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AND HUNGARIAN EVERYDAY

CONVERSATIONS

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by

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TIIVISTELMÄ – ABSTRACT

Tutkimus käsittelee itsekritiikkiä englannin- ja unkarinkielisessä vuorovaikutuksessa. Itsekritiikki on kannanottojen alalaji, jossa puhuja esittää negatiivisen arvion itsestään tai häneen liittyvästä referentistä. Lähestymistapana on keskustelunanalyysi. Hyödynnän sen käsitteitä ja analyyttisia työkaluja, kuten vieruspari, preferenssi, topiikki ja kertomus. Nämä ja niihin liittyvä aiempi tutkimusperinne esitellään luvuissa 2–4. Aineisto koostuu kahdesta nauhoitetusta jokapäiväisestä keskustelusta (yksi amerikkalaisten ja yksi unkarilaisten opiskelijoiden keskustelu).

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää 1) miten itsekritiikki kielellisesti rakennetaan, 2) miten keskustelukumppanit reagoivat itsekritiikkiin, 3) minkälaisissa sekventiaalisissa paikoissa itsekritiikkiä esiintyy, ja 4) minkälaisiin muihin toimintoihin itsekritiikit liittyvät. Näiden lisäksi tarkoituksena on vertailla aineistossa edustettujen kielten ja kulttuurien eroja ja yhtäläisyyksiä.

Kielellisten rakenteiden analyysissa selviää, että itsekritiikki rakennetaan noudattamalla tiettyjä syntaktisia muotteja, jotka ovat erilaisia englannissa ja unkarissa. Semanttisesti itsekritiikit sisältävät negatiivisen elementin: adjektiivin, verbin, negaation tai negatiivisuutta vihjaavan intonaation.

Itsekritiikkiä seuraavat puheenvuorot (jälkijäsenet) noudattavat preferenssijärjestystä. Erimieliset (preferoidut) jälkijäsenet tuotetaan heti ja niissä edellisen puhujan itsekritiikki kiistetään selkeästi. Samanmieliset (preferoimattomat) jälkijäsenet tuotetaan viipeellä ja niissä samanmielisyys on implisiittistä. Implisiittistä samanmielisyyttä osoittavat amerikkalaisessa aineistossa pelkkä negaatio, samankaltaiset itsekritiikit, nauru, hiljaisuus ja vuoronalkuiset partikkelit. Nämä voidaan esittää jatkumona sen mukaan, missä määrin niihin liittyy preferoimattomuutta. Unkarilaisessa aineistossa esiintyy preferoimattomana jälkijäsenenä naurun ja hiljaisuuden lisäksi vitsailua.

Tarkastelen myös kahta itsekritiikkisekvenssiä, joiden vierusparirakennetta ei voida selittää (pelkästään) preferenssijärjestyksellä. Niissä itsekritiikki liittyy vahvasti edeltävään toimintaan (puhekumppanin kritisointi) tai saa jälkijäsenekseen kiusoittelua. Kiusoittelemalla itsekritiikin vastaanottaja voi osoittaa pitävänsä itsekritiikkiä liioitteluna.

Itsekritiikki voi sekventiaalisesti/topikaalisesti liittyä edeltävään puheeseen kahdella tavalla: 1) joko edellisen toiminnan osana, tai 2) topikaalisena siirtymänä. Itsekritiikkisekvenssit (ketjut) päätetään järjestäytyneesti osoittamalla, että puheenaihe on ehtynyt tai loppuunkäsitelty.

Aineistossani itsekritiikit liittyvät joissakin tapauksissa muihin kritiikin muotoihin, kuten valitteluun, kiusoitteluun tai puhekumppanin kritisointiin.

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Finding the phenomenon

This study started with two tape recordings of everyday talk in two languages. The first one consists of a dormitory chat between three American students, the second documents five Hungarian students talking in a dormitory in Budapest. I had the idea of comparison of Hungarian materials with American data, since most investigation on everyday interaction was on North American materials whereas hardly any research on Hungarian interaction was available.

After some searches and false starts, I had an intuition that the participants in both recordings were "doing badly" or "having trouble". This intuition arose on many elements. On a general topical level, in both data, participants tell about their troubles in studies. On an abstract paralinguistic level, something in their voices indicated to me that they are "doing badly". Furthermore, on a more explicit level, some clear utterances verified these impressions. The American speakers were saying things such as "I'm not doing that good today". In the Hungarian data I found utterances like: "jaj de hülye vagyok" ('I'm such a fool'). Finally, and most importantly, I started to investigate the context of such expressions. That is, the activity of "doing badly" was not constructed only by isolated utterances, but by a series (i.e. *sequence*) of them.

First, I became interested on how recipients deal with such expressions. A recipient might, among others, disagree with them, deliver laughter or remain silent. Secondly, also the ways interlocutors arrived to those negative assessments appeared orderly. That is, negative evaluations of the self are not produced just anywhere, they seem to have a slot. For instance, in some cases an interlocutor first tells about how she has been writing an essay or preparing

for an exam. Then she produces negative assessment on herself (e.g. "I think like I took the long way around").

After these initial observations, I searched for previous research on a similar phenomenon. Soon I found Anita Pomerantz's (1984) article on preference organisation of seconds to self-deprecations. Her work convinced me that the mentioned expressions in my data can be studied with the help of an established analytical tool pack. Furthermore, even though this article from Pomerantz is widely quoted in the literature, the study of self-deprecations has not been taken much further (but see Launspach forthcoming). In sum, there is a solid methodological base for the analysis of the American data which provides a reliable and valid counterpart for comparison with the Hungarian data. Beyond comparison, further findings on self-deprecations on a general level are discoverable. Pomerantz's findings (1975,1984) which serve as main background materials for this study are described next.

1.2 Focus: self-deprecations

For the purposes of this study, I will concentrate on the clear negative expressions related to the speakers' self. Following Pomerantz (1975, 1984), I will start with the notion of *self-deprecation*. [1] She uses *self-deprecations* to name a subclass of *assessments* which evaluate the actor or a referent linked to her/him and their assessment is negative. [2]

Pomerantz has studied self-deprecations as assessment pairs (see also Goodwin & Goodwin 1992a; Tainio 1993; Tsui 1994; Uhmann 1996; Launspach frth.). This notion helps us to investigate the sequential organisation of activities and their turn formats. Furthermore, Pomerantz's dissertation (1975) is a seminal work on a general phenomenon called *preference*

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1 *Self-criticism* will be used as a synonym (also by Pomerantz 1975,1984). Others have used *self-denigration* (Brown & Levinson 1987:39; Tsui 1994) and *self-tease* (Glenn 1992).
2 The words *assess* and *evaluate* will be used synonymously.

organisation (see also Sacks 1987 [1973]; Levinson 1983; Heritage 1984; Schegloff 1988; Bilmes 1988; Drew 1989; Kotthoff 1994; Tainio 1997; Duranti 1997). Her research shows how alternative seconds to first turns in the realm of assessments have a content/form dependence.

In general, assessments receive *agreements* instantly, without hedging or prefaces. Agreeing elements are placed in the beginning of short turns produced at once. For instance (Pomerantz 1975:19):

(1)
     J: T's- tsuh *beautiful* day out isn't it?
  → L: Yeah it's just *gorgeous*...

The initial assessment *beautiful* is upgraded to *gorgeous*, and the second turn begins with *Yeah* which is a typical agreement token. In sum, L is clearly agreeing with J's initial assessment.

Furthermore, typically disagreements are *dispreferred seconds,* that is, they are produced together with gaps, hesitations and other delays of the disagreeing component. For example (Pomerantz 1975:73):

(2)
     B: Oh, how sad.
     B: And that wen wrong.
  →   (1.0)
     A: *Well*, uh –
     B: That surgery, I mean.
     A: I don't-

Here a one second silence (gap) and a preface (*Well*) delay the disagreeing component (*I don't*).

Some subclasses of assessments are exceptions to the above rule: recipients of self-deprecations routinely disagree with the criticism, since agreement would lead to co-participant criticism. In other words, according to Pomerantz (1975:87), self-deprecation is a prototype example of how the preference organisation adjusts to the activity type in question. Accordingly, in conversation analysis (e.g. Schegloff 1988:446, 1996a:94) and interaction related literature (e.g. Brown & Levinson 1987:39), self-deprecation is

typically mentioned as a special activity pressuring the recipient to disagree with the speaker. For instance in my Hungarian data:

(3)   [Hun:1]

> Y) ((tells how she has read for an exam))...de hát nem tudom mert az hogy elolvastam még semmi.
> *...but, well I don't know, that I have read it trough means yet nothing*
> B) =dehogynem kezedben volt [manuálisan-]
> *but of course, you had it in your hands manually-*

Here Y assesses her prospects poor. This self-deprecation is instantly disagreed by B, thus achieving solidarity, sociability and support.

I will not restrict myself to Pomerantz's (1975, 1984) framework. In this study, the term *self-deprecation* will be used in a more general sense, that is, as an umbrella term for negative self-expressions. This enables me to analyse all kinds of negative expressions in the data. Most of the cases fit Pomerantz's framework well. Nevertheless, some cases call for other definitions and categories, such as *teasing* (see Drew 1987), *troubles telling* (see Jefferson 1988) or *complaining* (see Drew 1998).

1.3 Method

Such concepts as *assessment pairs* or *preference organisation* belong to the research tradition of *Conversation Analysis* (CA hereafter). Nevertheless, activities such as assessments or self-deprecations have been recognised by other approaches as well. To start with, *compliments* have been studied by Manes and Wolfson (1981) as sentence types with focus also on the social status of the speakers. Furthermore, in the framework of *Politeness* or *Face*, developed by Brown and Levinson (1987), self-deprecations receive some attention. Finally, among others, Tsui (1994) offers a speech-act based, but still interactional account of assessments. Even though findings that originate from these sources are to some extent recognised and discussed in this study,

methodological distance is taken in favour of CA. Some reasons for this are given next (for an introduction to CA, see chapter 2).

First of all, CA investigates actual occurrences of a phenomenon in its natural environment. That is, the analysed self-deprecations in this study are not imagined, elicited or recalled from memory. Furthermore, CA investigates interactional structures and context as the participants accountably display them during interaction, not according to some *a priori* theoretical framework. In this manner, CA is open to all emerging social dimensions of interaction. Finally, CA is the primary method concerned with sequential organisation of activities. In other words, it investigates how different activities form the context of following activities, or how they display an understanding of the previous activity.

Pomerantz (1975,1984) has developed the tools for the analysis of assessments and self-deprecations through inductive reasoning based on materials of *actual everyday language use* which are comparable with any natural data. From this perspective, my study is a contribution to the cumulative body of CA research. Also the research of Goodwin & Goodwin (1992a,b), Tainio (1993,1996), Uhmann (1996) and Launspach (frth.) has followed and enriched the research on assessments started by Pomerantz's dissertation (see also Jefferson 1984,1993; Maynard 1989).

In the analysis I extend this earlier work by new explorations on a general level, such as linguistic structures of self-deprecations and sequential placement of initial self-deprecations. Nevertheless, similarly to previous research, the core of this study will consist of descriptions of how participants react to self-deprecations (preference organisation). Furthermore, my aim is to explore the connections of self-deprecations and other activities (e.g. other forms of criticism), and the identities these activities display. Finally, cross-linguistic study of self-deprecations with CA methodology, or in general CA on Hungarian data are also largely uncharted territory.

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One compromise of methodology has to be mentioned: the analysis is on a foreign language. On the one hand, the application of CA on a foreign language is difficult, since the implicit structures and devices that are routinely used in conversation – consider among others laughter, silence or interruptions – are assumed to be culturally dependent (Sacks 1992a:116; Schegloff 1996b:167; Hakulinen 1997:17). On the other hand, some researchers (Moerman 1988,1996; Bilmes 1996:172-173; Duranti 1997:160) have claimed that a non-native analyst might be more alert to some details of conversation. Finally, they have also argued that with the help of ethnographic knowledge conversations unfold also to a non-native analyst.

1.4 Cross-linguistic comparison of materials

The comparison with the Hungarian material is based on the American data and background materials. Cross-linguistic comparison is still a rather explorative area for conversation analysis. In this field, comparisons of culturally different sequential practices, such as openings in telephone calls (e.g. Houtkoop-Steensra 1991; Lindström 1994) have been published. Also connections of syntax and interactional structure have been investigated through cross-linguistic CA (see Fox, Hayashi and Jasperson 1996; Lerner and Takagi 1999).

In this study, self-deprecations in the two conversations are compared in the following manner: (i) linguistic patterns in connection with self-deprecations are compared, and (ii) differences in social cultural practices are explored. The latter perspective attempts to find possible differences in such practices as responding to self-deprecations (preference organisation) or the sequential placement of initial self-deprecations.

1.5 The structure of this study

This study is not written only to professional conversation analysts. Thus, a discussion of the general analytical framework is included in chapter 2. Chapters 3 and 4 consist of a synthesis of previous CA research on assessments and self-deprecations. Data is introduced in chapter 5. In the analysis section, first the linguistic structures of self-deprecations are described and compared (chapter 6). Then, the recipients' reactions to self-deprecations (i.e. 'seconds') are analysed from the perspective of preference organisation (chapter 7). Furthermore, other sequential locations of self-deprecations are described in chapter 8. Finally, conclusions are presented (chapter 9).

2 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

The student of language use is likely to be awed by terms such as *pragmatics, sociolinguistics* or *discourse analysis*. That is because defining the borders of these disciplines is such a difficult task (see Levinson 1983; Schiffrin 1994; van Dijk (ed.) 1997). In contrast, *conversation analysis* (CA hereafter), founded by the sociologist Harvey Sacks, is an approach to the study of interaction with somewhat more identifiable boundaries.

In this chapter, the general methodological questions of this study are reviewed. This discussion is intended also as a brief introduction to CA. First, the fundamentals that define CA are introduced (2.1). Secondly, some typical CA research practices linked to the study of actions are explained (2.2). Thirdly, this study has an explorative character, since I use cross-linguistic data. The prospects of cross-linguistic CA are discussed in 2.3. There, also some specific questions of this study, such as doing CA on a foreign language, will be addressed. Finally, a brief review of research on spoken Hungarian is provided (2.3.3).

2.1 Some fundamentals of Conversation Analysis

CA, in close connection with Garfinkel's ethnomethodology,[1] emerged as critique against the fundamentals of traditional methods in sociology and other human sciences (linguistics, anthropology etc.).[2] The tendency to idealise, presume and gloss everyday behaviour, typically for the purposes

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[1] Thus, the name *ethnomethodological conversation analysis* is also widespread. On ethnomethodology, see Garfinkel 1967, 1991; Heritage 1984.

[2] In the past, CA has been considered as an isolated, marginal approach (see Levinson 1983:294-295). Today, according to van Dijk (1997:26), CA is "one of the core domains of the new cross-discipline of discourse studies". This is evidenced by the widespread cross-fertilisation of CA findings to other disciplines. Among others, on the relation of modern Discourse Analysis and CA see van Dijk (ed.) 1997 and Schiffrin 1994. For the role of CA in Linguistic Anthropology see Duranti 1997 (chapter 8 and *passim*). The connections of CA and Interaction and Grammar are discussed in Ochs et al 1996. Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 1996 combine CA with the study of prosody. Finally, CA and discursive psychology are covered in Condor and Antaki 1997.

of quantitative study, was attacked as an unproductive enterprise that blurs the specific features under investigation. Instead, Garfinkel and Sacks called for an empirical, qualitative and cumulative study of everyday life. (Sacks 1992a:26-31; Garfinkel 1967,1991; Heritage & Atkinson 1984:1, Heritage 1984:234-238; Levinson 1983:294-5.)

Next, I will discuss some distinctive fundamentals of CA.[3] CA can initially be identified by the use of naturally occurring data (2.1.1). Furthermore, three basic assumptions behind CA are introduced (2.1.2). Finally, CA is characterised by the extensive presentation of data. This is achieved through the use of transcriptions (2.1.3).

