown to the student, the tutor can attend to weak signals for a student’s non-understanding and orient to having epistemic primacy over the English language, thereby “talking into being” the role of a language expert. The checks pave way for vocabulary teaching moments by making word definitions and explanations interactionally relevant, which provides opportunities for language learning. The study highlights the intricate relationship between context, intersubjectivity and pedagogy in small-group tutoring contexts, an awareness of which can help practitioners reflect on the role of contextual resources in their teaching.

**Keywords:** Conversation analysis, epistemics, ESL tutoring, L2 learners, vocabulary checks

## **1. Introduction**

Small-group tutorials are common instructional activities in many educational institutions around the world. Tutorials are perhaps most pervasively integrated into degree studies at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge (Ashwin, 2005), but they are also used in many other higher education contexts, for example as a means to organize writing conferences at which an instructor or a more

experienced peer helps students with their written assignments or dissertation drafts. Yet, another typical context for tutoring, which we also explore in this article, are so called language labs: places in which students completing their degrees in a second language can get language-related assistance from a native speaker tutor in an unstructured and learner-centered manner.

Previous conversation analytic (CA) studies have investigated the details of one-on-one or small-group tutorial interaction, exploring topics such as giving and receiving advice (e.g. Leyland, 2020; Park, 2012, 2014; Waring, 2005), the nature and limits of expertise (Back, 2016; Skogmyr Marian et al., 2020), the role of material artefacts (Ro, 2021), provision of feedback and assessment (Koshik, 2002; Shvidko, 2018) and tutorials' affordances for language learning (Belhiah, 2013; Young & Miller, 2004). These studies suggest that although the exact purposes and practical arrangements of tutorials may differ considerably from one context to another, tutorials differ from classroom education with respect to the number of participants and in terms of how participants manage knowledge and knowledge asymmetries. As Waring (2005) suggests, the tutor and tutee in a typical academic writing conference may have "competing areas of expertise" (p. 141), the tutor being an expert in writing and the student in content-related matters. This can make the situation epistemically less asymmetric than in many classrooms and manifest itself in practices of advice resistance (see also Park, 2014). Indeed, tutors do not always hold themselves in the epistemically privileged role of a 'knower' (Heritage, 2012) in tutorial interaction (see e.g. Back, 2016; Skogmyr Marian et al., 2020), unlike teachers in much of classroom plenary teaching (Mehan, 1979). This suggests that investigating participants' interactional orientations to knowledge, i.e., how they observably manage their "relative rights to tell, inform, assert, or assess something" (Stivers et al., 2011, p. 13), can provide a useful perspective for understanding the reflexive relationship between interaction and tutorial-specific pedagogical practices (cf. Seedhouse, 2004).

As we suggested above, tutorials differ from classroom-based teaching in a number of respects. In comparison to the significant body of research on teacher-student interaction in language classrooms, considerably fewer interactional studies have examined how participants identify and work on language gaps that emerge during the relatively flexible and unplanned interaction that characterizes many tutorial activities. Despite the lack of formal lesson plans, tutorials have pedagogical goals, and they differ from some other small-group learning activities organized for second language (L2) speakers such as 'conversation tables' (see e.g. Mori &

Hayashi, 2006), the purpose of which is typically to offer L2 speakers non-instructed opportunities for spoken interaction with first language (L1) speakers. Thus, we set to explore what kind of a pedagogy of vocabulary instruction emerges through interaction in this kind of an instructional setting: how vocabulary knowledge is embedded in, and dependent on, the ongoing task activity and courses of action, in other words, the context. This paper contributes to the existing CA research on tutorial interaction by exploring the relationship between intersubjectivity and pedagogy in vocabulary instruction at language labs offered to second language students. Intersubjectivity is a concept that can be approached from many theoretical perspectives, but from an interactional viewpoint, it can be defined as “joint understanding and sharing of experience between humans” (Lindström et al., 2021, p. 1).

Investigating video-recorded tutoring interactions in the language lab of a US community college, we focus on an interactional practice that we refer to as ‘vocabulary checks’. In previous CA literature, the term does not have a single established meaning, and it has been used in the context of linguistically or culturally asymmetric conversations to refer to both L2 and L1 speakers’ practices. For example, Hosoda (2006) viewed vocabulary checks as implicit requests for confirmation that L2 speakers make to native speakers by ‘try-marking’ vocabulary items in their speech through rising intonation or sound stretches. In contrast, Bolden (2014) used the term to describe a practice for cultural socialization in immigrant families whereby a culturally more experienced speaker checks a less experienced speaker’s knowledgeability of vocabulary items through explicit questions. In our study, we conceptualize vocabulary checks along the lines of Bolden (2014) and use the term to refer to questions querying whether the recipient knows or is familiar with a word that the speaker either uses in talk or that is otherwise present in task materials. We aim to explore the relationship between vocabulary checks and the different interactional, sequential and task contexts where such checks unfold. Through a close sequential analysis, we attempt to show how, through the deployment of vocabulary checks, the English as second language (ESL) tutor in our data demonstrates sensitivity to potential asymmetries in knowledge and understanding in L1-L2 interaction and positions herself as a language expert. This involves managing the double task of ensuring a local shared understanding, i.e. intersubjectivity, related to the ongoing activity, and attending to more general tutorial-relevant pedagogical concerns. Before turning to analyze the vocabulary checks in our data, we briefly sketch prior CA findings on questions designed to check the recipient’s knowledge or understanding.

## **2. Checking co-participant's knowledge and understanding in social interaction**

Different kinds of questions to check a co-participant's knowledge, and explanations that may follow them, are routine interactional resources for maintaining and achieving intersubjectivity in everyday and instructional interaction. Such knowledge checks can be employed in interaction between L1 speakers to show an orientation to the fact that a particular term, the topic of talk, or a domain of expertise may be unfamiliar to the recipient (Bolden, 2014; Kitzinger & Mandelbaum, 2013; Searles & Barriage, 2018). Earlier CA studies have shown that speakers design their talk to suit the demands of particular recipients in everyday interaction (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979) and, in doing so, make visible provisional assumptions about their own as well as the recipients' expertise and knowledge (Heritage, 2012). In some institutional settings, participants may expect that epistemic asymmetries are addressed in an explicit manner. To give an example, Kitzinger and Mandelbaum (2013) demonstrated how healthcare experts answering helpline calls by laypeople use questions such as 'do you know what doulas are?' to check whether the callers understand the meaning of specialized terms used by the expert. Such questions, and the 'lay definitions' with which they are often coupled with, display the expert's "judgment [...] about the knowledge, expertise and competence of their co-conversationalist" (Kitzinger & Mandelbaum, 2013, p. 183). Similarly, Bolden (2014) examined how presumed differences in both cultural and linguistic knowledge can be made visible in cross-generational family interactions. Her study shows how clarification requests, reformulations and/or explanations of everyday expressions were some of the resources with which asymmetries in knowledge related to the heritage culture and language were managed in interaction in Russian-American immigrant families.

Interactional checks of the co-participant's knowledge and understanding are also found in instructional settings, in which they can have a range of pedagogical and learning-related functions (see e.g. Escobar Urmeneta & Evnitskaya, 2014; Jakonen & Morton, 2015; Kim, 2019; Nanbu, 2020; Sert, 2013). These checks may provide opportunities for teachers to identify 'unknowing' students and maintain mutual understanding (Sert, 2013) as well as for students to seek help from teachers or more knowledgeable peers (Jakonen & Morton, 2015) by topicalizing the recipient's knowledgeability. For example, Koole (2010), investigating Dutch secondary school classrooms, distinguished between practices for displaying knowing and understanding. In Koole's data, 'do you know?' formatted questions are a teacher's practice of checking students' previous knowledge of a referent, which call for a demonstration of 'having known' before the question was asked.

These questions are typically found in “dialogue type” explanations (p. 207), constructed through a series of initiation-response-evaluation sequences.

Similar teacher practices for inviting displays of students’ knowledgeability are found in language instructional contexts. Analyzing interaction between learners in oral proficiency tests, Nanbu (2020) argued that ‘do you know?’ questions aim at a “public instantiation of intersubjectivity” (p. 30). Investigating teacher-led discussions in a content and language integrated (CLIL) biology class, Escobar Urmeneta and Evnitskaya (2014) demonstrated how ‘do you know X?’ formatted questions can be a means to anticipate students’ understanding problems and to mediate between scientific and everyday vocabulary. These questions could also lead to teacher reformulations of scientific terms and translation to the L1 when students did not produce displays of knowing.

In another study, Kim (2019) examined the affordances for learning of knowledge check questions between two L2 learners and a tutor in everyday interaction. She found that ‘do you know X?’ and ‘do you know what X is?’ were not only used to check the recipient’s knowledge of a word but also as a way to introduce a new topic in conversation. Likewise, You (2014) maintains that the interrogative ‘do you know?’ can function to examine recipient’s “knowledge, understanding and/or recognition” of something or someone (p. 32). Drawing on recognition checks of references with ‘do you remember?’ and ‘do you know?’ in English and German both in everyday and classroom interaction, You (2014) maintains that these checks serve the same overall purpose: to establish a mutual ground of understanding and knowledge. The author claims that ‘do you know?’ is usually found prior to ‘do you remember?’ when they occur together in the same sequence of conversation, which is related to the fact that “do you know is less ‘imposing’ on the recipient’s knowledge domain” (p. 195).

There has perhaps been less attention on what exactly drives teachers to occasionally problematize the knowledgeability or understanding of a student. In this regard, a study by Waring et al. (2013) is of direct relevance to our current focus on vocabulary checks in tutorial interaction. Waring et al. (2013) showed that teachers in adult ESL classrooms may problematize vocabulary items by way of questions such as ‘you know what X is?’ either unilaterally or bilaterally. In unilateral situations, the teacher selects an item as the focus of a vocabulary explanation sequence without any kind of student display or indication of trouble related to the item. In bilateral problematization, an item becomes the topic of a teacher-initiated vocabulary sequence following

a display or indication of student trouble. Such indications of trouble could include things such as inaccurate pronunciation, production of an incorrect form or use of a word, to name a few.

The current study builds on, and contributes to, these and other similar CA studies that have taken interest in interactional practices for checking a co-participant's knowledge in instructional settings. More specifically, we examine episodes in which participants orient to asymmetries in word knowledge between an L1 English language tutor and L2 tutees by way of vocabulary checks. In our data, such checks typically take the linguistic form 'do you know what they mean by X?' or 'you heard the word X?' and are overwhelmingly presented by the tutor to a tutee. Participants treat these questions as "known information questions" (Mehan, 1979) and orient to the asker as the participant with a more knowledgeable epistemic status (Heritage, 2012) than the recipient regarding word knowledge. The questions are designed to check if the (L2) recipient also knows the word. In analyzing such checks as an instructional practice, we focus on (1) how correction and word explanations emerge as relevant activities through vocabulary checks, and (2) how vocabulary check sequences are shaped by the task/activity context. In terms of the sequential environment of vocabulary checks, we pay particular attention to what happens immediately prior to an interactional turn that is designed to check whether the recipient knows a vocabulary item as well as how responses to such turns are offered and treated in so-called 'third turns' (predominantly by the tutor).

### **3. Data and method**

The data for this study were collected in ESL tutoring sessions at an urban community college in the northeast United States. Fifteen naturally occurring tutorials between one English native speaker tutor and seven English non-native speaker tutees were video-recorded over five weeks during spring 2019. The duration of each session ranged from 60 to 120 minutes, and altogether the corpus amounts to 18 hours of data. The primary goal of these sessions was to support the linguistic needs of ESL students in the diverse population of a large metropolitan area. The tutoring sessions were hosted in the college ESL lab, a physical space dedicated to supporting the students' English language acquisition, familiarization with the U.S. and academic practices in their institution. Students could visit the lab anytime and book an appointment with one of the tutors to practice their language skills (speaking, writing, grammar, etc.) and improve their academic as well as cultural knowledge.

The tutees in our data were aged between 18-34 and came from Bangladesh, Ukraine, Belarus, Ecuador, Senegal and Thailand, and majored in different disciplines. We did not have access to students' language proficiency test results, but the students had stayed in the U.S. for 1.5-6 years at the time of data collection. The students' oral skills in English varied, and some of them reported having few chances to engage in conversations with native English speakers outside the classroom. The tutor had been working in the ESL lab for 1.5 years, teaching ESL writing, conversational practice and exam practices. She was also about to complete a master's degree in TESOL for adults at an American university at the time of recording. Each participant signed an informed consent form, approved by the institutional review board of the community college. In the presented extracts, we have removed any references to the institution and its location. All participants' names have been changed to ones that are similar in terms of gender and nationality to secure anonymity. We have also blurred the face of those participants who requested it as part of informed consent.

The agenda of those meetings was set either by the students or by the tutor, which made the sessions flexible in terms of contents. Students could for instance bring their own assignments for the tutor to check or ask to practice casual conversational talk with the tutor. If students had no particular agenda, the tutor would offer some suggestions to work on and provide students with instructional materials either from the ESL lab or from her own resources. The data include both dyadic and small-group tutoring interaction. Some of the tutees in the small groups also knew each other from classes, which contributed towards a relaxed and familiar atmosphere in the tutorial meetings. The sessions took place in the open floor plan tutoring space, so while they were private conferences, they were also visible to everyone else in the tutoring area.

We have approached the recordings in the methodological framework of Conversation Analysis, CA (see e.g. ten Have, 2007). A basic tenet of CA is a sensitivity to how participants construct and make sense of actions in their sequential environment. Such an emic perspective to interaction involves paying attention to things that participants themselves make relevant as they interact with each other. A key methodological resource for interpreting participants' orientations is what Sacks et al. (1974) have referred to as the (next-turn) proof procedure, a "by-product" (p. 728) of the turn-taking organization. Because of the sequential nature of interaction, a turn will be heard to respond to a just-prior turn, which means that speakers can gain a sense of how their turn has been understood by others by monitoring others' conduct in subsequent turns. These real-time



participant orientations and understandings are also available to the analyst, and provide a resource for grounding analytical claims in data-internal evidence.