2.1.1 Data

CA insists on the use of recorded (audio or video) data collected from naturally occurring situations. There are many good reasons for this. First, as Heritage (1984:236-238) emphasises, anyone that has examined conversational materials knows that nobody can invent the details of everyday talk. Consider the following example from my data[4]:

(1)   [am:8]

01   B) >but (.) I just- it seems like I got a lot typed. but I mean it seems like (.)
        like I don't get that much accomplished=and I don't know its like- like- (.)
        all it is- is like- like straight from the Internet (stuff)=its not like anything
        in my words yet so< hh. (.) ([--)
02   A)   [but] that's what I usually have to do:.
        sometimes it's mo:re time [consuming-
03   B)   [↑yeah that-] that's what I'm talking. I think
        like I took the long way around because then I had to go through and
        change everything around ann,

The details of this excerpt, such as overlaps, silences or lexical elements could not possibly be invented or recollected by a participant or a by-hearing observer.

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[3] For considerations of space, a general and comprehensive overview cannot be given here. For such an overview, see the following sources: For the seminal developments in CA see Sacks 1992 a,b. For a recent general and practical introduction, see ten Have 1999; Tainio (ed.) 1997; Pomerantz & Fehr 1997. For a historical overview, see Schegloff's 1992a,b introductions to Sacks lectures.

Secondly, as Sacks (1992a:27) has stressed, we should investigate characteristics of interaction by attempting to find them in the activities in which they are employed. The use of recorded, spontaneous everyday interaction enables us to do just this. Furthermore, a general explanation for *not* using other kind of data, is as formulated by Drew (1989:100): "People cannot think about or control their behaviour at the level of details for which the systematics of action [...] are being investigated in conversation analysis". That is, people are unable to tell the analyst, why and when they use for instance pauses, overlaps, assessments or self-deprecations. When asked, they are likely to give an idealisation of some sort. Thus, participants' opinions are not used as evidence in CA (but see Tannen 1984).

As a conclusion, we should in general be at least cautious about the reports of interactional activity based on other kinds of data (Duranti 1997:136; Schegloff 1996b:167). For instance, the studies by Manes & Wolfson (1981) or Tsui (1994) include data collected through participant observation. Accordingly, in later parts of my work, the critique of these studies will be based largely on their use of other than tape-recorded data.

Finally, using video recorded materials has undoubtedly enriched the analysis of conversation. Such microscopic analysis of gaze, body movement and the like in combination with talk has been practised most influentially by Charles Goodwin (e.g. 1981, see also Goodwin & Goodwin 1992a). Nevertheless, it is still justified to use only audio materials. The basic claim is that there is a largely autonomous level of verbal organisation. Furthermore, as Peräkylä (1997:205, emphasis as original) points out, "*conversation analytic studies do not aim at describing all aspects of social organisation*". In brief, it is still plausible to focus only on talk, even though in an ideal case also video tapes are used (see also Drew 1989:98-99). Finally, most CA is still done with only audio materials, because it requires resources and complicated arrangements to video-tape everyday conversations. Similarly in this study, due to the lack of resources, only audio materials are used.

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[4] For transcription symbols, see Appendix 1.

To sum up, only recorded data on naturally occurring talk is valid data for conversation analysis. In this manner, studies carried out with this requirement can be used as background materials or comparative sources. Finally, it is noticed that video recordings are ideal data. Nevertheless studies, such as this, focusing exclusively on talk are not inadequate in any way.

2.1.2 Basic assumptions

According to Heritage (1984:241), there are three assumptions that form CA's basic image:

i)   interaction is structurally organised
ii) contributions to interaction are contextually oriented
iii) these two properties inhere in the details of interaction so that no order of detail can be dismissed, *a priori*, as disorderly, accidental or irrelevant.

The first, most important assumption, is that interaction exhibits stable, identifiable, structural features. These features are social in character. That is, they are autonomous from psychological or other individual characteristics of the speakers (ibid.). Following Duranti (1997:16-17), the mastering and knowledge (unconscious or conscious) of these structures forms our conversational competence with which we can interpret and influence the conduct of other participants. The task of CA is then to explicate this competence.

The second assumption means that in conversation everything takes place in a *sequence* of activities (see Sacks [1973] 1987:54-55). In this manner, any communicative action is both *context-shaped* and *context-renewing* (Heritage 1984:242). *Context-shaped* means that every utterance is delivered, understood and interpreted in a series of utterances. By virtue of sequence location, participants identify for instance answers as something that follow a question. With a similar logic, conversational activities are *context renewing* in that they form the context of the next activity (ibid. 242.)

Consider the following examples by Tsui (1994:15)

(2)
>
> (i)
> A: What's the time?
→ B: It's nearly three.
> (ii)
→ X: It's nearly three.
> Y: Oh my God!

The utterances have identical linguistic forms but different sequential locations. The utterance marked with arrows is first (i) an *answer* to a *question*. Then, in (ii), an *informing* or a *reminder*. Apart from these obvious cases, CA has achieved in describing also much more complicated phenomena with this apparatus. For instance (Levinson 1983:339):

(3)
>
> (i)
> A: God isn't it dreary!
→ B: ((SILENCE = DISAGREEMENT))
> (ii)
> A: I'm gettin fat hh
→ B: ((SILENCE = AGREEMENT))

In this case the 'linguistic form' (silence) has no other meaning or function beyond its sequential location. In brief, a proper characterisation of conversational activities should take their sequential location into consideration.

The third essential methodological assumption – that no order of detail in interaction can be dismissed *a priori* as insignificant – has two consequences. First, in CA premature theory construction is avoided, instead data driven analysis is promoted. Secondly, Heritage (1984:243) stresses that: "every effort is made to render empirical analyses answerable to the specific details of research materials". In this manner, special attention is given to such details as laughter, silences, repair, hesitation or repeating, and the ways they display social order.

To sum up, if one claims to be doing CA these three assumptions must be taken seriously. That is, attention must be given to focus on accountable structures of interaction that create, maintain and develop social relations between the interlocutors. Secondly, the sequential characteristics of talk provide the core of meaning and interpretation in

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conversation. Thirdly, no detail of talk, observable by the participants, can be dismissed as irrelevant. Due to this last requirement, there is a need for a special system of transcribing tape recorded data. This is described next.

2.1.3 Transcriptions

Sacks goal was to "develop a sociology where the reader has as much information as the author, and can reproduce the analysis." (1992a:27). CA has achieved this goal partially through the use of transcriptions. That is, analysis is based on features that are available on the transcripts of tape recorded data. Nevertheless, as Heritage and Atkinson (1984:12; see also Duranti 1997:138-141) stress, transcripts are not a total representation of the data under analysis. In other words, they are necessarily selective. In any case, so far they have been the only way to make CA studies meet the aforementioned requirement by Sacks. [5]

CA transcription has been developed by Sacks' student and colleague Gail Jefferson (see Heritage and Atkinson 1984:ix-xvi). It is important to describe audible deviations in intonation, volume, gaps and so on. Furthermore, silences and overlaps are measured on the basis of participant perception, not through mechanical procedures as in phonetics. That is, even though a stopwatch is widely used, no phonetic theory of "endings" or "beginnings" is applied. In this manner, the details of a transcription are ideally presented in the form that the participants could have heard them in real life (Ten Have 1999:chapter 5; Seppänen 1997). Practically, a kind of a 'natural orthography' is aimed at. This means that standard orthographic symbols are combined with some additional symbols and some modifications of spelling. Nevertheless, the way transcriptions are written can at times make CA reports difficult to understand, at least for non-native readers (Duranti 1997:140-1). In the end it is also a question of

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[5] Recent remedies to the selective nature of transcriptions include among others the use of CD-ROM's where the publications can have text, sound, pictures and video-extracts. An even more modern solution is the World Wide Web. There you can see and *hear* the data simultaneously with freeware programs, standard equipment and with minimal effort. A good and convincing example is available at Schegloff's homepage (visited November 1999): http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/schegloff/prosody.

individual style how 'mundane' the transcription is. Also native analysts use forms that are near to written language since, as Levinson (1983:296) suggests, in practice very seldom nuances like *an/and* make a difference for a CA analysis (but see Jefferson 1996).

In brief, the reader of a CA study should be able to follow, reproduce and challenge the analysis through reading the transcriptions. Furthermore, a transcription should contain the details of a conversation as they have been heard in the actual event by the participants. Finally, it is important to remember that transcriptions are selective and they constitute only one version of the talk in a tape recording. That is, a proper analysis of conversation can be conducted only with access to the original data in tape recorded form.

In this section the basic requirements for *any* CA study were reviewed. Nevertheless, these fundamentals give little idea of the practical work of CA. Next, practical steps of studying activities in conversation are introduced. I will focus on steps and examples that are linked to my study.

2.2 Investigating actions

I will continue with a description of practical methodology to study conversational actions. Here the research procedure and useful research questions behind the investigation of such activities as *assessments* (see chapter 3) or *self-deprecations* are reviewed. A version of seven steps of CA practice are presented by following largely a combination of Schegloff's (1996b) and Pomerantz & Fehr's (1997) models (see also Ten Have 1999; Tainio (ed.) 1997). These steps are practical tools to empirically and precisely describe an action. Furthermore, an important goal of them is to show that the participants understand and use the action in the way the explication suggests. That is, they seek for an account of an action that is based on "the reality" of the participants, not only on "the reality" of the analyst's. (Schegloff 1996b:172-173.)

1. Give an initial characterisation of a phenomenon.

We should start an analysis by selecting an activity. Then we should identify the *sequence* where this activity occurs. That is, we should identify its place in a series of activities with an identifiable beginning and end. (Pomerantz and Fehr 1997:71; Schegloff 1996b:169,174-181.)

For the characterisation of an action three matters should be considered: First, the identifying of an activity is based, at least partially, due to its constructional elements (Schegloff 1996b:169). This refers to linguistic forms, such as syntactic, semantic or intonational patterns. For instance, an *assessment* can typically be constructed with the use of an adjective. Finally, it should be kept in mind that no detail of verbal conduct (eg. laughter, silence, repair) should be considered *a priori* insignificant.

Secondly, as mentioned (pp.11-12), no activity should be investigated in isolation from its sequence (see also Schegloff 1996b:171). Thirdly, following Schegloff (1996b:172), any CA account should demonstrate that the interlocutors in the data have understood the utterances under examination in the proposed way. In practice, this demonstration is grounded in the interlocutor's subsequent talk or conduct (ibid.). In this manner, we should characterise the actions in the selected sequence. We should pose basic questions such as "what is this participant doing in this turn?" (Pomerantz & Fehr 1997:72). That is, are they doing a *greeting, assessment, complaining, self-deprecation* and so on. These labels are based on "a natural language metalanguage", not on a theory of speech acts (Levinson 1983:368, but see Tsui 1994). Finally, as Tainio (1997:93) mentions, for the newcomer, it is a good solution to start with categories that have been used in earlier CA studies.

2. Assemble a database.

After we have found and isolated a sequence of some sort, one way to proceed is to collect similar cases. Through the use of collections, we can

discover what kind of variation the phenomena displays. Following Schegloff (1996b:176), 'similarity' should be understood "generously". This will then enable or 'force' us to define explicitly what is distinctively going on in the different fragments of talk. In this study, the borderlines of self-deprecating are investigated in this manner. For instance, differences and connections between *self-deprecations* and *complaints* or *troubles telling* will be discussed.

How much variation do we need? According to Schegloff (1996a:68), if we are dealing with a new phenomenon one example might be enough. Furthermore, the smaller the unit is, the more cases one needs. For instance, a study of the distribution of tokens such as "yeah", "mm hm" or "okay" would require a large database. In contrast, one example may suffice in the study of larger sequences, such as stories (see Mandelbaum 1989 for an example). This study is somewhere in between these two ends. I investigate all self-deprecations from two conversations. Furthermore, the American examples are supported by prior studies (e.g. Pomerantz 1975,1984; Launspach frth.). Finally, the Hungarian examples present a new, comparative angle.

3. Investigate the used turn formats. Consider the options for the recipient that are set up by the packaging of turns.

Following Pomerantz and Fehr (1997:72-73), this means that it is important to describe how participants form up and deliver a given action. For instance, assessments can be delivered among others in an intensified form (e.g. 'that's so good'), interrogative form ('is it good?'), or negative interrogative form ('is it that bad?'). All these forms impose different expectations for the recipient. If the recipient (deliberately or not) wants to agree or disagree with these assessments, she has to build her turn due to these constraints.

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4. Consider how the timing and taking of turns provide for certain interpretations.

For each turn in the sequence we should describe how turns were obtained, terminated and how speakers were selected (ibid. 73-74). Furthermore, whether a turn is delayed is essential to the interpretation of many actions. For instance, Moerman (1988:13) stresses that:" It need take no more than .2 seconds of silence for any of us to know that a request, however momentous, has been denied.". In a similar manner, this study is partly based on the investigation of whether a next turn to a self-deprecation is delayed, produced in overlap or immediately.

5. Seek evidence from avoidance and nonoccurrence.

According to Schegloff (1996b:192):

> If some practice of talking is used to do some action, then there will be occasions on which a participant will undertake to avoid that action.

Furthermore, he (ibid.) suggests that avoidance and absence of an activity may be given special attention by the participants. For instance, assessments are typically delivered as a part of participating in events (Pomerantz 1984:57). Thus, if an assessment is missing after tasting of a food, drink or seeing a product and so on, then its missing is likely to be noticed (see Bilmes 1988:163). Finally, *preference organisation*, a central concept for this study, is largely based on avoidance of some action types.

6. Consider how the ways the actions were accomplished implicate certain identities, roles and/or relationships for the interactants.

This question from Pomerantz and Fehr (1997:74) should be answered after the basic analysis has been carried out. For CA identities are developed and maintained through the detailed social organisation of conversation. For instance, a silence or a laughter in a wrong place can cost a fortune in social

relations. Furthermore, social roles in conversation are not stable, permanent characterisations (see Schegloff 1987). That is, in a single conversation we might speak as a member of a seminar, and then in some other utterance as a man, furthermore as somebody that has a bicycle and so on. The task of CA is then to demonstrate which of the possible identities was displayed and oriented to in a given part of a given conversation. (Pomerantz & Fehr 1997:69-70.)

This list of possible steps in CA is by no means comprehensive (see for instance Clayman and Maynard 1995:7 for the analysis of *deviant cases*). It is neither normative, as Pomerantz and Fehr (1997:71) state, there is no one right way to develop an analysis. In addition, in practice these steps are integrated in an analysis. In any case, the list serves as a newcomer's guide to the practice of CA approach. Furthermore, it presents the major methodological tools that are used in this study. Roughly put, I have started with initially identifying self-deprecations (step 1, see 1.1 and 4.1), then collected similar cases (step 2, see chapter 5). Furthermore, I have investigated the turn formats of self-deprecations and seconds to self-deprecations (steps 3 and 4, see chapters 6 and 7). Analyses of avoidance or nonoccurence of some activity (step 5) are available in chapters 7 and 8. Finally, the identities of the participants are discussed (step 6) mainly in the conclusive sections of chapters 7 and 8.

Next, the methodological questions that are linked to using cross-linguistic materials are discussed. Here, attention is given also to the related practical applications in this study.

2.3 Cross-linguistic Conversation Analysis

In his book *Linguistic Anthropology*, Duranti (1997:264) writes that: "Conversation analysts have uncovered a wealth of social behaviours that are potentially relevant for cross-cultural comparison". In this study an attempt is made to meet his challenge. Namely, the findings on self-

deprecations in the American data will be compared to Hungarian cases. With this set up new perspectives are opened, but simultaneously some methodological complexities and questions emerge.

I will begin with a discussion of the concept of *culture* and on the perspective of comparing cultures with CA methodology (2.3.1). Then the special problems linked to the application of CA on a foreign language will be considered (2.3.2). Finally, the analysis of the American data is partly based on similar prior studies (see chapters 3 and 4). In contrast, there is no CA on Hungarian materials (see Harlig 1995; Kontra 1995; Pléh 1995 for possible reasons). Nevertheless, general research on spoken Hungarian exists. It will be reviewed briefly in 2.3.3.

2.3.1 Comparing cultures and languages with Conversation Analysis

First, we should try to define the concept of *culture*. According to Sacks (as quoted by Schegloff 1996b:163), "culture [is] an apparatus for generating *recognisable* actions". *Culture* must thus be understood as something more than "popular" or "high" culture, or features such as beliefs, values, taste or fashion (Schegloff 1996b:164). That is, the mastering of social structures in conversation is the core of cultural competence (cf. Duranti 1997:16). As a conclusion, the study of conversational patterns is equivalent to the study of culture.

Schegloff (1987) posits that the much wanted linkage between micro and macro level phenomena might be found through: "variation in microphenomena between cultures or societies" (ibid. 209-210). A review of some cross-linguistic CA or CA on "exotic" languages shows that such differences are indeed discoverable on many levels of organisation. Among others, Fox, Hayashi and Jasperson (1996) investigate differences in the organisation of repair in English and Japanese and Lerner and Takagi (1999) explore the different resources of English and Japanese in collaborative construction of turns. A common finding for both studies is that the interactional resources (repair, collaborative completion) are available in both languages, but there are empirically explicable differences

in the way some elements are projected. That is, for instance, in English a *but* is enough to project contrastivity of the next element. Accordingly, such a projection may enable collaborative completion of the utterance.[6] In contrast, Japanese has different grammatical resources for the same task (Lerner and Takagi 1999). (Similar differences in relation to assessments will be discussed in chapter 3).

The analysis of telephone conversation openings has a different perspective of comparative CA. For instance, Lindström (1994) shows how in Swedish telephone conversations the answerers overwhelmingly provide some kind of self-identification in the first turn, typically their name (see Houtkoop-Steensra 1991 for a similar Dutch practice). In contrast, as Schegloff (1968) has reported, American answerers seldom provide explicit self-identifications, typically they just deliver a greeting, e.g. *hello*. Lindström (1994:248-249) concludes that this displays how in a Swedish society people trust each other more than the Americans do. That is, regardless to who is calling, the Swedes rely on the benevolence of the caller. Of course, this is only an empirically informed guess on the possible cultural motives behind the differences in conversational routines.

To summarise, the study of different languages with CA methodology provides a possibility to build empirical explications of cultural and language based differences. That is, to connect micro notions with macro notions on language typology and everyday practises of cultures. Finally, cross-linguistic research was rare in the dawn of conversation analysis (from 1960's to late 1970's), but has a growing importance for the current research.

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[6] An example of collaborative completion of a turn is (Lerner and Takagi 1999:70):

> Penny: I know that's a cliche, I kno:w probly evrybody
>   said tha[t. but-
> → Pat: [but it's true:. En (yet [I nev]er:,)
>   Penny: [Yeah]

Notice how Penny's *but* is enough to project that the following element is in contrastive relation to the prior element. Penny's *Yeah* can be seen as an agreement with this

2.3.2 Doing Conversation Analysis on a foreign language

A central dimension of my study is that both Hungarian and American English are foreign languages to the analyst. In the face of it, this is a weak point of my work, since it is a common claim that CA is best done by members of the culture in question. As Schegloff emphasises (1996b:167): "we need to press [CA] inquiries especially with materials to which we bring native competence and cultural membership." (cf. Sacks 1992a:116 and Hakulinen 1997:17). The problem is that the methods of sense making people use in conversation are often implicit and therefore at best analysed by a participant member, who has access to the cultural resources and meanings. In any case, doing CA on a foreign language is not viewed as impossible or flawed, just difficult.

Before going to the special requirements in this field, I will briefly discuss a basic benefit of doing CA on a foreign language. As mentioned above, Schegloff (1987) in his review of CA on "exotic" languages (e.g. Thai, Tuvaluan) credits these studies as excellent examples on connecting variation of microphenomena (e.g. repair) with linguistic and cultural differences. He gives the research by Moerman (especially Moerman 1988) as a fine example of such work. According to Moerman's autobiography (1996:149):

> Conversation analysis of foreign language materials is difficult. But those materials make it easier to see strangeness, to notice managedness and constructedness, to be struck by the problematic and the enchanting in everyday talk.

In brief, a non-native analyst may be more alert to some of the details of talk (Moerman 1988,1996; Bilmes 1996:172-173; Duranti 1997:160).

A main theme of Moerman (1988) and Duranti (1997) is that studying foreign data demands ethnographic knowledge on the emerging cultural inferences (cf. Ten Have 1999:56-57). For instance, in Moerman's studies CA is combined with his previous ethnographic work on the Thai societies. His interactional analyses are used at times to verify ethnographic

interpretation by Pat.

research and at times to counter it. Moerman's ethnographic background knowledge involves such things as the type of rice eaten in different regions. In his analyses, Moerman points out, among others, how Thai people from different regions use these differences to categorise each other (1988:83). Moerman does not specify his ethnographic knowledge in advance, rather he explains it as inferences emerge in the data.

To reiterate, the analyst should have background knowledge over the (sub)culture in question. In my case, some autobiographical facts have developed the potential to understand culture specific objects: the participants are approximately the same age as me and the topics they discuss are familiar to me also. In addition, I have studied almost two years in Hungarian universities. Furthermore, the American data was recorded, while the participants were studying as exchange students in my home university. (See chapter 5 for details on data.)

Preparing a CA transcription in a foreign language poses some difficulties. Moerman (1988,1996) and Duranti (1997) propose consulting a native for transcription work. I have followed this advice: for the American data, one of the participants helped me to initially write down what happens on the tape. Furthermore, there is a readymade transcription for the Hungarian materials. Actually the materials are the only well-known database on everyday Hungarian conversation.[7] It has been transcribed by Hungarian students, nevertheless I have retranscribed most of it. Among others pauses, laughter and similar non-lexical material had been left out. The data had also otherwise been slightly idealised, for instance repeats were ignored and intuitive punctuation had been added (see Keszler 1983:165-166). In my transcription, I have broadly preserved the spelling forms used in written language, but added prosodic material due to CA conventions. Also for the American data, I have used mainly written forms.

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[7] The tapes and the transcripts are at the disposal of the department of Contemporary Hungarian Language (*Mai Magyar Nyelvi Tanszék*) at ELTE, Budapest. The corpus is referred to as *Beszelt nyelvi gyűjtemény (BNyGy)*, my materials are part 2 of Volume VI, pages 93-127 (see Keszler 1983:167).

There are also other published or used recordings but they can be all considered either monologues or institutional talk, such as the one in Kontra (ed. 1988) which is a part of a cable-tv discussion.

For the discourse particles, breathing, laughter and so on, an attempt has been made to follow CA requirements. Silences have been measured with a stopwatch.

A further special technical requirement for CA on a foreign language is that the reader cannot always be expected to master the analysed language. In order to improve the accessibility of data, translation is necessary. The problems that arise from translating conversations are well noticed by conversation analysts (see Moerman 1988:5-7; Duranti 1997:154-159; Seppänen 1997). Duranti (1997:154-159) demonstrates many practical solutions. In my study, the format of an interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme gloss and a free translation is used. According to Duranti (ibid. 159), it is especially useful when the reader wants to follow the translation processes more closely. In my study, some details, such as discourse particles or word-order require such a reading. (Glosses will be illustrated in p.63 and listed in appendix 2).

To sum up, doing CA on a foreign language is difficult and some special attention should be paid to ascertaining cultural knowledge. Furthermore, transcriptions should be prepared together with a native and usually a translation is required for the final report. Finally, relatively many studies are conducted by 'non members' of the 'culture' in question.[8] Non-native analysts are likely to notice some details that might go unnoticed by native analysts. We can also add that the critiques of CA (Taylor & Cameron 1987:117-124; cf. Tainio 1993:52; Duranti 1997:160) have claimed that CA's weakness is leaving a lot of information implicit. For the non-native analyst nothing is obvious and thus all the claims should be grounded even better on the empirical explications.

2.3.3 The study of interaction in Hungarian

There are at least two Hungarian research groups that have done research on actual spoken data. Next, I will briefly sketch their work.

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[8] Extreme examples are studies where for instance aphasic people (see Klippi 1996) are investigated with CA.

Keszler (1977) begins by noticing difficulties of defining sentences in literature dialogues. In later studies (1983,1985), she moves on to use the tape recorded corpus (BNyGY) which her research group[9] (started in 1975) has collected. She investigates mainly with quantitative methods how spontaneous spoken language differs from the language of literature. These two studies by Keszler can be seen as an example of what de Beaugrande (1997:42-44) has called "the campaign of traditional grammar" or "language guardians" doing research on spoken language. Nevertheless, facing naturally occurring materials has lead Keszler to show some of the characteristics of the grammar of spoken Hungarian which will be of some value also for this study.

Since late 1980's another group has taken over the investigation of Hungarian spoken language. The "Living Language" research group[10], led by Kontra, is mainly interested in phonetics and Labovian style sociolinguistics (see Kontra (ed.) 1988; Kontra 1995). The line of investigation started by Keszler has in turn returned to using intuitive data (e.g. Kugler 1998).

Finally, only scarce findings on Hungarian self-deprecations are available. In any case, Suszczyńska's study (1999) on apologies in English, Polish and Hungarian deserves notice. It should be noticed that she uses data from discourse completion tests (DCT) instead of naturally occurring talk. Her study will be reviewed in more detail in the context of previous research on self-deprecations (4.5).

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[9] 'Research group for spoken language', in Hungarian: *beszélt nyelvi kutatócsoport.*
[10] The group is located at the Hungarian Academy of Science, Institute of Living Language. In Hungarian: *Előnyelvi csoport.*

3 PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON ASSESSMENTS

Evaluating something as good or bad, hot, cold, easy or healthy makes our world view available for others. Furthermore, it allows others to collaborate in the assessing activity and thus create solidarity or conflict between the speakers. Assessing something is a very everyday activity. In this manner, assessments are easily collected and relatively widely studied.

Self-deprecations are a subclass of assessments. 'Plain' assessments are a more general and more studied activity. Thus, before going to self-deprecations an understanding of assessments is required. In this chapter, a synthesis of prior studies of assessments is provided. At least for the non CA reader, this summary serves also as an introduction to some CA findings that will later be referred to in the analysis.

First, in 3.1 typical characterisations of assessments as action are given. Furthermore, the paired character of assessments is discussed in 3.2 . Preference organisation of second assessments is pursued next (3.3). Then, some findings on first assessments in the literature are piled together (3.4). Finally, possibilities for a syntactic characterisation of assessments are reviewed (3.5). In 3.6 these findings are summarised and discussed.

3.1 Characterisation of assessments as action

Pomerantz (1975:11-12; 1984:57-59) defines assessments as products of participation where an interlocutor claims knowledge of that which she is assessing. That is, assessments are mostly made on the basis of first hand knowledge. As evidence for this she demonstrates how declining to assess is often explained by referring to insufficient knowledge of the matter. for instance (Pomerantz 1984:57):

(1)
     A: An how's the dresses coming long. How d't they look.
→   B: Well uh I haven't been uh by there-...

Here A requests an assessment from B, who declines to evaluate by claiming that she does not know about the matter.

From a slightly different perspective, Goodwin & Goodwin (1992a:154-155) define assessment action as taking up a position for which its agent can be held responsible afterwards. That is, assessments are public commitments or claims. Furthermore, they typically also display affective involvement with the referent being assessed. Most significantly, Goodwin & Goodwin (ibid. 155-156) find the importance of assessment activity in the interactive organisation of co-experience. That is, with assessments an interlocutor puts forward a stance, which is processed and negotiated with other participants.

To sum up, assessments as an action have many dimensions: they involve *participation*, require *knowledge*, lead to *responsibility*, display *affect* and organise *co-experience*. Assessments can be said to be sensitive subjective experiences that are routinely given an intersubjective treatment. The intersubjective work is not accomplished through a single assessment, instead evaluations routinely appear in pairs. Next this paired character of assessments is discussed.

3.2 Sequential locations 1: second assessments

Starting with Pomerantz's dissertation (1975), assessments have been defined as something that appear in pairs (ibid. 1):

(2)
    J: T's- tsuh beautiful day out isn't it?
    L: Yeh it's just gorgeous...

Here we have two assessments on the same matter, the weather. The activities can be characterised as follows:

    J: [First assessment]
    L: [Second assessment]

This prototypical paired structure, together with *question – answer, greeting – greeting* pattern, can in general terms be characterised through the notion

of *adjacency pairs*. Schegloff and Sacks (1973) give the following requirements for adjacency pairs (as presented in Levinson 1983:303-304):

> *Adjacency pairs* are sequences of two utterances that are:
> (i)   adjacent
> (ii)   produced by different speakers
> (iii)   ordered as *first part* and *second part*
> (iv)   typed, so that a particular first part requires a particular second (or range of second parts) – e.g. offers require acceptances or rejections, greetings require greetings, and so on

According to Sacks (1987 [1973]:54-55), adjacency pairs form a prototypical *sequence*. In his definition *sequential* organisation means that the parts located one after the other (i.e. adjacently) have some 'ritualised' organisation between them. That is, after a participant has delivered a first pair part a second pair is *expected, required* or *conditionally relevant*. In other words, the absence of a 'second' is typically noticed and inferences are made. For instance, not answering a question or failing to return a greeting is *marked* behaviour, whereas answering or greeting back is considered *typical, routine* or *normal* behaviour in conversation.

Even though Pomerantz does not use the term *adjacency pair* for assessments, they largely meet the criteria mentioned above. That is, assessments routinely appear in pairs and many researchers (Pomerantz 1975, Goodwin & Goodwin 1992a, Tainio 1993, Uhman 1996, Launspach frth.) have shown them to be organised as first and second assessments. Accordingly, in general descriptions of adjacency pairs (e.g. Levinson 1983:336; Heritage 1984:269) assessments are included. Nevertheless, the category *adjacency chains* is given by Pomerantz (1978) not only to mention that assessment activity often includes more assessments than two, but also to take distance to the notion of adjacency pairs. She claims that the absence of a second assessment is less noticed than the absence of, for instance, an answer or a second greeting. That is, assessments *project*, or *expect* second assessments, whereas questions *require* or *'force'* answers (cf. Tainio 1993:37-39). In any case, this slight difference of modality does not change the fact that also assessment pairs can be illuminated through the notion of adjacency pairs.

The basic problem of adjacency pairs or chains is that there are alternatives in the second pair part slot, for instance *acceptances* or *rejections* for *offers* or agreeing/disagreeing assessments for initial assessments (Pomerantz 1984:62; Levinson 1983:307; Sacks 1987:56-57). The solution, and the point of the whole adjacency pair notion is that the second pair parts are not organised equally. Namely, there is orderliness co-ordinating response types and their turn formats. This order is called *preference organisation*, which is described in the next section.

3.3 Preference organisation: specifying assessments

Pomerantz's dissertation (1975), *Second Assessments: A Study of Some Features of Agreements/Disagreements,* and articles based on it (1978,1984) are considered primary research on *preference organisation.* Her main finding is that (1975:4): "The non-equivalency of agreements and disagreements is observable in the organisation of agreement and disagreement turns." This means that participants design their second assessments differently due to whether they agree with the prior assessments or not. In general, agreements are *preferred* second pair parts, whereas disagreements are *dispreferred* seconds.

3.3.1 Preferred seconds: agreement preferred

Pomerantz (1984:64-70) gives *upgrading* assessments as the prototype of agreeing with assessments. According to her (cf. Uhman 1996: 306-307), they are *strong, clear* or *overt* agreements. In structural terms, upgradings have a design that (Pomerantz 1984:64):

(i) maximises the action of agreeing performed in them
(ii) utilises minimisation of gap between its initiation and prior turns completion
(iii)contains explicit agreeing components

A typical preferred structure could be for instance (Pomerantz 1975:4):

(3)
>J: It's really a clear lake isn't it?
→ R: It is wonderful.