The initial stage of data analysis began by watching video recordings multiple times to familiarize ourselves with the data. As any detail of interaction could be potentially relevant for understanding participants' orientations, a fine-grained analysis of talk and embodied conduct was needed. The video recordings were thus transcribed following the standard CA conventions developed by Jefferson (2004) with slight alterations (see Appendix). The transcriptions include notations of participants' embodied conduct, such as gaze and gesture, when participants orient to it as a relevant resource for the on-going activity. We made several preliminary observations on the transcripts and eventually identified a phenomenon of interest: explicit queries of whether the recipient is familiar with a particular lexical item, i.e. vocabulary checks. As the goal of CA is to document systematic practices within interaction, we collected every episode in which a participant produces a vocabulary check, altogether 28 vocabulary checks. An overwhelming majority of these checks (n=27) was performed by the tutor. Only one tutee-initiated vocabulary check was observed in the dataset, which we also analyze in the next section as a deviant case (see Extracts 5a & 5b) to illustrate how the interactional implications of a vocabulary check are starkly different when a tutee checks their peer's word knowledge. We examined each episode on its own terms and as part of the broader collection. To present findings from our analysis, in this paper we closely examine five vocabulary check episodes that show variation in the practice in terms of the nature of 'trouble' as well as the interactional and task context.

#### **4. Analysis**

The vocabulary checks in our dataset appear as part of different kinds of language learning activities. Most checks come after a word has been mentioned or encountered in task materials, and typically take the form of questions such as 'do you know what X means?', 'you know what I mean by X?', 'you ever heard the word X?' or 'you heard this one?'. As we will show in this section, vocabulary checks are unplanned and emerge through side sequences (Jefferson, 1972) within some larger tutorial activity such as reading aloud passages, going through word lists, and so on. The checks do not seem as repair initiations in the sense that they would address a specific trouble source in prior talk, hearing or understanding. Instead, they make visible an inference that the recipient might not know or understand a word that is relevant for the on-going pedagogical activity. By checking knowledge of a vocabulary item, a participant is drawing the recipient's

attention to a vocabulary item and making it into an object of inquiry in tutoring meetings. Such inquiries demonstrate an orientation to potential knowledge asymmetries between the participants, and often lead to action sequences in which correction and word explanations become relevant. In what follows, we will discuss ways in which the tutor orients to student conduct as a sign of potential unfamiliarity of a word to the student (Extracts 1 & 2). We will then analyze how identification of an unfamiliar expression can be a collaborative effort between the tutor and the student (Extract 3a), and how word meanings are contextualized in subsequent word explanations (Extracts 3b & 4). Finally, we will discuss a deviant case that illustrates how a student's vocabulary check presented to a peer involves taking up the institutional identity of the teacher and can be used as a device for humorous teasing (Extracts 5a & 5b).

#### 4.1 Checking an incorrectly pronounced expression

Extract 1 comes from a dyadic reading activity in which the tutor and the student (Ira) are investigating a sample reading test that Ira will need to take. Prior to the extract, they have been reading the text and working on the comprehension questions of the test. As the student reads aloud the text and mispronounces the word 'staged', the tutor treats it as an indication that the meaning of the expression 'staged emergency' may be unfamiliar to the student, and thus in need of checking.

##### Extract 1. Staged emergency

```

01  T   do you wanna read the second paragraph?
02  Ira  uhh:: (.) ↑yep
03      (1.8)
04      in one >experiment,< (0.6) in behavioral, (0.4)
05      behavioral p- (.) pha- (0.4) philosophy [students?
06-> T                                     [psychology
07      (.)
08  Ira  psychol- oh my god
09      (1.4) ((Ira taps paper with pen))
10      psychology? (0.4) students were seated in a room
11      either alone or in a: (.) groups of three? (0.3)
12      as a (0.3) state (0.4) [of e-
13-> T                                     [staged
14  Ira  staged emergency ((taps paper with pen))
15-> T   do you know what they mean by that?
16  Ira  (°no°)
17      (0.7) ((Ira looks at paper, slightly frowns))
18  T    like a f- (0.5)
19      it wasn't a real emergency but it was like <acting>
20  Ira  acting (.) okay ((underlines))
21      (2.8) ((Ira keeps looking at text & nods))
22  Ira  staged emergency occurred? ((continues to read aloud))

```



The tutor corrects in an explicit manner (see Jefferson, 1987) the student's reading on two occasions, at lines 6 ('psychology') and 13 ('staged'). In the first case, the student produces a word, 'philosophy', with difficulty, after two cut-off attempts and a short intra-turn silence (line 5). The tutor immediately corrects this by providing the word ('psychology') that is written in the reading passage. In response, Ira begins to repeat the correct form of the word but soon cuts off and orients to her reading error as a gross mistake (line 8). The self-deprecating expression 'oh my god' is a way to mark her error as something that she should have been able to read correctly (see also Park, 2007, pp. 349-350). Ira also touches the paper with her pen (possibly the place that contains the word 'psychology', see Fig. 1.1).

Ira repeats the complete, corrected word and continues to read aloud the text (lines 10-11). At line 12, she takes a short intra-turn silence before uttering the word 'state'. Following a 0.4 second silence, the tutor corrects the reading, similarly to the previous occasion, by providing a correction ('staged') to replace an erroneous word ('state'). Touching the paper with her pen (presumably the word 'staged'), Ira responds by producing the complete compound noun ('staged emergency') which the target word is part of. However, in contrast to the previous correction, Ira does not account for the reading error or otherwise indicate that she should have been able to read the adjective correctly.

Immediately afterwards, the tutor asks at line 15 whether Ira knows what the compound noun ('that') means and shifts her gaze to Ira (see Fig. 1.2). In response, Ira produces a barely audible turn that sounds like a softly spoken display of no knowledge (line 16) and maintains her gaze on the text frowning slightly. By explaining what the expression 'staged emergency' means in this context (lines 18-19), the tutor shows that she analyses Ira's response to indicate lack of knowledge of the term. In her uptake, Ira repeats a word in the tutor's explanation ('acting') and claims to understand the explanation ('okay', line 20). Underlining a part of the text, Ira continues to read aloud the passage from the problematic expression onwards (line 22).

It is interesting that, in Extract 1, two reading errors are identified but only the latter of them leads to a vocabulary check. It may be that 'psychology' is treated as a word that an average student can be expected to know more likely than the less frequent compound noun 'staged emergency'. Indeed, Ira's self-deprecating 'oh my god' (line 8) is hearable to the tutor as a claim of knowing what 'psychology' means, whereas simply continuing to read aloud in line 14 after being corrected does not make such a claim. It is also noteworthy that the vocabulary check is not

yet presented directly after the inaccurately pronounced word ('staged'), but only after the entire compound noun has been read aloud. This allows the participants to examine the problematic word within the context of the reading passage, as does the formulation of the check as asking for what 'they mean by that' (line 15). The pursued and relevant meaning is thus the situated and subject-specific expression in the reading passage and not the general "dictionary definition" of a single word.

#### **4.2 Introducing a word as a possibly unknown item**

In the next extract, the tutor and two students are doing a synonym activity. The tutor is showing Ali a list of words for which the tutor and the other student, Ana, have been trying to find synonyms, so far with little success. The activity is organized so that the tutor says a word from the list and asks Ali to provide a synonym for the word. When Ali has trouble providing a synonym for the phrasal verb 'get worse', the tutor introduces a possible synonym so that she simultaneously checks Ali's knowledge of the vocabulary item (line 20).