The agreement is produced instantly after the first assessment, and with a clearly upgrading adjective (*clear -> wonderful*). Following Pomerantz (1984:77), preferred second assessments are oriented to as "comfortable, supportive, reinforcing, perhaps as being sociable, and as showing that they [the participants] are like minded.".

In parallel terms, according to Goodwin and Goodwin (1992a:162-165), speakers can produce "heightened participation" through producing assessments in overlap. In other words, also they describe a social norm of displaying agreement. For example (ibid.163):

(4)
>Dianne: Jeff made en asparagus pie it wz s : :so[: goo:d].
>Clacia: [I love it]

In the example Clacia's assessment begins to emerge during Dianne's intensifier (*s: :so:*). Goodwin and Goodwin find this simultaneous assessing as a typical way to (ibid.165) "make congruent understanding visible", or to show how the participants "minds are together". Note also, how Clacia's assessment is clearly an upgrading evaluation (*so good -> I love it*).

If the second assessment is not clearly upgrading, it is often interpreted as a disagreement (Pomerantz 1984:68):

(5)
>A: She's a fox.
→ L: Yeah, she's a pretty girl.
→ A: Oh, she's gorgeous!

Here L evaluates *she* with a *downgrading* adjective *pretty* compared to *fox*. A interprets this as a disagreement and thus reasserts her position. Following Pomerantz (ibid. 69), such downgradings are called *weak agreements*.

Similarly, *same assessments* have an ambiguous status as agreements. For instance (ibid. 67):

(6)
>K: ...He's terrific!
→ J: He is.

In this example, K *only* agrees with a same assessment. That is, she does not upgrade the assessment. Such second assessments either terminate assessment sequences or preface disagreements. (ibid.)

In the next example a same assessment prefaces disagreement. In these cases participants first agree with assessments only to disagree with them later on (Pomerantz 1975:68):

(7)
     F: Course <u>no</u> mutual fund is doin good now <u>anyhow</u>.
→ J: <u>No</u>. But that's why it's good time tuh <u>buy</u>.

Here the initial assessment is first agreed (*No*) with a same (elliptical) assessment, followed by a typical transition marker (*but*) signalling contrast between the co-ordinated units. The explicit disagreeing component is the last part of the turn.

Finally, the matter of same assessments might also be culturally variant, since Tainio (1993:168-169), working with Finnish conversations argues, that in Finnish same assessments are *not* normally used as prefaces to disagreements. Instead, in Finnish they serve more often as confirming assessments. [1]

3.3.2 Dispreferred seconds: agreement preferred

For *dispreferred seconds* the disagreeing components are minimised, delayed with prefaces or silences (gaps). Dispreferred seconds also often have nonexplicit disagreeing components (Pomerantz 1984:64, see also Tainio 1993:171-178). For instance (Pomerantz 1975:66):

(8)
     R:.. well never mind. It's not important.
→ W: *Well*, it is important.

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[1] For instance (Tainio 1993:167):

    S: se on n't [sit liian myöhästä]
    V: [n-   [no <u>se</u> on myöhästä. h]

    S: that's n'w [then too late]
    V: [w-   [well <u>it</u>'s too late. h]

Here V confirms S's assertion with a same assessment. On confirming with repeats in general, see Schegloff 1996b.

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Here a typical preface (*well*) is used before the disagreeing component. Other similar prefaces before disagreements include agreement and acknowledgement tokens (e.g. *yeah, I know*).

Another routinely used device to delay a disagreement is silence. Substantial silence is a case when the selected next speaker does not take the turn. For instance (Pomerantz 1975:73):

(9)
        A:.. You sound very far away.
→   (0.7)
        B: I <u>do</u>?
        A: Myeahm.
        B: mNo I'm no:t

Here the disagreement is delayed by a gap of 0.7 seconds. There are also other devices that are used as inexplicit disagreements, such are partial repeats, requests for clarifications or next turn repair initiators, such as *I do?* in the example above. (Pomerantz 1975:73-75.)

Furthermore, Tainio (1993:178) has also found cases where disagreement is displayed through changing the referent, Pomerantz (1984:64) has called them "other actions than a conditionally relevant next". In sum, we can say that everything else than an instantly produced clearly agreeing assessment is considered as a disagreement.

In fact, these conversational routines are so basic and much used, that a preface or a delay is enough for a speaker to deduce that her assessment is *not* going to receive the expected reaction. Therefore, participants routinely reformulate or backdown their assessments before the indicated disagreement is delivered (Pomerantz 1975:79):

(10)
        B: ..an' that's not an awful lotta <u>fruit</u>cake.
            (1.0)
→   B: Course it is. A little piece goes a long way.
        A: Well that's right.

Here B turns her assessment upside-down. The reformulated assessment is preceded by a substantial silence. In this manner, it can be claimed that both participants orient to the preference organisation and make inferences due to it (Pomerantz 1975:79; Sacks 1987).

Finally, dispreferred second assessments have also different sequential consequences. Preferred seconds typically terminate sequences, whereas dispreferred seconds engender extensions (Pomerantz 1975:5-6). This can be seen as a part of the "normality" of preferred seconds, that is they display agreement and solidarity and thus go unnoticed. Dispreffered seconds in turn typically lead to a search of a compromise.

To sum up, preferred second assessments must be overt, clearly stated upgradings and appear instantly or in overlap. Mere same assessments or downgrades are ambiguous and often interpreted as disagreements. They also precede explicit disagreements. Thus, Pomerantz (1984) has named them 'weak agreements'. Disagreements are seldom strong, explicit and overt. That is, they are either implicit or mitigated by prefaces or delays. Accordingly, Pomerantz has named them 'weak disagreements'. In this manner (see also Tainio 1997:104), we can see preference organisation as a continuum:

preferred ⋀ strong agreements (instantly delivered upgrading assessments)
      ‖ weak agreements (same assessments or downgrades)
      ‖ weak disagreements (prefaced or delayed disagreements)
dispref. ⋁ strong disagreements (explicit disagreements)
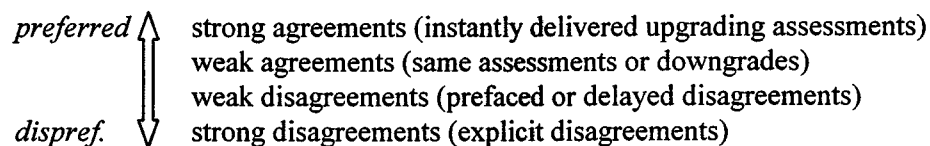
Figure 1. Continuum of preference organisation of assessments

From a methodological perspective Pomerantz (1975) has first documented what Levinson (1983) later has made popular as *dispreference markers*. As described above, such markers are prefaces (e.g. *well, I know*) or other kinds of delays (e.g. silence) of the disagreeing component. Furthermore, this concept of preference that Pomerantz has developed for the needs of her data has later become known as the *practice based* view (Schegloff 1988:453ff). That is, much weight is given to the practice of the speakers to display a stance towards what they are doing by the use of dispreference markers. This view of preference is taken as a basis of analysis also in this study.

Nevertheless, there is also an alternative view of preference, the

structure based view. According to Schegloff (1988:453-6), it is an original concept of Sacks (see Sacks [1973]1987) which focuses more on the characterisations of sequence types. That is, it pays less attention to *preference markers* central to the practice based approach. In any case, both approaches typically lead to same results. In fact, the difference is relevant only when the practice based approach falls, that is prototypically when people instantly provide an uninvited second (see p.120 for an example). Furthermore, in the reports on American data such assessment pairs have not been analysed (but see Drew 1987).

An important methodological point to note is that the term *preference* is not used to refer to psychological or motivational phenomena. It is used only for visible and accountable structural features that go along with failing to meet the institutional social expectations of a culture. (Schegloff 1988:453-455; Heritage 1984:241-242; Levinson 1983:332-333.) In other words, we should try to make a difference between a "public" and "private" self. That is, participants deliver disagreeing second assessments routinely "as dispreferred", even if they "privately" might enjoy doing them. (Schegloff 1988:453.)

Finally, studies on preference organisation can reveal and empirically explicate cultural practices. For instance, Paul Drew (1989:111) explains preference in the context of invitations as follows:

> Just as often we make invitations that we hope or expect the other will decline, so also we know that on occasions when we have no desire at all to accept an invitation from someone, either now or in the future, nevertheless in declining the invitation we follow the [preference organisation] [...] That is, we express how valued the invitation is (even when it is not), and that we are unable to accept on this occasion because of some prior commitment, even though we have had to fabricate a quite false account or excuse or had to turn something we were merely going to do into something we *have* to do, and even though we have no intention of accepting such an invitation in the future.

In other words, the preference of accepting an invitation is institutional part of conversation (and culture) that participants cannot control. Nevertheless, it is possible that there are cultures where this preference is not present (see Schegloff 1987; Bilmes 1988; Duranti 1997:260-270).

Later studies on assessments have largely supported Pomerantz's notions with small adjustments. As already mentioned (p.30), the notions of same assessments have been found to be somewhat culturally bound. Nonetheless, so far few cultural differences for the organisation of dispreferred second assessments have been discovered. For instance, Tainio's (1993:171-181) notions on Finnish dispreferred second assessments largely fit Pomerantz's findings. Nevertheless, for the general system Uhman (1996:chapter 2) has found a new perspective: in German data preference organisation is reflected in a scale of the turn initial particle *ja* (*yeah, well*) combined with upgrading/downgrading:

```
                agreement – potential disagreement
    clear agreement <---------------------------> unstated disagreement

    ja          ja              modified ja   modified ja   naja
    + upgrade  + same          + same        + downgrade   (+downgrade)
```
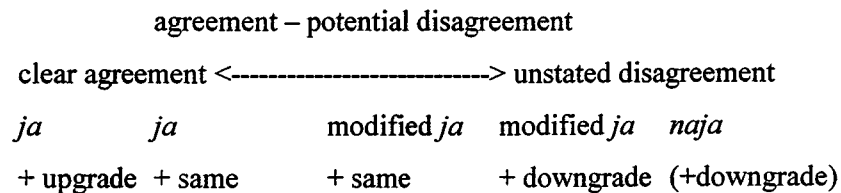
Figure 2. The system of turn-initial particles for agreement/disagreement in German (Uhmann 1996:319)

In this manner, German has developed a grammatical system due to preference organisation of second assessments. In other languages such grammatical systems have not yet been discovered. Nevertheless, the German example further verifies that preference organisation is clearly oriented to by the participants, and that they use it very routinely and in an orderly manner.

3.4 Sequential locations 2: initial assessments

In her studies Pomerantz investigates a wide collection of assessments from the point of view of *second assessments* they receive. The *seconds* are most important, since they typically either agree or disagree with the prior assessments, or in other words, provide a re-evaluation of the prior assessment. Accordingly, all the mentioned studies on assessments can be

said to have focused on second assessments. Nevertheless, all studies also give some typical sequential locations for first assessments, that is:

1. Action X (X ≠ assessment)
2. Assessment

Notice here that due to the (possible) lack of the adjacency pair structure, there is no (conditional) requirement, that X and assessment were in different turns. In other words, both 1. and 2. action can be produced by the same interlocutor.

By producing a first assessment a participant takes a risk of being disagreed with. According to Maynard (1989, see also Uhmann 1996:309-310), participants often avoid this position of doing first assessments. A typical strategy is to ask the recipient for her view first (Maynard 1989:95):

(11)
    → John: So what do you THI::NK about the bicycles on campus?
          Judy: I think they're terrible

Following Maynard (ibid.109), this is a typical strategy in such situations as "getting acquainted" or "diagnostic news delivery". That is, assessments are a crucial activity to achieve or fail to build a shared ground, therefore caution is at place.

The sequential locations for initial assessments have not yet been a topic of an independent, general study. Nevertheless, Pomerantz (1975) gives a chapter for them as seconds to *informings*. This sequential location is pursued next. There are also some larger entities in which it has been shown that assessment have recurrent sequential locations. Such are stories or topics. They are introduced in 3.4.2.

3.4.1 Assessments as seconds to informings

According to Pomerantz (1975:chapter 2) informings are 'news' which are delivered to a recipient. Furthermore, the category *informings* or *news* points to the differences in knowledge: the recipient does not have the knowledge. Because of this limitation, the intersubjective work of assessing is not possible immediately. Thus, informings could as well be thought as

extended assessments. Also here the recipient task is to produce a "receipt". That is, she should show that she has understood/misunderstood the news, agrees/disagrees with it or appreciates/disappreciates it and so on. Assessments are routinely used for this location (ibid. 33). (Ibid. 36):

(12)
     N: Guess what.=I haven't had a drink for eight days now
  → C: Fan-tas-tic

In this example, C makes her position clear in relation to the news N has delivered. Here the assessment is produced at the closest location to the news, in it's recognitional place. (ibid. 39.)

Furthermore, Pomerantz documents how positive assessments to informings terminate sequences, whereas negative assessments extend them. This order is better described in connection with *topic* which is the theme of the next section.

3.4.2 Topical work through assessments: the case of stories

Topic is not a formal term in conversation analysis, it has only a mundane meaning "what is being talked about" (see Schegloff 1990).[2] It has become clear that people in everyday conversations do not display having a script of topics, moreover topics flow to each other (Levinson 1983:313-317). This is a consequence of conversation being context-bound and context-renewing in every turn (see p. 11 of this study). That is, all turns start where the prior turn ends and put forward also a new dimension. From this perspective conversation looks disorderly, or as Tainio (1993:54) has put it, *topics are only in participants heads*. Nevertheless, the empirical study of *topical work* is possible. That is, participants at times accountably orient to bordering, closing, proffering or revitalising topics.

Due to the looseness of the notion topic it can then be studied anywhere. For the sake of structural clarity it will be presented here in connection with *stories*. Stories are multi-unit turns, in which the normal rules for turn-taking (see Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1978) are

suspended. That is, as an exception the *story teller* has a right for more than one turn construction unit. In order to achieve this, stories are proffered accountably. For instance, (invented) A: *have you heard x..?* B: *No, tell me...* A: [tells a story]. Finally, stories must also be brought to an end, and the normal turn-taking order restored. (see Routarinne 1997.) These two sequential slots are typically filled with assessments.

According to Goodwin & Goodwin (1992a:161-162,170-172; see also Jefferson 1984,1993), assessments in stories mark a move toward closure, for instance (ibid. 161):

(13)

```
Hyla:  A:n then they got t'this country club fer a party en the gu:y *hh u::m.
       (0.2) en they kick him out becuz they find out eez Jewi:sh,
→      *hh an it's j's r:ril[ly s:::sa::d,]
Clacia:                     [Guy that sounds] so goo::d?
```

Goodwin and Goodwin (ibid. 162) analyse the marked line as a "a shift from *description to assessment of described events"*. Furthermore, assessments in such locations both indicate topic (or story) closure and show heightened involvement in the topic (or story telling) (ibid. 171). In this manner, assessments are not only devices to show that the story or topic is interesting, important or relevant, but also an interactional resource for the *teller* to implicitly close the story. Notice also, how due to the adjacency pair structure assessments elicit an instant response. In the example, Clacia's turn is an agreeing second assessment produced in overlap with the first assessment.

Even though from a different perspective, also Pomerantz (1984:58) describes this sequential location as very typical for assessments. In her words (ibid. 58):

> The depiction of an event is not complete with the referencing alone. A conclusion or a point is needed: a summary of the actor's sense or experience of the event.

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[2] *Not formal* meaning here in comparison to the categories in CA which include some strict definitional requirements, such as those for *adjacency pairs* (see 3.2).

In sum, the structure [story/depiction]+[assessment] is an expected orderliness in interaction. In this pattern assessments serve as turn completion/termination devices.

Finally, assessments can initiate topics. According to Tainio (1993:67), in these slots it is often difficult to explicate whether or where a "new" topic begins. This is because most "new" topics are related to the "old" topic. In any case, topical misplacement markers (e.g. *by the way*), or contrastive markers (e.g. *but*) indicate transition points (cf. Tainio 1993:67-68). Accordingly, when assessments visibly initiate topics, they are likely to achieve topical transition in combination with other devices. Tainio (1993:71) has also given a characterisation for topic initial assessments: they bring up a topic with a personal starting point, to which the recipient should first provide a second assessment before she can develop the topic into a further direction. In brief, topic initial assessments make a personal view the focus of the interaction.

To summarise the discussion of initial assessments, they can occur as receipt tokens to informings, as closing devices to stories/topics or as topic/story initiators. Their occurrence can often be explained through differences in knowledge. If the recipient of the story or informing knows the assessable, then she may produce the first assessment. Nevertheless, the most involved participant, the teller of a story or the deliverer of news, usually evaluates it first. First assessors seem to be aware of the risk of conflict. If assessments occur as topic initiators, they are often combined with other topical work. Finally, introducing a topic with an assessment makes the speakers' affective view the starting point of intersubjective negotiation.

3.5 Grammatical structure

According to Tainio (1993:19), identifying activities require recognising *both sequential location and syntactic form* (cf. Goodwin & Goodwin 1992a:182; Launspach frth.). Furthermore, she finds that, typical form and

typical use go together. So far, I have reviewed findings on assessments, which always describe them in relation to their sequential location, that is, what comes after or before the investigated assessment. Next, I will discuss some possibilities of the grammatical characterisation of assessments which appears more difficult and methodologically problematic.[3]

Initially, Goodwin & Goodwin (1992a), deconstruct assessment turns into micro-units and give them different functions due to different syntactic positions. They divide assessments into two groups: (i) assessments where assessment terms precede assessables, that is *prepositioned* assessments, and (ii) *postpositioned* assessments where the order is reversed. For example (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992a:157,161):

(14)

        (i)
→ Eileen: *hh an this beautiful, (0.2) Irish Setter
    Debbie: Ahh::,
    Eileen: Came tearin up on ta the firts green(h)n an tried ta steal Pau(h)l's
        go(h)lf ball. *hh
    Paul: Eh hnh hnh.
    Eileen: *hheh! *hh

        (ii)
→ Dianne: **Jeff** made en asparagus pie it wz s : :so[: goo:d].
    Clacia: [I love it]

In the first example, the assessment terms is *beautiful*, which is prepositioned to the assessable *Irish Setter*. In the second example, *good* is postpositioned to *asparagus pie*.

Goodwin & Goodwin (ibid.) demonstrate how prepositioned assessments typically guide recipients to hear the next noun-phrase as an assessable. Furthermore, they also project turn-transition in the next possible location, irrespective whether the turn has otherwise come to a completion. In this manner, Goodwin & Goodwin (1992a:155-157) say that prepositioned assessments can occur in *the midst of an utterance*. This happens in the above example, Debbie delivers an assessment *Ahh*, which matches with the affective loading of Eileen's talk and can thus be seen as an

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[3] The general relation of CA and the study of grammar is out of the scope of this study. The general parameters are presented in the introductory article of the book *Interaction and Grammar* (Schegloff, Ochs and Thompson 1996).

agreement (ibid. 157). In their terminology, assessment action can be isolated from the utterance as a whole, which after reaching completion receives different treatment. In the above example the *whole* utterance is treated as a laughable, whereas an isolatable part of it is interpreted as an assessable.

Postpositioned assessments in turn are possible, if the assessable has already been mentioned. Grammatically speaking, ellipsis is used to postposition the assessment segment. Assessing is also often the only activity in a such turn construction unit. Goodwin & Goodwin (1992a:162) give the following sentence prototype for such a unit:

> [it] + [copula] + [adverbial intensifier] + [assessment term]
> e.g.: *It wz s::so: goo:d*
>   *an it's r:rilly s::::sa::d*

This structure is used by the participants to project turn closure. Goodwin & Goodwin (1992a:162) divide it further into two parts: referencing the assessable and the activity of assessing. In a microscopic level, at least in their materials, recipients start producing a congruent (agreeing) second assessment already during the intensifier (see example 14 (ii)). Finally, also the lengthening of the sounds and the semantic structure display "movement towards heightening participation in the activity of assessing by the speaker as the sentence unfolds" (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992a:162).

To sum up, Goodwin & Goodwins (1992a) framework of pre- and postpositioned assessments shows how the different syntactic structures have different interactional consequences and functions. Prepositioned assessment terms (prototypically adjectives) are used for assessing 'new' materials and they prepare the recipients to hear the referent (prototypically a (pro)noun) in some particular way and to treat them as assessable objects. Furthermore, such action may take place in the midst of an utterance. In contrast, postpositioned assessments make use of 'known' referents. This is prototypically done through elliptical referents (e.g. *it*). Furthermore, they project turn, story and topic closure by displaying a movement towards heightened participation, which is then typically withdrawn from (see p.37).

As a conclusion we may say that syntactic form not only makes assessments recognisable, but also creates interactional differences between assessments.

Finally, the relatively traditional forms of grammar presented in this section (in comparison to Uhmann's findings, see p.34) provide apparently solid starting points for empirical comparisons in different languages (cf. Schegloff, Ochs and Thompson 1996:28-32). This task has been taken up by Tainio (1993). She starts with building a syntactic prototype of assessments for Finnish, which with some modifications fits Goodwin & Goodwin's format. According to Tainio (1993:215), the most important difference between American and Finnish assessments lays in the second assessments. In Finnish most second assessments are minimal turns consisting mostly of particles (e.g. *nii, joo* 'yeah'). Tainio (1993:165-167) also argues, that Finnish overlapping second assessments are started during the assessment term, not already during the production of intensifiers, as in American conversations (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992a, see example 14 (ii) above).

3.6. Other findings and summary discussion

The findings on assessments do not end here, actually most CA studies make some remarks on this very mundane activity. Also some general findings, such as those considering gaze or body movement co-ordinated to assessments (see Goodwin & Goodwin 1992a:159,166,168-172) were left out because of their irrelevance for the current study.[4] Before providing a summary of the whole chapter, one final, partial summary dimension of assessments is how they operate to create, maintain or alter identities, responsibilities, group relations and the like. Or in Goodwin & Goodwin's (1992a:174) terms: how do assessments invoke larger activities?

Goodwin & Goodwin's article *Assessments and the construction of context* (1992a) contains also a case account on how assessments are used to create solidarity and conflict between black urban girls in a particular conversation. The findings (ibid. 174-181) are summarised here:

Three girls are conversing: A girl portrays her own character through evaluations. These evaluations are done in relation to the current other activities, which is telling about what somebody has been talking about them. This larger activity is called *instigating*. That is, the assessments are in favour of the girls present, whereas they promote a future confrontation with a third, non-present girl.

Through alignment to these assessments girls display their positions and group relationships. That is, second assessments are taken as basis of their group position. Furthermore, the girls take each other to be responsible for these positions later in the same conversation.

In sum, recipients are not only listening to the talk, but orient to it also in terms of how they are positioned by it. Furthermore, the used assessments have 'political' consequences for the social organisation of the girls group.

This analysis demonstrates, how assessments are resources for forcing coalitions or alliances between the participants (ibid. 183). It also shows, how assessments can be analysed in a wider context than those reviewed in this chapter so far (see also Antaki, Condor & Levine 1996). A restriction of such an analysis is that it tells only about *a* conversation, assessments can, and are likely to be a part of other larger activities than instigating in other conversations.

A summary of the findings in the literature on assessments is listed next:

Assessments in general
- require access to knowledge
- are recognised by virtue of sequential placement and syntactic structure
- display affect/ personal stance
- appear in pairs/chains, which display features typical to adjacency pairs
- typically contain an adjective as their assessment term
- can be divided grammatically to pre- or postpositioned assessments
- may invoke larger activities

Second assessments
- are organised due to preference constraints
- can be classified upgrading, same or downgrading assessments
- upgrading second assessments are clearly preferred
- agreeing (preferred) second assessments terminate sequences (topics)
- disagreeing (dispreferred) second assessments extend sequences
- show recipients alignment to the prior speaker and/or referent

First assessments
- are mainly produced by participants with more knowledge on the matter
- elicit a second assessment from a recipient

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[4] My materials are only audio.

- include a risk that the recipient may disagree with them
- routinely occur after informings or news
- display a movement towards topic or story closure
- can start new topics or stories, but such turns routinely include other topical work

In this chapter also some language/culture based differences were taken as examples:

- in American conversations same second assessments routinely operate as prefaces to disagreements, whereas in Finnish same assessments more often function as confirming assessments.
- the variants of the German particle *ja* are routinely linked to the preference organisation of second assessments.
- in American conversations overlapping second assessments are started during the intensifier, whereas in Finnish examples such overlaps emerge later.

These initial findings on the cultural or language bound differences on assessments have to be accepted cautiously. The problem is that they lie in the fine details. As Tainio (1993:166) has stated, one can find counter examples to practically everything and it is impossible to say that such things that happen in American conversations are not discoverable in e.g. Finnish materials, such as overlaps starting earlier (see pp.40-41). The analysts can say only what is typical in their materials. The analysis of different cultures is still so explorative, that we have very little idea of what is typical to a culture or language. In any case, it appears that some domain of assessing activity is culturally invariant. Actually, many of the orderly characteristics of assessments listed above can be considered such.

Overwhelmingly, in the literature preference organisation for second assessments is the most apparent basic orderliness for assessments. It has been found to be relevant for all assessments in every conversation and in all languages studied this far. It will be a central starting point for analysis also in this study, since the topic of this study, self-deprecations is considered a subclass of assessments in the first place due to its special preference organisation. In the next chapter not only this, but also other characterisations of assessments are reflected to self-deprecations.

4 PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON SELF-DEPRECATIONS

Self-deprecations are a subclass of assessments. The next figure, from Tsui (1994:151, adjusted)[1], illustrates some subclasses of assessments:

```
                          ├ Positive .......... Self-praise
           ┌Speaker-directed —>  ├ Negative .......... Self-deprecation
           │
Assessments —>               ├ Positive .......... Compliment
           │ ├ Addressee-dir.  —>  ├ Negative .......... Criticism
           │
           └ Neither speaker nor addressee directed.... Assessing
```
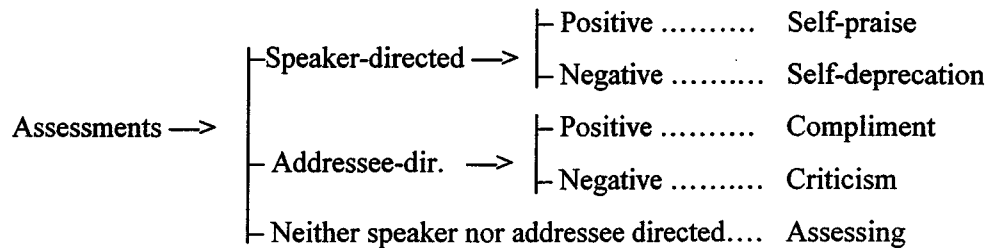
Figure 3. Five subclasses of assessments

The general case, 'neutral' *assessing*, was discussed in the prior chapter. Initially, Pomerantz (1975) has studied self-deprecations as a special case of preference organisation. Self-deprecations, together with self-praise, compliments and criticism, are special activities in that they all have a complex preference organisation.

In this chapter, prior studies of self-deprecations will be reviewed. First some initial characterisations are discussed (4.1). Then Pomerantz's work on preference organisation of seconds to self-deprecations is reviewed (4.2). Furthermore, Launspach (frth.) has investigated the role of self-criticism in the context of quilting sessions, where she has explicated some strategic functions for self-deprecations. Her findings are the theme of 4.3. In this chapter also the notions on the grammar of self-deprecations are reviewed (4.4). Finally, perspectives for this study are summarised in 4.5.

4.1 Initial characterisations of self-deprecations

Before going to the preference organisation of self-deprecations, I will briefly describe how self-deprecations can be identified from the stream of

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[1] Only the terms *self-condemnation* and *self-denegration* have been changed in order to follow the general practice of this study.

speech. Following figure 2 above, an initial characterisation of self-deprecations could be:

> Self-deprecations are activities that evaluate the actor, or a referent linked to her/him and their assessment is negative.

This is only a working definition, since as described in 2.2 a proper characterisation is based on (i) constructional elements, (ii) sequential location and (iii) accountable recipient interpretation. Next, examples of self-deprecations from prior studies and my data will be given.

In a typical case, self-deprecations have the actor as their referent and are thus directly linked to the speaker:

(1)   (Pomerantz 1984:85)

→ L: ...I'm so dumb I don't even know it hhh!—heh!
W: y-no, y-you're not du:mb

(2)   (Tsui 1994:149)

→ H: My God, ten years, I can't believe it. It doesn't seem that you were away that long. Maybe it just shows that I'm really getting old.
X: Eh listen, Henry, that's what's happening to all of us.
H: Yeah.

In these cases *I* is the assessable: *I'm so dumb*, *I'm really getting old*. The assessment terms *dumb* and *old* are clearly negative.

For reasons of space or transparency such features as sequential location or participant interpretations are not described explicitly in the literature. In order to demonstrate their existence and relevance, I will extend the characterisation of the following case from my data to address those dimensions, too:

(3)   [Am:1-3]
Participants are tasting and evaluating a food that one of them has made:

01 → C) = @<yeah and it's healthy. hh(.) but then I crave. hh (.) fattening things
like the Twix. hh>@ (--) (.) heh but I have barely eaten.
02   (0.8)
03   A) well I ate- I have been eating bread all day (--)
04   (.)
05 → B) I had (---). (.) and some cookies(h). AND A MUF(h)FIN. (.)
06   A) ehh hh=
07 → B) =so I'm not doing that good today (either).
08   (1.5)

First, C delivers a negative evaluation on her own eating habits. Her self-critical assessment in line 01 has *I* as its referent and the assessment is negative (*fattening*). This self-deprecation is sequentially placed next to an assessment of a food. That is, the self-deprecation involves a topic/activity shift. This shift is achieved through the contrastive transition marker *but*. In sum, C orientates to sequentially distancing the self-deprecation from the prior activity (assessing a food).

In the follow-up another participant produces similar self-deprecations. In line 07 B speaks critically about herself (*I'm not doing that good today*). The turn on line 05 is linguistically a less transparent case, here assessing is achieved through *assessment sounds* (term used by Goodwin and Goodwin 1992a). That is, the laugh tokens in *cookies(h)* and *MUF(h)IN*, as well as the rise of volume produce a self-ironic effect.

Sequentially these assessments in lines 05 and 07 are produced in a context created by C's initial self-deprecation. That is, there is an *assessment chain* where participants produce negative evaluations on their eating. In this manner, C's initial self-deprecation can be seen to elicit similar accounts. Furthermore, the self-deprecation in line 05 is clearly a response to C's telling what she has eaten that day. Finally, also the linguistic form of the self-deprecation in line 05 is connected with C's (and A's) initial accounts. The utterance can be seen to carry elliptically some elements from prior assessments. That is, it is clearly a report of "what I have eaten today" without stating it explicitly.

Producing similar accounts shows also that the recipients of C's assessment in line 01 have interpreted it as a self-deprecation. Furthermore, B's second self-deprecation: *so I'm not doing that good today (either)*, gives an explicit interpretation of her previous turn (line 05) and summarises the activity in this sequence as self-deprecatory. As a conclusion, this evidence shows that the sequence is treated as self-deprecatory by the participants themselves.

In the next examples the referent is not *I*, here it is something that is linked to the speaker:

(4)   (Pomerantz 1984:84)

        R: Did she get my card.
        C: Yeah she gotcher card
→   R: Did she t'ink it was terrible
        C: No she thought it was very adohrable.