#### **Extract 2. Decline**

01 T what about to get worse.  
 02 (2.5) ((Ali looks around))  
 03 Ali feel bad  
 04 (1.6)  
 05 T (>tha's) about< feeling bad>but when< something gets worse



06 Ali o:kay (1.0) (°just °)  
 07 (10.0) ((Ali leaves table & comes back))  
 08 T there's two words (.) they start with dee  
 09 (1.5)  
 10 Ana °dee° ((looks at list in front of T))  
 11 (2.0) ((T nods to Ana))  
 12 T that mean the same thing ((looks at Ali))  
 13 (6.9)  
 14 Ali decrease  
 15 (3.6) ((T looks at list & frowns))  
 16 T that means to get ↓less  
 17 (0.7) to be less. (0.9) ((T flips notebook))  
 18 but (to ge-) something gets ↓worse  
 19 (6.6) ((Ali stares in mid-distance, T & Ana look at Ali))  
 20-> T you heard the word decline?  
 21 (0.5)  
 22 Ali oh [yeah  
 23 Ana [oh ↓yeah [(.) mm hmm ((nods))  
 24 T [decline  
 25 (1.5) ((T writes))  
 26-> T also (2.1) deteriorate  
 27 Ali [ye::ah  
 28 Ana [°uh-uh° ((shakes head))  
 29 T like his (.) his muscle condition has  
 30 deteriorated (0.4) meaning [it's gotten worse  
 31 Ana [ohh okay  
 32 Ana uh-huh



At line 5, the tutor does not accept Ali's initial synonym suggestion ('feel bad') but contrasts it with the sought-for answer by way of two gestures, the first one pointing towards oneself and the other one depicting a downward movement (see Figs. 2.1 & 2.2). Ali acknowledges the rejection and leaves the table for a brief moment.<sup>1</sup> As he comes back, the tutor provides a hint for the 'correct

<sup>1</sup> Ali goes beyond the camera frame, which means we are not able to tell why exactly he leaves the table. He is, however, visible to the tutor and Ana, who do not continue the activity during line 7, suggesting that they are 'waiting' for Ali to return to the table and to resume the activity with a new response.

response' by telling what the first letter of two possible words is (line 8). Ali offers another synonym, 'decrease' (line 14). A lengthy silence ensues during which the tutor displays in an embodied manner that the response is problematic by looking at her word list and frowning. At lines 16-18, the tutor rejects the suggestion by defining what Ali has just said and contrasting that with the original phrasal verb, 'to get worse' through an intricate series of hand gestures.

Ali takes this as an indication to keep searching for the correct synonym and assumes a thinking face during the ensuing lengthy silence (line 19), while the tutor and Ana maintain their gaze on him. The tutor breaks the silence by offering the 'correct answer' (line 20). The grammatical design of the turn and the turn-final rising intonation make the turn hearable as a "double-barreled" action (Schegloff, 2007), which serves not only as an announcement of a 'correct' response but also a vocabulary check directed to Ali. In other words, it queries whether Ali knew the meaning of the word 'decline' prior to the tutor's announcement (see also Koole, 2010). Ali and Ana claim 'having realized' that they are familiar with the word with nearly identical turns ('oh yeah').

Conversely, when the tutor announces the second possible answer ('deteriorate') at line 26, which functions as another vocabulary check, she receives mixed evidence regarding whether the students are familiar with the word. Ali claims to recognize the word (line 27), but unlike at line 22, his turn does not begin with 'oh' and the 'yeah' is noticeably more stretched. These features make his claim of knowing the word weaker than at line 22. Ana, in turn, shakes her head, not knowing the word (see Fig. 2.3). These aspects in student uptake may explain why the tutor does not explain 'decline' but instead offers an explanation for 'deteriorate' (lines 29-30) by giving an example sentence featuring the word. To sum up, so far, we have shown how the tutor can attend to student conduct (mispronunciation in Extract 1; silence in Extract 2) as a contextual indicator of unfamiliarity of a word to the students.

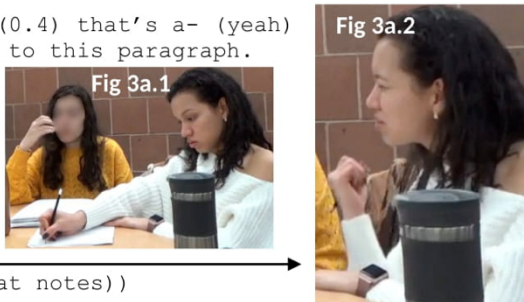
#### **4.3 Identifying and explaining an unfamiliar expression in tutor talk**

Vocabulary checks can also involve a considerable amount of learner agency, and the next extract illustrates how a student does extensive work to indicate lack of knowledge of an expression uttered by the tutor. Extract 3a shows the tutor giving feedback to Liz on an essay that she is writing during the tutoring session, at the same time as the tutor is teaching different things to three other students. The tutor uses the phrasal verb 'to deal with' in her suggestion on how to revise a part of the essay (lines 1-8). Liz picks up the verb from the tutor's extended turn and orients to it

as problematic. The vocabulary check eventually comes at line 30, after considerable effort by both parties to pinpoint the trouble source.

### Extract 3a. Deal with

01 T I would say like the life hits us so much, (0.6)  
 02 >hits us a lot< even with, (.) you know  
 03 (1.8) ((Liz picks up pencil & begins to write))  
 04 traumatizing experiences (are) very difficult  
 05 experiences to deal with  
 06 (1.4) ((Liz nods))  
 07 and we learn from those experiences (0.4) that's a- (yeah)  
 08 I would leave that (0.6) and then go to this paragraph.  
 09 Liz °okay°  
 10 (1.5) →  
 11 Liz with very different experience?  
 12 (0.9)  
 13 Liz with  
 14 (0.8)  
 15 Liz °( )° →  
 16 T .hh  
 17 Liz (you said) with different? ((points at notes))  
 18 T experie[n]ces  
 19 Liz [(then) you say a good (.) a good uhh, ((points at T))  
 20 (1.6)  
 21 T that are (.) (>maybe<) that are difficult to deal with right?  
 22 (10.6) ((Liz writes))  
 23 Liz °these things are difficult (to)° ((points at paper))  
 24 (0.7)  
 25 T deal (.) deal  
 26 (0.8)  
 27 Liz deh- (0.2) >detail<=  
 28 T =DEAL  
 29 (0.9)  
 30-> T like, (0.4) do you know what I mean by deal with?



Liz follows the tutor's extended advice turn (lines 1-8) by taking notes. She picks up her pencil during the intra-turn silence at line 3 and begins to write on the paper in front of her (see Fig. 3a.1). Even if Liz's gaze is on the paper and withdrawn from the tutor, she signals alignment and agreement with the advice-giving activity by nodding (line 6). Liz ends note-taking and, at line 11, utters parts of the tutor's turn with some modification ('different' instead of 'difficult experiences'). The turn is a designedly incomplete utterance, DIU, (Koshik, 2002) that requests the tutor to respond by providing a formulation that would complete it. The tutor does not take a turn, and as Liz pursues the missing response at line 13 ('with'), she gazes towards the tutor, squints her eyes and leans forward (see Fig. 3a.2). Through such embodied conduct, she shows that she could not catch every bit of what the tutor said. As the tutor does not take a turn during the ensuing silence, Liz reiterates her request with a slightly different DIU, and by pointing at her notebook to show that her talk is linked to her notes. The tutor completes Liz's DIU with the word



‘experiences’ (line 18). Liz continues to direct the tutor’s attention to a different part of the tutor’s earlier revision suggestion at line 17, indicating that she is after a specific part that came afterwards (‘then’) and was well-said.