(5)   (Launspach frth.)

        G is showing a quilt that she has made:

→   G: It's a:ll of what not to do.
        S: No this is (not how it) looks.
→   G: I'll show you all of the mistakes, first of all-I used four inch squares,

We can say that the product of a person is linked to the person's self. Thus, negative assessments (*terrible, what not to do, mistakes*) of ones own products are routinely understood as self-deprecations.

Consider also the following example from my data:

(6)   [Am:4]
        A has prepared a food that B is about to taste:

01   ((B tastes the food))
02 → A) is it that bad=
03   B) =no. [no]

The sequential placement of this self-deprecation can be analysed through cultural knowledge described by Bilmes (1988:163). Namely, that in situations where one displays one's products (painting, sewing, food etc.) a co-participant praise is awaited. If no praise is delivered, then it is relevantly absent (ibid.). Here A thus interprets that B does not like the food she has prepared. In this manner, she delivers a negative assessment of the food. Furthermore, the negative, interrogative assessment can be seen as a display of giving B a chance to deliver a negative assessment which would not display conflict. In comparison, *Isn't it great* (invented) would display less sensitivity towards B's prior conduct.

Finally, B delivers a *no.* at once. This routine like disagreement is a typical co-participant reaction to a self-deprecation (see p.50). In this manner, B can be seen to orientate to A's assessment as self-deprecatory.

Finally, an example from my Hungarian data:

(7)   [Hun:1]

01   Z) ((tells how she has read for the exam))...de hát nem tudom mert az hogy
       elolvastam még semmi.
       but well no know-SG1,DEF because that pron PFX-read-SG1,PAST yet nothing
       ...*but, well I don't know, that I have read it through means yet nothing*
02   B) =dehogynem kezedben volt [manuálisan-]
       but-pron-no hand-GEN,SG2-INESS be-PAST manually
       but of course, you had it in your hands manually-
03   A) [a lényeges] az hogy elolvastad
       ART important that pron PFX-read-SG2,PAST
       the main thing is that you have read it.

In my Hungarian example Z is going to an exam and evaluates her prospects
poor, whereas A and B produce disagreements to her assertion. In the self-
depreciative turn (line 01) the referent is expressed through first person
singular verb inflection: *el-olvas-t-am*, {prefix}-{read}-{past tense}-{Sg1},
'I read through'. The negative assessment is constructed through negation: *az
semmi* "that (is) nothing". Furthermore, the following turns display a similar
interpretation. First, the referent of assessing in lines 02 and 03 is the former
speaker. This is indicated linguistically through the use of second person
reference in verb inflection: *kezedben volt* "it was in *your* hand"; *elovastad*
"*you* have read it'. Secondly, the second turns disagree with the self-criticism
in a routine manner. That is, they display solidarity towards the participant
that has produced a self-deprecation.

To summarise, self-deprecations can be characterised as activities
which are in some way linked to the speaker. Two basic cases were
illustrated, either the referent is *I*, or a product of the speaker (food, quilt,
card etc.). In addition, the assessment term is negative (*bad, fattening, old,
dumb, terrible* etc.). Negativity may be expressed also in other way, for
instance through intonation. Furthermore, these constructional elements are
not definitive as such: sequential location and participant interpretations
must be investigated. These should be described in order to ascertain that the
participants themselves have oriented to the given utterance in the proposed
way. Finally, self-deprecations are similarly recognisable in the Hungarian
data.

4.2 Complications of the preference organisation

The fourth chapter of Pomerantz's dissertation is titled: *'Seconds' to self-deprecations*. It is devoted to the complications of the preference organisation for assessments. Her main finding is that for self-deprecations disagreements are produced as preferred seconds.

In fact, all the mentioned subclasses (see figure 2): *self-praise, criticisms, compliments* and *self-deprecations* are characterised by complications of the preference organisation. Pomerantz (1975,1978,1984 see also Tsui 1994 and Launspach frth.) explains some of these deviancies from agreement through cultural "maxims" or values which are displayed by these activities:

- "Maxim of modesty": Self-praise or brag is considered wrong and should be avoided.
- "Maxim of solidarity": Criticism of a co-participant is unsupportive and should be avoided.

These "maxims" are paired with compliments and self-deprecations as follows:

- Agreeing to compliments may lead to self-praise.
- Agreeing with self-deprecations leads to co-participant criticism and should avoided.

For compliments, downgrading the praise, moving the focus away from the recipient or disagreements serve as devices to "achieve modesty" (Pomerantz 1975:142). Returns or shows of gratitude (thanks) in turn are "supportive seconds" (ibid. 140).[2]

It is essential to remember that the "maxims" are only macro-level explanations of recurrent interactional patterns in a collection of naturally occurring data. That is, they are extensively based on detailed investigation of micro-level phenomena. Furthermore, the organisation of micro-

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[2] For criticisms there appears to be an even more complicated basic preference organisation than for compliments or self-deprecations. Bluntly put, it is preferred to disagree with a criticism of one's opinions or values (Kotthoff 1993). Furthermore, it is not preferred to disagree strongly (Tsui 1994:192). Kotthoff (1993:213) explains these preferences through the "maxim" of avoiding submissivness.

phenomena displays patterns that the participants rarely have knowledge of (e.g. Heritage 1984:242-243). In the next subchapters the micro-level organisation of seconds to self-deprecations is discussed. That is, alternative second assessment types and their turn formats are described.

4.2.1 Disagreements to self-deprecations (preferred)

According to Pomerantz (1975:91-102), disagreements are packaged in many different forms and activities. Nevertheless, disagreements to self-deprecations have almost uniformly the following turn design, typical for preferred seconds (ibid. 101):

> i) Disagreement components occupy entire disagreement units. In particular, there are generally no contrastive prefaces.
> ii) Disagreements tend to occur without gaps prior to their initiations.

Typical 'realisations' of this structure are negations, partial repeats or compliments. They are foregrounded in Pomerantz's analysis because they also display a relative order when they appear together. The next example illustrates this order (ibid. 92,94,96):

(9)
   L, the hostess, is showing slides to her guests:

   L: You are not bored (huh)
→ S: Bored?=
→ S: No. We're fascinated.

The partial repeat *Bored?* challenges the prior self-deprecation instantly. Such repeats typically occur before disagreements, that is, they are disagreement implicative devices (ibid. 94). The negation *No.* is placed in the beginning of the disagreement which is its typical location in Pomerantz's materials. These two components can also be considered "weak disagreements", since they are not overt disagreements (ibid.). Finally, the assessment term *fascinated* is a compliment to the hostess who is showing slides to her guests. It is a clearly positive evaluation and thus an overt disagreement. Compliments are also in general positioned after partial repeats and/or negations (ibid. 96).

When two or more different types of disagreements are delivered (as here by S) there is routinely an escalation of disagreements (ibid. 94-97). The typical sequential order of components is as presented: partial repeats, negations and compliments. This order is explained due to their relative strength, that is, compliments are overt and clear disagreements (ibid. 96). This continuum is similar to the "weak agreement – strong agreement" characterisation based on the scaling of downgrading, same and upgrading assessments (see pp.28-30,32). Partial repeats or negations can be considered similar to same assessments or downgradings, whereas only compliments are clearly positive characterisations and thus prototypes of disagreeing preferred seconds (Pomerantz 1975:97, note 2). Both scales are summarised in the next table:

Table 1. Preferred seconds to assessments and self-deprecations:

Preferred	Agreeing seconds to assessments		Disagreeing seconds to self-deprecations	
	characterisation	*scale*	*characterisation*	*scale*
clearly	strong agreem.	I. upgrading	strong disagreem.	I. compliments
		II. same		II. negations
less	weak agreement	III. downgrading	weak disagreement	III. partial repeats

This table illustrates how preferred seconds form a continuum (cf. Tainio 1997:104). To reiterate, compliments are strong disagreements and thus clear, overt and strong preferred seconds as second activity types to self-deprecations.

Launspach (frth.) partly challenges Pomerantz's findings, in her materials typical disagreements to self-deprecations are more often *questions* or *challenge assertions* than partial repeats or compliments. For example:

(10)
> A is unwilling to show her hand made quilt:

> A: this-that's my first.
→ J: But I want to see it.
→ L: We-we still want to see it.
> A: Ok.

Here the self-deprecation (that A's product is not worth showing) is countered at once with a challenge assertion that contains neither negation

nor partial repeat (e.g. the units *that* or *first*). In fact, one of Launspach's points is that she has found different *typical* forms compared to Pomerantz. Nevertheless, this can be taken as evidence for Pomerantz's statement (1975:97) that preferred seconds appear in many various forms and procedures, since they are the primary, preferred variant in comparison to agreements. That is, Launspach has increased the cumulative knowledge on basic disagreement types, but not challenged Pomerantz's main insight, preference organisation. Finally, Launspach's different forms may be explained by virtue of her data, that is, the assessable objects (quilts) are present and visible.

Also Pomerantz lists some other typical disagreement activities and procedures than the above mentioned gradable forms: *Undermines* are a type, where the negative characterisation is for instance generalised (Pomerantz 1975:97):

(11)
    W: Yet I've got quite a distance tuh go yet.
→ L: Everybody has a distance

Another procedure is a *shift of scale* towards relatively more positive and less deprecatory direction. For instance (ibid.98):

(12)
    R: 'hh but I'm only getting a C on my report card in math.
→ C: Yeh but that's passing Roger,

In the category of grades C is lower than A or B, but nevertheless a positive category in the "pass" − "fail" scale as pointed out by C.

Furthermore, if a participant "accidentally" criticises a co-participant, who notices this accountably with a self-deprecation, participants routinely use *third turn repairs* to restore solidarity. In other words, they rebuild their prior assertions in order to disagree with the self-deprecation (ibid. 99). Finally, if a participant produces a series of self-deprecations, they are *treated as improper activities* and challenged with responses such as "What's wrong with you today" or "Right you're a perf-perfectionis" (ibid. 99-101).

This list of procedures is by no means exhaustive, as Pomerantz (ibid. 97) admits. Undoubtedly, such a description would be endless, since

disagreements with self-deprecations are packaged in different activities for all practical purposes and contexts. In any case, considering Pomerantz's framework, it is more important and significant that the basic turn formats of disagreeing second assessments to self-deprecations are uniformly preferred ones. That is, similar to the formats of agreeing second assessments after "basic" assessments (see also Launspach frth. and Tsui 1994). Following Pomerantz (ibid. 101-102):

> i) disagreement components occupy the whole disagreement units
> ii) disagreements occur instantly
> iii) disagreements are progressively ordered from weak to strong
> iv) overtly positive disagreements are strong preferred seconds
> v) disagreements are positioned as first activities in their turns

The same orderliness has been described in relation to assessments, where agreements are preferred seconds (pp.28-30). Pomerantz takes this as further evidence for the claim that: "Some features of turn organisation operate with respect to preference constraints." (ibid. 102). In other words, preference organisation is invariant as the basis of accountable turn features, irrespective whether these turns display agreement or disagreement.

4.2.2 Agreements to self-deprecations (dispreferred)

Agreements to self-deprecations are interpreted as co-participant criticisms. Following Pomerantz (1975:102-109), both agreement components and the organisation of turns in which agreements are accomplished reflect the status of agreements as dispreferred. That is, they are delayed, minimised, withheld and contain implicit agreeing components.

When agreements are produced, they are typically 'weak agreements', such as continuers or agreement tokens (*yeah, mm hm, uh huh*). For example (Pomerantz 1975:103):

(14)
> R: Um...Which way do I want to go? Like so, huh? Oh, I'm clumsy. Look, see?
> → J: *Yeah, I see*. ((chuckling)) You're also turning us around in a circle.

In this example the co-participant criticism (*You're also turning us around in a circle*) is prefaced by an unexplicit agreement (*Yeah, I see*).

Furthermore, agreements may be qualified as 'weak agreements': (Pomerantz 1975:102):

(15)
```
    W: ..Do you know what I was all the time?
    L: (No).
    W. Pavlov's dog.
            (2.0)
→ L: (I suppose)
```

The agreement to the self-deprecation is weakened by what Pomerantz (ibid. 104) calls, a "suppositional" (*I suppose*).

Furthermore, delays are typical dispreference tokens. They can precede agreements as in the previous example, or the self-deprecating party can continue talking. That is, there are two alternative structures in relation to gaps: either an agreement from the recipient or a resumption from the speaker. (ibid. 104-105.)

In general, Pomerantz finds self-deprecations tentative or proposed self-criticisms, the legitimacy or validity of which is interactionally and collaboratively established (ibid. 106). If the recipients do not disagree with the self-deprecation, then the self-criticism stands as interactionally confirmed. For instance (ibid. 107):

(16)
```
    B: I like 'er very much
    B: But she still has that silly chatter about 'er
    A: Mm hm,
    B: That is like a (1.0) Oh, I'm not much of a teaser.
            (1.0)
→   B: Well now this is my fault. I don't like teasing
    A: Mm hm,
    B: And I know people love it.
```

The self-deprecation from B (*I'm not much of a teaser.*) is followed by a gap of 1.0 seconds and a resumption. In the resumption the matter that B is *not much of a teaser* is taken as a fact. Had A challenged the tentative self-criticism, B would have no reason to accept this characterisation.

Finally, Pomerantz (ibid. 108-109) describes *laughter* as an option to produce a weak agreement. In this manner, self-deprecations can be

interpreted as non-serious. First, the agents of self-criticism can produce post-completion laugh tokens (ibid. 108):

(17)

      B: Course she had such a lovely thing an' I ate all of it *heh*
      A: [Mm hm]
      B: [Bi(*h*)g ol'] glutton

Here B delivers a laugh token *(heh)* after her self-deprecation has come to a completion and a second assessment is relevant.

Secondly, also seconds to self-deprecations may include laughter (ibid. 109):

(18)

      C: ..cept in my old age I'm slowin down consider[ably,
      D: [(yeah) old age
      C: [hhah-hah-hah-hah-hah-hah!]
      D: [What're you thirdy five?]
      C: Ye(h)e(h)es.
→   D: heh-heh-heh-heh
      C: 'hhhhh[hhh
      D: [But a young thirty five.

In this example both the producer of the self-deprecation and the recipient produce laugh tokens. That is, both B and D ease the touchy issue of self-criticism by categorising it as a laughable, humorous or non-serious matter.

Also Glenn (1992:142-144) has investigated laughter in connection to self-deprecations. His basic claim is that (ibid. 142, empahasis as original): "laughing first invites other to laugh *with* current speaker *at* current speaker". In other words, the self-deprecating party can display willingness to share laughter at self. For instance (ibid. 140,142):

(19)

      Ida: My house is filthy J(h)en[ny
      Jenny: [hhhheh-hhehh

Ida treats her assessment as a laughable, Jenny joins this laughter, and for this moment participants align in common activity thus displaying solidarity (Glenn 1992:140). Nevertheless, Jenny's laughter neither agrees, nor confirms the self-deprecation. With the analysis of this case, Glenn is in line with Pomerantz on that laughter is not preferred second activity. As a new perspective, Glenn (ibid. 143-144) notes that in the sequential context of

"troubles telling" (Jefferson 1988), people do not produce second laughter, because they are a more serious activity than self-deprecations.

To summarise, agreements to self-deprecations have the following features:

i) if agreements occur, they are weak agreements
ii) delays, laughter and other prefaces routinely precede agreement components or resumptions
iii) self-deprecations that are not disagreed with are treated as confirmed criticisms
iv) laughter is routinely used by both participants to categorise the self-deprecation non-serious

In the end of her investigation of self-deprecations, Pomerantz (1975:109) again reiterates that the described order verifies that "Some features of turn organisation operate with respect to dispreference constraints.". We could add that the role of laughter here suggests that self-deprecation is a "touchy" or "embarrassing" activity, but nevertheless a less serious activity than "troubles telling". In other words, self-deprecation is an assessment to be agreed or disagreed with, not a description that should be taken as a fact.