When the tutor provides the expression ‘difficult to deal with’ (line 21), Liz begins to make notes, and following a lengthy silence, makes another DIU while pointing at her paper (line 23). The tutor provides the trouble item ‘deal’ twice, the first one of these with emphasis (line 25). Liz repeats the target word with signs of trouble: she cuts off the first attempt and, after a pause, utters a different word (‘detail’). The tutor repeats the correct word with yet more emphasis, and when Liz does not produce a verbal response but instead keeps gazing at the tutor, she takes this as an indication of unfamiliarity with the word and proceeds to check if Liz knows the meaning of ‘deal with’ with a yes/no interrogative (line 30).

Extract 3b shows how the tutor explains the expression ‘deal with’ to Liz, using pen, paper and out loud spelling.

### Extract 3b. (continuation of Ext. 3a)

```

30 T like, (0.4) do you know what I mean by deal with?
31 (1.1)
32-> T d-e-a-l
33 (1.0) ((Liz writes))
34 Liz oh dial? [(0.3) like this?
35 T [no no no no ((shakes head))
36-> (2.9)
37 Liz oh deal okay °okay° ((nods & puts down pencil))
38 (0.7)
39-> T like to manage=
40 Liz =uh-huh= ((nods))
41 T =difficult to manage
42 (1.7) ((Liz orients to passersby))
43 T difficult to deal with
44 (2.3) ((Liz's gaze follows other passersby))
45 Liz deal (°okay°)
46 (2.3)
47 T (°to°) deal with
48 (2.4) ((T writes))
49-> T or difficult to handle ((continues to write))

```



Liz’s utterance at line 34 approximates the word ‘dial’, which provides for an inference that she has not recognized the word ‘deal’ in the tutor’s letter-by-letter word spelling (line 32) following the vocabulary check during which the tutor orients to Liz (see Fig. 3b.1). The tutor initiates correction (line 35) and writes something on paper during the subsequent silence, possibly the word ‘deal’ (see Fig. 3b.2). Liz both demonstrates recognition of the word (through more ‘standard’ pronunciation) and claims it (‘okay okay’) at line 37. The initiation of correction thus



indicates that the tutor monitors the student's pronunciation for interactional signals of trouble concerning word knowledge.

Once the trouble regarding word recognition has been settled, the tutor explains 'deal with' by offering synonyms for it (manage, handle). She first provides an alternative verb on its own (line 39), then as a replacement of 'deal with' in her original expression (line 41), followed by the original expression (line 43). There is limited uptake from Liz, who is visibly disengaged and orients to people passing by their desk in the crowded ESL lab during the silences at lines 42 and 44. When Liz re-engages the dyadic interaction, she only utters part of the problem expression ('deal', line 45). The tutor treats this as indicating a need for further correction, and she repeats the whole expression at line 47. She also writes on the paper, and based on her hand movements, it could be the word 'with' to complete the expression 'deal with'. Similarly, the tutor seems to write the second alternative, 'to handle', on the same piece of paper (line 49). Both instances of handwriting can be seen as ways of making 'learnable' vocabulary items visible to Liz (see also Majlesi, 2014).

In summary, 'context' is being treated as relevant in Extracts 3a and 3b in two different ways. The tutor's vocabulary check is preceded not only by a long struggle by the student to query an expression but also a mispronunciation (line 27) and lack of uptake (line 29) after the tutor provides the target word: the check shows an orientation to these as a sign of lack of knowledge. Added to this, the tutor's actions towards the end of Extract 3b display an orientation to contextualizing the meaning of the unknown word by fitting the explanations and synonyms that she offers in the original linguistic environment (i.e. 'difficult experiences to deal with' in Extract 3a).

#### **4.4 Orienting to task context in an explanation**

In a similar fashion, the next extract illustrates how the task context configures what constitutes a relevant word meaning in explanations following a vocabulary check. The extract shows the tutor and Ira working on a sample reading text to prepare Ira for an exam that she has to take. They have been reading the text, and as Extract 4 begins, the tutor tells Ira how she should construct her response essay in the exam. In this context, the tutor checks whether Ira knows what a 'summary' means (line 5) and quickly rejects Ira's explanation-in-progress that might not in everyday language use be so far apart from 'summary' but that implies confusion of key essay-writing terminology.

## Extract 4. Summary

01 T so, (.) the [name of the test] is structured like this.  
02 (1.7)((T writes in the notebook))  
03 the first part of the essay (.) is the summary.  
04 (3.0)((T writes & underlines a word))  
05-> now (.) do you know what a summary is?  
06 (0.4)  
07 Ira conclusion? (0.4) like the- what uhh- (.)  
08 [what uhh (end is-)  
09 T not a conclusion ((smiles))  
10 (0.6)  
11 T (the) conclusion is at the end.  
12 Ira uhm::= ((puts hand in front of mouth))  
13-> T =what's a summary.  
14 Ira okay  
15 (1.6)((turns page, looks at text))  
16 Ira so (0.4) here I (believe) I should tell  
17 what (0.5) the essay was telling me?=  
18 T =about. (.) in your own words right?  
19 Ira uhm (0.6) <the:> (.) <essay,> (0.5) tell that ((continues))



By prefacing her vocabulary check (line 5) with ‘now’ and shifting her gaze from the paper to the student (see Figs. 4.1 & 4.2), the tutor makes an explicit suspension to the activity of explaining the response essay structure. The check is a way to topicalize a projected topic of instruction, and knowing ‘summary’ is treated as necessary for being able to continue. Ira begins her answer by providing another word (‘conclusion’) before embarking on what is hearable as the beginning of more elaboration. However, the tutor soon cuts off the explanation with a smilingly produced but otherwise unmitigated rejection (line 9), in overlap with Ira’s on-going turn. The tutor’s subsequent elaboration makes a clear distinction between these two words on the basis of how they relate to the response essay. Unlike a summary that begins an essay, the conclusion should be ‘at the end’ (line 11), which the tutor also highlights by placing her hand at the bottom of the notebook (see Fig. 4.3).

At line 13, the tutor repeats the vocabulary check. Orienting to the reading text, Ira responds at lines 16-17 with an epistemically downgraded response, marked as such by its verbal design (‘I believe I should’) and the ‘try-marked’ intonation (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979) at the end of the turn. Notice that the response is not a type-conforming answer in the sense that it would provide what could be seen as a prototypical decontextualized ‘dictionary definition’ for the word. Instead, it outlines what constructing a ‘summary’ entails in the context of the response essay in the exam for which Ira is practicing. Task context is also treated as relevant as the tutor adds to Ira’s response

by specifying that the summary should be written with ‘own words’ (line 18), which is hearable as advice for taking the exam.

#### **4.5 A deviant case: Checking a peer’s vocabulary knowledge**

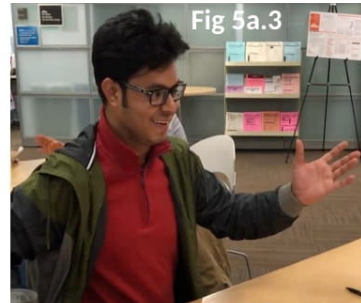
The next extract shows a deviant case, the only one in our collection, in which a student (Ira) presents a vocabulary check to her peer (Zia). This can be seen as an instance of ‘subteaching’ (Tholander & Aronsson, 2003) in the sense that the student assumes the position of a teacher and conducts a pedagogical action. The deviant nature of the interaction manifests itself as humor and subversion in and around the vocabulary check. Shortly before the extract (data not shown here), the tutor and the three students (Liz, Ira and Zia) have been working on a handout showing verbs that have irregular past tenses. Zia has read aloud a sentence featuring the verb ‘hire’ and mispronounced it as ‘hear’, which the tutor has overtly and immediately corrected in a similar manner as in Extracts 1 and 3b. After approximately one-minute of conversation on irregular verbs, the tutor re-orient to the word ‘hire’ and checks whether Zia knows what it means at line 1 in Extract 5a. This creates an occasion for Ira to ‘team up’ with the tutor and present another vocabulary check to Zia in a somewhat jokey and teasing manner to see if he also knows the verb ‘fire’ (line 7). Although Zia claims to know, his knowledgeability is not equally demonstrated by the explanation that follows.

#### **Extract 5a. Fire**

01 T so okay. (.) .hh do you know what hire means?  
 02 Zia yeah  
 03 T yeah (.) right. (.) [so (.) not- so-  
 04 Zia [like, (.) <la::rge> ((raises hand high up))  
 05 T hire  
 06 (0.5)  
 07-> Ira what about fire.



08 Zia fire?  
 09 (0.6) ((Ira nods))  
 10 Zia fire means (0.7) when (0.2) som- err (.) fire means like, (.)  
 11 you know (this,) (0.8)  
 12 (fi(h)r(h)e) (0.7) something burning?  
 13 (0.7)  
 14 T hh he [he he he he he he he he  
 15 Ira [\$no n(h)o n(h)o no no\$=



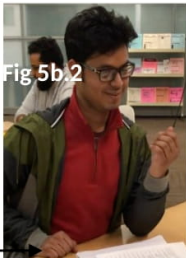
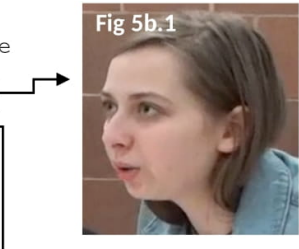
Zia's response to the first vocabulary check indicates that he analyses the word as the comparative form of an adjective ('higher') instead of a verb (line 4). This is not picked up, but instead Ira presents another check, which she marks as humorous through her embodied conduct (line 7). It is as if the very exaggerated 'wink' (see Figs. 5a.1a & 5a.1b) is conveying that Ira is putting Zia to the test. Zia's response (lines 10-12) contains multiple instances of self-repair and is produced through laughter (see Fig. 5a.2). These features frame the answer-in-progress as unsure. However, the way Zia persists in providing a meaning to the word, enlisting the help of palm-open 'wiggly' gestures (see Fig. 5a.3), shows that he is engaged to produce an answer even if that answer may not emerge easily. Zia's definition of fire as 'something burning' (line 12) suggests that he approaches the word as a 'noun' describing a chemical process and not as a 'verb' meaning

dismissing an employee. Ira rejects the answer in an unmitigated manner through multiple ‘no’s, and both she and the tutor receive the response with laughter (see Fig. 5a.4).

Extract 5b shows how the situation continues and the participants establish a shared, contextually relevant understanding of the word ‘fire’.

**Extract 5b. (continuation of Ext. 5a)**

14 T hh he [he he he he he he he he  
 15 Ira [\$no n(h)o n(h)o no no\$=  
 16 T =well it means that but what about in the  
 17 w- in the context of work.  
 18-> Ira =if somebody will tell you I <fire you>  
 19 Zia I'm fire you, (.) [like I'm very angry  
 20 Ira [yeah  
 21 Ira no=  
 22 Liz =n[o (.) I'm firing you is like,  
 23 T [no:: hh he he  
 24 (0.9)  
 25 T you don't [have your job any[more  
 26 Liz [you're- [exact.  
 27 Ira [you have-  
 28 Zia [you (don't)?  
 29-> T you- when you're working at a place and I say  
 30-> you're fire(d) [it means you will ][have to leave.  
 31 Liz [this is your last day]  
 32 Zia [o:::h yeah yeah.  
 33 (0.3)  
 34 Zia oh yeah I (---) employee like, (0.4) [when (manager says) employee  
 35 T [yeah  
 36 Liz on °(fi[re)°  
 37 Zia [you're fire(d) (0.4) (like [this)  
 38 T [yeah



Both Ira and the tutor recast the vocabulary check by contextualizing the word, but in slightly different ways. The tutor’s turn at lines 16-17 explicitly topicalizes ‘context’ as a feature that defines the word meaning. Ira, in turn, provides an example of contextual use of the word by enacting a hypothetical situation (Tai & Brandt, 2018) in which she adopts the role of a boss dismissing an employee. Ira changes her tone of voice and facial expression into more serious, and embellishes her delivery by leaning forward towards Zia (see Fig. 5b.1).

Zia’s answer at line 19 seems to attend to the emotional ‘key’ in Ira’s previous turn but is otherwise off the mark (see Fig. 5b.2). It is met with an unmitigated rejection by all participants and the tutor’s laughter. At line 22, Liz begins to produce a definition (‘I am firing you is like’), which the tutor collaboratively completes at line 25, in overlap with Liz. Zia initiates repair by repeating a part of the tutor’s turn, which could address either a problem in hearing (due to overlap) or understanding of the word meaning (line 28). The tutor responds not by merely repeating her

explanation but by elaborating on it (lines 29-30), which indicates that she treats the repair initiation as a problem of understanding: Zia needs further explanation. The extended explanation, too, is collaboratively completed, this time Liz adding a turn (line 31) that fits pragmatically and syntactically with the tutor's turn.

In his uptake, Zia claims recognition and understanding ('oh yeah yeah') of the collaboratively produced word definition and offers a contextualized enactment of the phrase 'you are fired' (lines 34, 37), together with a 'dismissive' hand gesture (see Fig. 5b.3). The tutor validates Zia's understanding of the target word (lines 35, 38), and as the situation continues beyond the transcript, she constructs yet another hypothetical scenario as an upshot of Zia's misinterpretation.

Overall, the situation shown in Extracts 5a and 5b illustrates the role of context in two different ways. In Extract 5a, Zia misreads the context of the topic of talk as he is responding to a vocabulary check ('fire'), and in Extract 5b, a hypothetical everyday situation is enacted as a resource for restoring the context and explaining the word. The situation is sensitive in the sense that participants are managing a delicate borderline between laughing 'with' or 'at' Zia as they produce, align with and receive corrective actions. The participants' trouble relates to two words that are homophones ('fire') with each other, i.e. words that sound the same but have different meanings. For dealing with ambiguities of such nature, providing the context of a word can be a useful strategy as it allows participants to identify which of the (two or more) possible words fits the context.