4.3 How do self-deprecations invoke larger activities?

Sonja Launspach (frth.) has investigated assessments in recordings of "quilting guild" sessions. Her materials present a situation, where women[3] come together in order to show their hand made quilts. The investigated activity is called *shown-and-tell* sequence, where one of the participants shows her quilt, comments on it and also other participants give an evaluation of her product. In show-and-tell sequences self-deprecatory assessments are typically used by the person showing her quilt. Other participants in turn challenge these assertions with compliments.

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[3] The women are mostly: White, middle class, middle aged, North American and from a southern small city.

Show-and-tell sequences are routinely initiated with self-deprecations (Launspach frth.: 4.1.1[4]):

(21)
→ G: It's a:ll of what not to do.
    S: No this is (not how it) looks.
→ G: I'll show you all of the mistakes, first of all-I used four inch squares,

Here, Gwen starts a list of her mistakes in quilting a jacket. According to Launspach, this self-depreciative list is used to draw attention towards their products or them as skilled quilters without producing self-praise or brag. In fact, according to Launspach, the quilter showing her work never offers positive evaluations of her own work. As in the example, other participants typically produce (preferred) seconds which challenge these assertions, and thus create solidarity and support. Finally, notice how Gwen produces yet another self-deprecation after Sara's compliment. Launspach (frth.:4.1.1) characterises this procedure as a resource to keep control over the turn and the topic.

In those rare cases, when other participants do not disagree with the negative assessments (which is the dispreferred second activity) she typically goes on talking (ibid. 4.1.2):

(22)
    ((S lays out a block))
    S: I'm not happy with that one.
    ((S lays another block out))
    S: I like the smaller ones better.

As described earlier (p.54), self-deprecations that are not countered are considered confirmed. Here Sara's first self-deprecation has been confirmed with a silence. Launspach analyses the resumptions (here: *I like the smaller ones better*) as another possibility for the speaker to maintain control of both the turn and the topic.

Furthermore, in Launspach's materials the self-deprecations are never connected directly to a person. Instead, they always refer to their products (see previous example (22)) or to their methods of work (see example (21)). As a conclusion, Launspach posits that self-deprecations and

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[4] There are no pagenumbers in the manuscript, therefore, section numbers will be referred to.

compliments are in a complementary distribution in the show-and-tell situation. Self-deprecations call attention to the quilters or their work, simultaneously avoiding self-praise. The use of compliments as a disagreeing device builds solidarity and acknowledges the creativity of each quilter without praising them directly. In this manner, participants "are able to maintain the egalitarian norm of the community of practice, quilting and at the same time ask for and receive recognition for their work" (ibid. chapter 5). Self-deprecations have an important role in this activity: they are a resource to resolve "the conflicting tension between the group/societal norms and positive self-image." (ibid.)

Launspach investigates also how self-criticism can be connected to a larger "macro" context of women's language and identity. Negative self-expressions as such fit the traditional view of women's role of avoiding self-praise. Nevertheless, Launspach posits also that self-deprecations on the other hand allow women to call attention to their creativity and skill which are "positive characteristics often absent from definitions of women's identity" (ibid.). In this manner, women use assessments both for promoting egalitarian group values and for fulfilling individualistic needs.

The main contribution of Launspach's work is bringing new perspectives to the study of self-deprecations. This includes showing what strategic functions self-deprecations might have in specific situations, such as *show-and-tell* sessions. She has also succeeded in empirically explicating how women build their identities (both egalitarian and individualistic) through self-deprecations. Nevertheless, it is difficult to subscribe to a view that this use would be distributed due to gender. From this point of view, the discussion is without base in the lack of comparative data on male show-and-tell situations. It is also possible that the procedures she has described are more culture-bound than gender-bound, from this perspective it would be rewarding to find a (sub)culture, an institution or a situation, where self-deprecations can be said to have other strategic functions.

4.4 Grammar of self-deprecations

Both Launspach and Pomerantz can be said to describe the grammar of both self-deprecations and seconds to self-deprecations. In fact, the whole notion of preference organisation has been described "grammatical organisation" (Schegloff 1996a:64, footnote 18). Nevertheless, I will concentrate here only on a form of organisation that might be autonomous for self-deprecations. Since I have already introduced the relevant materials of Pomerantz (1975,1984), I will only list some of her findings that can be considered 'grammatical':

Self-deprecations
— contain a referent which is either first person (*I*), or a something linked to the actor.
— their assessment (assessment segment) is negative

Seconds to self-deprecations
— the use of negations, e.g. *No. We're fascinated.*
— the use of partial repeats (i.e. ellipsis), e.g. L: *You are not bored (huh)?* S: *Bored?*

From this information it is still difficult to build a prototype of a self-deprecating sentence.

Launspach gives prototype sentences for compliments which she founds prevalent to self-deprecations as well. She lists sentence patterns due to frequencies (cf. Manes and Wolfson 1981):

Table 2: sentence patterns of compliments and self-deprecations

Pattern	Example	Frequency
(i) I love/like NP	*I like these colours*	14
(ii) PRO is/looks ADJ	*That's pretty*	9
(iii) PRO is ADJ NP	*Here is my pitiful tulip*	2
(iv) PRO is/looks NP	*It looks like McDonald's*	1

(Launspach frth.: 3.1)

These patterns can be seen as an advanced version of Goodwin and Goodwin's (1992a) model (see pp.38-41, cf. Tainio 1993). Launspach's patterns give typical but specific options for the assessable (I/PRO/NP), verb (be/love/like/looks), the assessment term (ADJ/NP) and for their syntactic

positions. The frequent use of pronouns as assessables is explained by the physical situation: the participants see the blocks of quilt in front of them and thus they can be referred with pronouns.

In these patterns only referents that are related to the participants are used. That is, self-deprecations that have the actor as the referent are absent from show-and-tell situations analysed by Launspach. In this manner, self-deprecations can be said to have the same syntactic format as compliments. Or, as Launspach (chapter 5) puts it: "the quilters appear to be overgeneralising a syntactic form associated with compliments". According to Launspach, the syntactic patterns are recycled, not the lexical surface forms, as in Pomerantz's materials.

As a conclusion, we have a fragmental picture of the syntactic structure of self-deprecations. Launspach has presented patterns that are typical to a situation, where no self-deprecations referring to the speaker get used. In general, assessments used in the show-and-tell sessions can be called institutional, that is, tied to a given situation since they all have a given referent (the block of quilt). From this basis, there is an obvious need for further study in the realm of grammatical forms of self-deprecations in general, or in specific level on forms of self-deprecations containing direct reference to self. Also the comparison of self-deprecations in different languages is an untouched territory.

4.5 Perspectives for this study

Before indicating perspectives for this study, I will briefly review a study that includes claims on self-deprecations in Hungarian. Namely, Suszczyńska's work (1999) on apologies in (American) English, Polish and Hungarian deserves notice. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned outright that she uses data from discourse completion tests (DCT) instead of naturally occurring talk.

First, in Suszczyńska's framework self-deprecations are included as a potential strategy to do apologising (ibid. 1056). Then she investigates a

situation of "bumping into an elderly lady in a department store". Due to DCT answers, she observes, among others, that Hungarians (and Poles) included more self-deprecations in their apologies than Americans in this situation. She concludes that (ibid. 1063):

> It seems that [...] immunity of one's private self is much less part of the Hungarian [...] culture. People are more publicly available to each other, which implies less social distance and a smaller personal preserve.

For the American culture in turn she claims that (ibid. 1063):

> Admitting one's deficiency can be quite embarrassing, discrediting, and ultimately unnecessary in a society that values personal preserves and egalitarianism.

This can be true to the statistics of self-deprecations in DCT tests, but as Launspach has demonstrated (see pp.56-58) the opposite is true for women showing their hand-made products. That is, due to empirical studies of actual language use, self-deprecations are a typical strategy in American conversations to promote both egalitarianism and individual wants. In a similar manner, the finding that self-deprecating would be typical for Hungarian oral culture must be accepted with caution.

It would be possible to continue with piling up the findings on self-deprecations in other levels of assessment phenomena described in the third chapter. For instance, slots for initial self-deprecations or self-deprecations and topic could be pursued. Nevertheless, the findings would be even more fragmental than those on the syntactic format of self-deprecations. Thus, I will take the other levels of analysis as potential areas for further analysis. As a working hypothesis we might say that the order in these areas is the same as in assessments in general. A goal of analysis is then to discover whether there actually are other autonomous characteristics for self-deprecations than those described in this chapter.

Next I will indicate the research questions for this study emerging from the subchapters here:

(i) What kind of linguistic structures house self-deprecations in my data?

(ii) Is the preference organisation described by Pomerantz prevalent in my data?

(iii) What kind of sequential locations do the self-deprecations have in my data?

(iv) What kind of activities do self-deprecations invoke or contribute to?

Furthermore, a basic approach to all these questions is:

(v) Do my American and Hungarian data display differences?

Methodologically the questions and perspectives (i)-(iv) can or may not be the only direction the analysis will take, since conversation analytic work should be data driven, not hypothesis driven. In this manner, these starting points will only be the basis of doing cumulative work. In other words, the findings that I have reviewed work as a baseline for my analysis of the American data.

In turn, the empirical study of Hungarian conversation is largely uncharted territory. Furthermore, as Launspach has demonstrated, there may be gender or subculture based differences or links between self-deprecations and identity. In a similar manner, different linguistic patterns or cultural norms may be discoverable. Nevertheless, these differences are not so easily available as Suszczyńska (1999) has suggested.

5 DATA

My data consists of two recorded mundane multiperson conversations, one Hungarian, one American. This choice of natural material is based on the assumption that everyday interaction is the basic environment for language use and development (Schegloff 1996a:54). In this chapter, I will describe the basic characteristics of my data. First, brief reports are given on how I collected the data and what kind of conversations they represent (5.1). Secondly, the content of the conversations and the occurrence of self-deprecations in them is described (5.2). Thirdly, transcriptions, translations and glosses are explained briefly (5.3).

5.1 Data collection

The American data was recorded by one of the participants, in 1996 in a dormitory in Jyväskylä. The participants are three female exchange students from the USA aged between 20 and 23. The data was originally recorded for a course on CA. I knew one of the participants and she recorded their conversation. The other two women were visiting her almost daily, thus the situation is very spontaneous and mundane. Afterwards, the participants gave their permission to use the materials. The participants were not worried about the content of their conversation, whereas they told me that they are speaking "bad language" on the tape. Finally, one of the participants helped me to prepare the first transcript. The quality of the recording is at places rather poor. This is because the participants move around the room and sometimes leave the room. Nevertheless, most of the 30 minutes on the tape is understandable.

Gathering the Hungarian data was rather difficult in comparison to the American data. First, I failed in receiving data with a similar method.

My Hungarian fellow students [1] tried their best helping me, but for some reason nobody was willing to give their mundane conversations as data to an investigation. Finally, I received the Hungarian data from the 'Department of Contemporary Hungarian Language' [2] of Eötvös Roland University (Budapest) with the help and permission of professor Borbála Keszler. The conversation has been recorded in a dormitory in Budapest in 1978 for the purposes of linguistic investigation. The Hungarian data has similar technical difficulties, the quality of the recording is at times poor and the participants move around the room. Nevertheless, most of the half an hour conversation is audible.

In the Hungarian data most participants know about the recording. One of the participants is most active. The most active participant did not know about the recording.[3] It is obvious that those who knew about the recording adjusted their behaviour in some ways (cf. Keszler 1984:190-191). Some participants might be nervous, others avoid some topics and some talk less. Nevertheless, the adjustments of behaviour are not such that they would cause problems for my analysis. That is, participants cannot typically control their behaviour in the level of details that will be analysed in this study. For instance, preference organisation is a typical example for an interactional phenomenon that is unavailable to participant's control (cf. Pomerantz 1984:77).

5.2 General context of self-deprecations in the data

In the American data three young American women are eating a food that one of them has prepared. In the conversation first the food is evaluated. That is, one of the participants is talked into tasting the food and then the food is evaluated together. Following this, the interlocutors talk about their eating habits. Finally, they turn into matters considering their studies.

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[1] I spent the academic year 1996/1997 in Budapest, Eötvös Roland University.
[2] In Hungarian: *Mai Magyar Nyelvi Tanszék.*

In the course of these activities many self-deprecations emerge. First, the participant that has prepared the food delivers negative assessments on her product. Later on, all participants produce negative assessments of their eating habits. Finally, one of the participants starts to tell about her studies. There she describes how she has had problems to write an essay. Another participant reacts by producing similar accounts.

The recording contains also talk before and after the analysed part. I have chosen this approximately 10 minutes of talk for two reasons. First, it is clearly audible, whereas in other parts the participants move around a lot. Secondly, and most importantly as mentioned, this section contains many self-deprecations. The parts before and after this section serve as background materials.

In the Hungarian data five participants (1 male) discuss matters that are related to their studies. Apparently, the conversation takes place during the exam period.[4] In the beginning of the conversation one of the participants enters the room and brings up her problems with exams. She depicts herself as a lazy student. She also evaluates her prospects in the oncoming exams poor. Other participants ask questions about her exams and give similar accounts about their studies.

This section of approximately 10 minutes ends when the participants leave to drink coffee in another room. After this part, the participants tell stories about persons that are not present in the conversation.

In sum, the investigated materials are similar in many ways. First, they take place in a similar, mundane setting (dormitory) and have both university students as their participants. Secondly, the topics are similar to some extent (studies). Thirdly and most importantly, they both contain self-deprecations. From these self-depreciatory sequences I will analyse in detail five cases from both data. As already mentioned (see pp.45-48) there are

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[3] In fact, Keszler (1984:168) has worked out statistics on how many 'words' each participant has spoken. Apparently, those participants that knew about the recording spoke less also in her whole corpus.

[4] "Viszgaidőszak", the exam period in December-February and May-June in Hungarian universities, consists of larger exams. Most of the exams are oral and the students are expected to be dressed formally for the exams.

typically several self-deprecations in these sequences. The number of analysed cases is explained through the ways they present new variants of some orderliness (see also p.16).

5.3 Presentation of the data: transcription, glosses and translations

As mentioned earlier (pp.22-23), I follow the transcription conventions of CA. An attempt has been made to achieve at least a modest level of details. That is, largely written language forms have been used, but pauses (measured with a stopwatch), laughter, changes of voice and other prosodic material has been added (see Appendix 1 for transcription symbols).

The Hungarian data is presented together with a grammatical gloss and a translation. For instance:

(1)
1	D) gondolod?
2	think-SG2-DEF
3	*Do you think so?*

The actual transcript is given first (line 1), then a grammatical gloss (line 2) and finally a free translation (line 3). In the gloss lexical items are given a morpheme-by-morpheme characterisation. In the example the verb *think* is inflected in the second singular (SG2) person and in the definitive (transitive) paradigm (DEF). That is, *you* is the subject, and there should be an object. Finally, the utterance is a question due to its *intonation* (*?*). Intonation, laughter, silence and so on can be poorly displayed in the gloss or translation. Due to different word-order and typology such displays (if they are possible) would more likely confuse than help the reader. Thus, for those details the reader should consult the first line of the transcript.

As mentioned (see pp.22-24), this form of data presentation enables a reasonably critical reading of the translation. In my study some details, such as discourse particles or word-order may require such a reading. More information on Hungarian grammar in general will be given in the next chapter. A list of glosses is provided in appendix 2.

6 LINGUISTIC STRUCTURES OF SELF-DEPRECATIONS

Schegloff (1996b:169) once asked a computer scientist whether it would be possible to programme a computer to "do" a compliment. The expert on "artificial intelligence" declined even to try. Nevertheless, as Schegloff points out the task is not that difficult. One can start with (ibid.) "Select a positive assessment term for some feature of the recipient/interlocutor or interlocutor's just prior conduct." That is, an elementary account requires only the constructional elements (positive assessment terms) and their positioning (just after an occurrence of a feature or conduct).[1]

A part of the analysis in this study could also be formulated as a similar question: how to teach a computer to do a self-deprecation? Namely, in this chapter the constructional elements of self-deprecations will be analysed. In the following chapters, some possible locations for self-deprecations are explicated.