## **5. Discussion**

This paper set out to investigate how vocabulary checks are occasioned by preceding turns and actions, and fitted to situation-specific concerns in ESL tutorial interaction. In broad terms, our findings align with those studies that have found different kinds of cognitive checks as a resource for maintaining intersubjectivity (e.g. Bolden, 2014; Kim, 2019; Koole, 2010; Nanbu, 2020; Searles & Barriage, 2018). To add to these studies, we have shown that, and how, context can become treated as a relevant aspect of vocabulary checks and the ensuing explanations. The right to ask pedagogical questions and assess answers to them is typically part of the tutor's institutional property. Indeed, vocabulary checks are in our data predominantly a tutor's epistemic practice in that they topicalize a potential asymmetry in vocabulary knowledge between a 'knowing' speaker and an 'unknowing' recipient. However, this does not mean that students would have no agency

in the accomplishment of these checks. As Extracts 3a and 3b showed, students' interactional work to identify and publicly highlight gaps in their vocabulary can be an important aspect in recruiting the tutor's help to resolve them.

Vocabulary checks may come in different turn designs, in some of which the check's epistemic orientation is made explicit by the use of the verb 'to know'. By performing vocabulary checks, the tutor in our data orients to having more vocabulary knowledge in the English language than her tutees, and thereby makes relevant the exogenous identity of a language expert (see Kurhila et al., 2021) in tutorial interaction. Indeed, on the only occasion that a peer performs a vocabulary check in our data (Ext. 5a), the check has distinct teasing undertones and participants orient to it as something that moves beyond the core pedagogical agenda of the meetings.

In terms of sequence organization, vocabulary checks constitute a side sequence during which participants put the ongoing pedagogical activity temporarily on hold while conducting interactional work to maintain intersubjectivity. Within such a side sequence, the vocabulary check is a first pair-part turn which makes relevant a second pair-part turn that indicates whether or not the asked-for word is known. However, the checks in our data are often expanded beyond this kind of minimal pair, for example, by way of ensuing word explanations when a check is met with an 'unknowing' response. Even during these later moments, the conditional relevance of a knowledge display that drives checking sequences may be visible in the use of retrospective claims of recognizing or knowing a word through 'oh yeah' formatted turns, even when these are offered by tutees in a 'delayed' sequential position after the tutor has already explained the target word (Exts. 2 & 5b).

Our analyses point to certain aspects in which the task context becomes a relevant and attended-to feature of the checks and the explanations that may follow them. One is how the tutor seems to monitor the on-going interaction - the tutees' talk and the way they manage tasks - for signs that may indicate unfamiliarity with a word. For example, trouble with pronouncing (Ext. 1) or spelling (Ext. 3b) a word can each be taken as an accountable sign of the student's possible unfamiliarity with the word. Similar orientation to the relevance of context is visible in that what counts as a relevant definition may depend on what a word is being used for in the current task activity (Ext. 4). Through contextualized definitions (Exts. 1, 4 & 5b), the tutor orients to a need to support the tutees' language development in a way that enables them to navigate their studies

and life in the US. Thus, context configures both diagnostic aspects of vocabulary checks and the ‘aftermath’ of managing such emergent vocabulary gaps.

Vocabulary checks can be seen to offer opportunities for language learning by paving way to vocabulary explanations and corrective activities. In the clear majority of cases in our collection, the check constitutes a ‘good guess’ in the sense that the target word either turns out to need the tutor’s help or the explanation that a student offers needs correction. In this sense, the check serves the intersubjective purpose of making visible discrepancies in how participants understand vocabulary. However, as a by-product of this kind of basic interactional sense-making, we argue that the contextualization, task-specific explanations and possible multiple synonyms offered for the focal word by the tutor constitute clear pedagogical moves aimed at vocabulary teaching. Correcting and explaining can be seen as practices involved in doing “being a tutor” in that they create opportunities for learning within the pedagogical organization of ESL tutorials.

The context in which the current study is situated lends itself well to learner-centered pedagogies and immediate support and feedback, and requires the tutor to be vigilant for what the students know and understand. At the same time, a group size smaller than in regular classrooms means that tutors may have greater possibilities to attend to weak interactional signals indicating a student’s knowledge gap. Extract 3a is a good illustration of how tutoring sessions can provide a collaborative learning environment in which a student has plenty of time to exercise their agency by asking questions and seeking help for vocabulary-related understanding problems. Lack of grading, loose pedagogical agenda and minimal social distance between the tutor and tutees can be seen as elements that make the setting into a safe and cooperative learning environment. In contrast, in a ‘typical’ language classroom with a cohort of 20-30 students, these aspects can be quite different, and there may be less time for individualized teaching, which may constrain student agency. Furthermore, it may also be easier for a student to hide understanding problems as part of a bigger classroom cohort than it is as a member of a small group. The vocabulary checks we have investigated here can be seen as a practice that makes visible inferences about such weak interactional signals indicating a student’s lack of vocabulary knowledge.

Although we have not examined the link between vocabulary checks and long-term second language learning, we believe our observations on how the checks are organized as an interactional practice have implications for L2 pedagogy. CA is typically viewed as a descriptive analytical method, which does not easily translate into prescriptive guidelines for teachers. However, close



analyses of naturally-occurring teaching activities such as those that we have examined here can be taken as a starting point for pedagogical reflection in pre- and in-service teacher education (see e.g. the collection of studies in Kunitz et al., 2021). For example, student teachers could investigate these transcripts or record their own interaction and use that as a basis for pedagogical reflection. In our case, understanding what participants achieve with vocabulary checks can help develop tutoring conventions, identify relevant material and instructional resources, and increase tutors' awareness of their role in supporting their students' language development. Sensitivity towards differences in interactional possibilities and constraints in classroom-based and small-group tutoring settings can also enable teachers/tutors to adjust their interactional practices such as correction, word explanations and cued elicitations to the local environment in which they are doing teaching.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study has examined how participants in a language lab at a US community college manage word knowledge through the practice of vocabulary checks. These checks offer a resource for maintaining intersubjectivity and accomplishing language teaching. The analysis has highlighted the situated and collaborative nature of vocabulary checks, which can be seen as design features of small-group tutorial interaction. Through vocabulary checks, the participants talk into being the situated identities of the language expert (tutor) and the language learner by topicalizing asymmetries in knowledge between the participants, and by searching for ways to overcome such asymmetries through instructional activities. Our study yields insights into how the interactional, sequential and task contexts are treated as a feature of vocabulary knowledge and instruction. Despite the exploratory nature and small data sample of our study, we hope that it has provided an applied conversation analytical perspective on tutor-tutee interaction in language labs and shed light on some ways in which practices for achieving intersubjectivity and fulfilling pedagogical concerns are intertwined in such a small-group instructional setting. Further research is needed to more fully understand the interactional organization of small group instruction across a variety of task types, language proficiency levels and pedagogical settings.

## Funding

This work was supported by the Academy of Finland [grant number 343480].

## Acknowledgements

We are indebted to our study participants. We also would like to thank two anonymous reviewers who provided valuable suggestions on the earlier version of this paper.

## Appendix:

### Transcription conventions

Symbol	Explanation
(0.8)	Numbers in parentheses = length of silence in tenths of a second
[	Start of overlapping talk
]	End of overlapping talk
.	Falling intonation
,	Rising intonation, suggesting continuation.
?	Rising intonation. Questioning inflection, but not necessarily a question
<u>word</u>	Underlining = stress/emphasis
°°	Degree signs = talk between these is markedly quieter than the surrounding talk
↑	Up arrow = sharp intonation rise
↓	Down arrow = sharp intonation fall
.hh	Audible in-breath
(( ))	Double parentheses enclose description of environment or non-verbal behaviour
(---)	Empty parentheses enclose unintelligible talk
(word)	Words in parentheses indicate transcriber's 'best guess' utterance
> <	Talk between symbols is rushed
:	Prolongation/stretching out of sound
=	Contiguous utterances with no interval between talk
\$	Smiley voice
->	Highlights point of analysis

## References

- Ashwin, P. 2005. Variation in students' experiences of the 'Oxford tutorial'. *Higher Education* 50(4). 631-644.
- Back, M. 2016. Epistemics and expertise in peer tutoring interactions: Co-constructing knowledge of Spanish. *The Modern Language Journal* 100(2). 508-521.
- Belhiah, H. 2013. Using the hand to choreograph instruction: On the functional role of gesture in definition talk. *Modern Language Journal* 97. 417-434.
- Bolden, G. 2014. Negotiating understanding in "intercultural moments" in immigrant family interactions. *Communication Monographs* 81(2). 208-238.
- Escobar Urmeneta, C. & Evnitskaya, N. 2014. 'Do you know Actimel?' The adaptive nature of dialogic teacher-led discussions in the CLIL science classroom: A case study. *Language Learning Journal* 42(2). 165-180.
- Heritage, J. 2012. Epistemics in action: Action formation and territories of knowledge. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 45(1). 1-29.
- Hosoda, Y. 2006. Repair and relevance of differential language expertise in second language conversations. *Applied Linguistics* 27. 25-50.
- Jakonen, T. & Morton, T. 2015. Epistemic search sequences in peer interaction in a content-based language classroom. *Applied Linguistics* 36(1). 73-94.
- Jefferson, G. 1972. Side sequences. In D.N. Sudnow (ed.), *Studies in social interaction*, 294-338. New York: Free Press.
- Jefferson, G. 1987. On exposed and embedded correction in conversation. In G. Button & J. R. E. Lee (eds.), *Talk and social organization*, 86-100. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Jefferson, G. 2004. Glossary of transcript symbols with an introduction. In G. H. Lerner (ed.), *Conversation analysis: Studies from the first generation*, 13-31. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Kim, Y. 2019. 'What is stoyr-steruh type?': Knowledge asymmetry, intersubjectivity, and learning opportunities in conversation-for-learning. *Applied Linguistics* 40(2). 307-328.
- Koole, T. 2010. Displays of epistemic access: Student responses to teacher explanations. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 43. 183-209.
- Koshik, I. 2002. Designedly incomplete utterances: A pedagogical practice for eliciting knowledge displays in error correction sequences. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 5. 277-309.

- Kitzinger, C. & Mandelbaum, J. 2013. Word selection and social identities in talk-in-interaction. *Communication Monographs* 80. 176-198.
- Kunitz, S., Markee, N. & Sert, O. (Eds.) 2021. *Classroom-based conversation analytic research. Theoretical and applied perspectives on pedagogy*. Springer: Cham.
- Kurhila, S., Kotilainen, L. & Lehtimaja, I. 2021. Orienting to the language learner role in multilingual workplace meetings. *Applied Linguistics Review*, <https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2021-0053>
- Leyland, C. 2020. Academic writing tutorials for international students: Deferring to an expert and follow-up advice. *Language and Education* 34 (3). 212-230.
- Majlesi, A. R. 2014. *Learnables in action: The embodied achievement of opportunities for teaching and learning in Swedish as a second language classrooms*. Published PhD dissertation. Linköping: Linköping University Press.
- Mehan, H. 1979. 'What time is it, Denise?': Asking known information questions in classroom discourse. *Theory Into Practice* 18(4). 285-294.
- Mori, J. & Hayashi, M. 2006. The Achievement of intersubjectivity through embodied completions: A study of interactions between first and second language speakers. *Applied Linguistics* 27(2). 195-219.
- Nanbu, Z. 2020. "Do you know banana boat?": Occasioning overt knowledge negotiations in Japanese EFL conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics* 169. 30-48.
- Park, I. 2012. Seeking advice: Epistemic asymmetry and learner autonomy in writing conferences. *Journal of Pragmatics* 44. 2004-2021.
- Park, I. 2014. Stepwise advice negotiation in writing center peer tutoring. *Language and Education* 28(4). 362-382.
- Park, J. 2007. Co-construction of nonnative speaker identity in cross-cultural interaction. *Applied Linguistics* 28(3). 339-360.
- Ro, E. 2021. Using PowerPoint slides as a resource for coordinating understanding during presentation consultations at an L2 speaking center. *Applied Linguistics Review*, <https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2020-0052>
- Sacks, H. & Schegloff, E. A. 1979. Two preferences in the organization of reference to persons in conversation and their interaction. In G. Psathas (ed.), *Everyday language: Studies in ethnomethodology*, 15-21. Irvington Publishers, New York, NY.
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A. & Jefferson, G. 1974. A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language* 50(4). 696-735.

- Schegloff, E. A. 2007. *Sequence organization in interaction. A primer in conversation analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Searles, D. K. & Barriage, S. 2018. "What does curious even mean do you know?": Orientations to word meanings in family interactions. *Journal of Pragmatics* 134. 57-69.
- Seedhouse, P. 2004. *The interactional architecture of the language classroom: A conversation analysis perspective*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Inc.
- Sert, O. 2013. 'Epistemic status check' as an interactional phenomenon in instructed learning settings. *Journal of Pragmatics* 45. 13-28.
- Shvidko, E. 2018. Writing conference feedback as moment-to-moment affiliative relationship building. *Journal of Pragmatics* 127. 20-35.
- Skogmyr Marian K, Henricson, S. & Nelson, M. 2020. Counselors' claims of insufficient knowledge in academic writing consultations. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 65(6). 1065-1080.
- Lindström, J., Laury, R., Peräkylä, A., & Sorjonen, M-L. (Eds.). 2021. *Intersubjectivity in action: Studies in language and social interaction*. John Benjamins.
- Stivers, T., Mondada, L. & Steensig, J. 2011. *The morality of knowledge in conversation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tai, K. W. & Brandt, A. 2018. Creating an imaginary context: teacher's use of embodied enactments in addressing learner initiatives in a beginner-level adult ESOL classroom. *Classroom Discourse* 9(3). 244-266.
- ten Have, P. 2007. *Doing conversation analysis*. London: Sage.
- Tholander, M., & Aronsson, K. 2003. Doing subteaching in school group work: Positionings, resistance and participation frameworks. *Language and Education* 17(3). 208-234
- Waring, H. Z. 2005. Peer tutoring in a graduate writing center: Identity, expertise and advice resisting. *Applied Linguistics* 26. 141-168.
- Waring, H. Z., Box, C. D. & Creider, S. C. 2013. Problematizing vocabulary in the second language classroom: Unilateral and bilateral approaches. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Professional Practice* 10(1). 87-108.
- You, H. J. 2014. *Checking recognition: Do you remember and do you know in talk-in-interaction*. Unpublished PhD dissertation. University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.
- Young, R. F. & Miller, E. R. 2004. Learning as changing participation: Discourse roles in ESL writing conferences. *Modern Language Journal* 88. 519-535.