Here, I will search for possible linguistic "keys" (term used by Tainio 1993:18) to recognise self-deprecations in the stream of interaction. It is clear that linguistic structures as such are not sufficient for categorising activities in conversation (but see Manes & Wolfson 1981 for a description of syntactic and semantic formula for compliments). That is, they tell very little about self-deprecations' sequential characteristics and interactional functions. Nevertheless, some general syntactic and semantic patterns of self-deprecations in my data can be illuminated. Secondly, through linguistic analysis some relevant language based differences and similarities between English and Hungarian will be explicated. In these descriptions general, existing frameworks will be used.[2]

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[1] To be fair, computer programs have already been taught to do everyday conversational activities. For instance, most recent *chess programs* – which are a primary site of the development of artificial intelligence – can kibitz. Since they constantly evaluate the position, they have "an idea" whether their opponent is playing well or badly. When their opponent seems to make a good move they are programmed to say things like: "Where did you learn to do that?" or "Ouch! I didn't know humans are that good.".

[2] The general terms (e.g. copula) of my grammatical analysis are taken from the basic descriptive grammars of English (Quirk et al 1972) and Hungarian (Bencédy et al 1991).

I will proceed by first explicating the syntactic surface elements that construct self-deprecations (6.1). Secondly, the semantic character of self-deprecations as negative evaluations and as assessments connected to the self is investigated (6.2). Finally, the findings are summarised and reviewed (6.3).

6.1 Syntactic characterisations of self-deprecations

Here I will describe matters of word-order, referents and sentence types. I will first analyse American data and then Hungarian data.

6.1.1 American data

English is generally described as a rigid Subject Verb (Object) language. According to Fox, Hayashi and Jasperson (1996:200-201), this is true also for conversational English. In my collection of self-deprecations the word-order of self-deprecations is almost always SV(O). For instance: *I* (Subject) *crave* (Verb) *fattening things like the Twix* (Object). There is only one case of interrogation: *is* (Verb) *it* (Subject) *that bad?*, here we can speak of "subject-verb inversion" of the basic word-order.

As Fox et al (1996:200-201) observe, conversational English in general requires explicit mention of the subject in main clauses. In my American materials the subject is always explicitly expressed and it is mostly also the referent of self-deprecations. In most cases the subject (referent) is *I*, in this manner the self-deprecations are also semantically clearly connected to the speaker. For instance:

(1)   [Am:6-7]
        C has said that she will get up at five in the next morning

01 →   B) =hmm oh? .hh God yeah if **I** go to bed now **I** would never make it up at
        fi(h)ve heh=
02   A) =@you can't even make it out of bed at nine@= ((smiling voice))
03 →   B) =**I** know **I** am so a- you know when **I**...

In lines 01 and 03 B makes a critical assessment of her sleeping habits. In both of these utterances she uses the pronoun *I*, thus displaying herself as the referent of these turns. In 3 cases the subject and referent is *it*:

(2)   [Am:4]
        B has just tasted a food that A has prepared:

01 →   A) is **it** that bad=
02   B)=no. [no]

Here, and also in the two other cases, *it* refers to a food that the speaker has made. (See also pp.46-47.)

This division can be compared to Pomerantz's and Launspach's materials: Pomerantz (1975) has 14 cases of self-deprecations which have *I* as their subject (referent), and 6 cases where the subject is something else:

(3)
        (i) (p. 83) You're not bored?
        (ii) (p. 83) ...c(h)ept in my old age
        (iii) (p. 84) Did she t'hink it was terrible
        (iv) (p. 85) ...but it's not bad for an old lady.
        (v) (p. 86) ... I hope by next semester it'll be a bi(h)t b()edd(h)er heh heh
            heh heh hh hh heh (prob'ly not)

Also in these cases some of the self-deprecations are apparent without the explication of their context. For instance, cases (ii) and (iv) are similar to saying *I am old* (invented) even though less direct. Pomerantz's data gives also some other variation to the first person singular:

(4)
        (p. 89) We're mentally ill, children, run ehhhehhh

Here the referent *We* includes obviously the speaker, too.

Launspach's (frth.) examples in turn include only cases of the second type. This is explained through the situation. In a show-and-tell session participants show their quilts and comment on them. For instance:

(5)
        (i) Here's my pitiful tulip.
        (ii) It's a:ll of what not to do

As the examples illustrate, participants in Launspach's materials criticise their products and their methods of quilting, not themselves (see 4.3).

Next I will describe the sentence types of my American data, before this I will briefly return to the relevant discussions in the background section (see pp.38-41). Syntactic forms (pre- and postpositioned assessments) have been investigated by Goodwin & Goodwin (1992a) in order to illuminate the differences they make for the interactional assessment activity. In connection to postpositioned assessments (where referents are given before assessment terms) they give the following prototypical sentence formula:

[it] + [copula] + [adverbial intensifier] + [assessment term]
e.g.: *It*   *wz*   *s::so:*   *goo:d*

This formula displays heightening involvement by the speaker and has the assessment term as its peak after which turn transition is relevant. Furthermore Goodwin & Goodwin (1992a) have illustrated how this formula is highly predictable. (See pp.38-40.)

In my American data, self-deprecations have the following loose sentence format:

([preface]) + [pronoun] + [verb] + [Noun/Adjective] / [Adj. + Noun]
e.g.: *so*   *I'm not doing*   *that good today (either)*
     I think like *I*   *took*   *the long way around*

From Goodwin and Goodwin's (1992a) framework of pre- and postpositioned assessments, self-deprecations in my American data are postpositioned. That is, all the referents are given before assessing them.[3] In other words, the assessable (*I, it*) is known to the recipients before the speaker displays her stance towards it.[4]

The specific sentence patterns and their frequencies are given in the next table. Preface, negation and subject-verb inversion are not taken into account.:

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[3] A prepositioned self-deprecation could be for instance (invented): *Stupid me.*

[4] This framework resembles the notions of *topic* (or *theme*) and *comment* (or *rheme*) which will be applied for the Hungarian data (cf. also Tainio 1993:20).

table 3. Sentence patterns in the American data:

Pattern	Example	Frequency
(i) I [copula] A	*I am so a-*	3
(ii) it is A	*it is not that bad*	3
(iii) I Verb A N	*I crave fattening things like the Twix*	3
(iv) I Verb N	*I can't read my handwriting*	3

These patterns are largely similar to Launspach's patterns (see p.59, table 2). That is, also in my materials *copulas* are a frequent verb type (6/12). Furthermore, *adjectives* are typical assessment terms. In the fourth (iv) type self-deprecations are produced in a linguistic form of a *report* or an *informing* (Pomerantz 1975:chapter 2; see pp.35-36). The negative character of such utterances is displayed through *negation* or other devices such as intonation. Assessment terms, negation and other ways to display negativity will be discussed in 6.2 .

Prefaces are very frequent. Examples of prefaces include: *I know..., I don't know..., so..., yeah and..., like..., I think..., but then....* Such markers, tokens or particles connect the self-deprecations to previous talk and project following talk, for instance:

(6)   [Am:1]
        Participants are tasting and evaluating a food that one of them has made:

01   B) =sure it's something easier than (.) other things like-=
02 → C) =@<yeah and it's healthy. hh (.) but then I crave. hh (.) fattening
        things like the Twix. hh>@ (--)
        (talk on eating habits follows)

In the example C's turn is constructed of two identifiable units. Both of these units start with prefaces, namely *yeah and* and *but then*. The first part of the turn can be heard as an agreeing second assessment to B's previous assessment (*healthy* can be taken as an upgrade of *easier than other things*). In the second unit C modifies the character of assessing (from positive to critical; *healthy* -> *fattening*) and the referent of assessing (from *it* to *I*). This unit starting with *but then* can be characterised as a self-deprecation. As a conclusion, *yeah and* can be said to display agreement between the first unit and prior talk. Furthermore, *but then* projects contrast between the two units in the turn.

Prefaces can also display the speakers knowledge or commitment towards forecoming talk *(I don't know.., I think...)*. In sum, prefaces have an important role in the interactional organisation of self-deprecations and thus also they will be given more thorough treatment in chapter 8 where sequential and topical organisation of initial self-deprecations is investigated.

6.1.2 Hungarian data

Hungarian has been described as a relatively free word-order language, with **SOV** or **SVO** as basic types. Nevertheless, for instance also **OSV** or **VOS** are syntactically just as correct and occur also in the data. Furthermore, according to traditional descriptive Hungarian grammars (e.g. Bencédy et. al 1991:68) the subject is unobligatory when it is indicated by the verb. This is because, among others, the first person singular subject is always indicated through the inflection of the verb. For instance: *tud-om* {know}{Sgl}; 'I know', *olvas-om* {read}{Sgl}; 'I read'. Furthermore, the verb inflection indicates transitivity or intransitivity, for example *lát-om* 'I see [transitive]', *lát-ok* 'I see [intransitive]'. Finally, through this character, Hungarian verbs can indicate also the object: *megüt a guta* "the braindamage hits (me)", or less literally: 'I'm going mad'. To sum up, since the explicit subject is not obligatory, Hungarian is a language where verb is the primary sentence element (ibid. 454).

In recent studies and grammars É. Kiss (e.g. 1982) has asserted that instead of subject-predicative description, characteristic for English, Hungarian surface sentence structure is better illuminated through the notions of *topic, comment* and *focus*. Following her definitions, *topic* is the optional part of the sentence which is an unstressed element, known for the listener.[5] It is typically a nominal (e.g. a pronoun) or adverbial sentence initial element. *Comment* includes the verb and its arguments. *Focus* is a

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[5] Notice that elsewhere in this study *topic* is used to mean "what the participants are talking about" (see 3.4.2).

part of the comment that is stressed. It is either the verb or its argument. *Focus* occupies the first slot of the comment which is typically located before the verb. In this manner, the basic English and Hungarian syntactic sentence types are illustrated in the next figure:

The basic Hungarian sentence   The basic English sentence

TOPIC COMMENT   SUBJECT PREDICATE

FOCUS
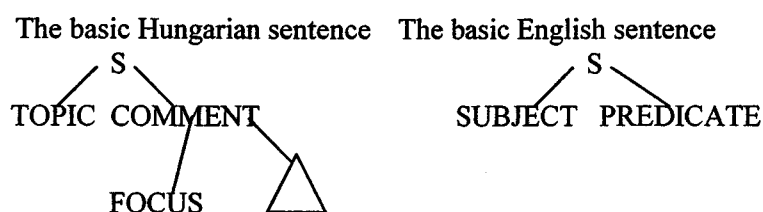
Figure 4. Basic sentence structures (É. Kiss 1982:45)

This structure has been applied also to a corpus of spoken monologue (Szalamin 1988). Furthermore, it has been called as *communicative patterning* to indicate that it identifies semantic-communicative elements (É. Kiss 1981:41). Nevertheless, as Szalamin (1988:94) admits, in many cases some structures of spoken language cannot be given any treatment with these categories (other than "illogical" or "filling elements").

Looking empirically to the utterances in my data we can find that the referents are mainly displayed by verb inflection. For instance: *hülye vagyok* 'fool be-sg1' "I'm a fool" or *kész vagyok* 'finished be-sg1' "I'm finished". In these sentences the verb (*comment*) is a copula and the *topic* is not explicitly expressed with the pronoun *én* ('I'). For example:

(7)   [Hun:4]
     Z tells about how she has troubles with her exams:

     Z) nyolcadikán megyek. >nyolc napot hagytam Terényire. < **jaj de hülye vagyok Istenem,.**
     num(8)-SUPERESS go-SG1 eight day-ACC leave-SG1-PAST Terényi-SUBLAT part but fool be-sg1 God-GEN,SG1
     (I'll) go on the 8ᵗʰ (I) left 8 days for Terényi. (I) am a fool oh my God

In the example, Z speaks about herself, but does not use the pronoun *én* ('I'), instead only verb inflection displays the topic. Also other verbs are used in similar manner, such as *bírom* 'bear- Sg1' or *tudom* 'know-Sg1'.

In the Hungarian corpus of self-deprecations the first person is pronominilazed in the following case. Here Z first claims that D is going to

do badly in an oral exam that Z has already made. D challenges Z's claim (line 02). Then Z explains that she thinks so because she herself did badly in the exam:

(8)   [Hun:4] D is going to an exam which 4 has already done:

01   Z) azt hiszem ilyen fejjel jössz haza hah,.=
        that believe-SG1,DEF such head- come-SG2 home-INSTR-COMIT
        (I) believe you'll come home with a head like that (laughs)
02   D) =gondolod?= ((smiling voice))
        think-SG2,DEF
        Do you think so?
03 →   Z) =el tudom képzelni mert én olyan- olyannal jöttem.
        PFX-can-SG1,DEF imagine-INF, because pro(Sg1) such- such-INSTR come-
        SG1,PAST
        (I) can imagine because that's how I came

In line 03 the *topic* changes. That is, Z is no longer speaking about D's prospects, instead her own experiences are referred to. According to Szalamin (1988:93), *topic* is explicitly expressed, when there is a contrast (cf. Bencédy et. al 1991:231). Also here, the *topic* is shifted from 'you' to 'me', and this shift or contrast is explicitly marked.

In this manner the use of personal pronoun *én* ('I') (as *topic*) in Hungarian can be neatly explained. This explanation also fits most self-deprecations in my data. Nevertheless, in other sentences *én* occurs without any contrast. There its "unnecessary" or "irregular" use has been explained as a part of the affective loading of these sentences (Keszler 1983:175). Furthermore, according to Keszler, the use of first person pronoun is a typical difference between spoken and written Hungarian.[6] Nevertheless, the *topic* (or subject or referent) of self-deprecations in my data is mainly expressed through verb inflexion and thus the uses of *én* in interaction will not be pursued further here.

Next, a general characterisation of self-deprecation sentences in Hungarian will be given with the help of *topic, focus* and *comment*:

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[6] Similarly in written Finnish personal pronouns are seldom used, whereas in spoken Finnish they are routinely included (Seppänen 1989:202). Nevertheless, in the light of my materials and Keszler's study (1983) it can be tentatively said that in spoken Hungarian the use of personal pronouns is far less common than in spoken Finnish. This apparent difference between the two related languages, Hungarian and Finnish, presents a potential topic for comparative CA.

(i) The *topic* is typically first person singular. It is mostly (6/8) not explicitly expressed, but it is available from the context and verb inflection.

(ii) The *focus* is an adjective (4/8): *hülye* "stupid", *kész* "finished" or negation (4/8): *nem tudom* "I can't x", *nem birom* "I can't x".

(iii) Other elements of *comment* might include a copula: *vagyok* ('be-Sg1') (4/8). Or a verb that is being negated (4/8) *nem fogom tudni* "I won't know x"

The main elements in the Hungarian data are similar to the American data. The main difference is that the *topic* (or subject) is not explicitly expressed. These characterisations can be summarised to two basic patterns of self-deprecations in the Hungarian data:

[Adj] + [Copula]
Hülye vagyok
stupid be-SG1
[[Focus] Comment]

And

[Neg] + [Verb] + [Infinitive]
nem   tudom végigvenni
no   can-SG1-DEF 'read-through'
[[Focus]   Comment]

In this manner, the syntactic surface element that is 'new', 'foregrounded' or 'stressed' is always the assessment term (i.e. adjective or negation). The given structures also explain the word-order as [Focus] + [Verb]. That is, the word-order in Hungarian is strongly influenced by stressing of an element (cf. É. Kiss 1982).

Finally, prefaces occur frequently also in the Hungarian data, for instance: *hát* 'well', *nem tudom* 'I don't know', *jaj, de* 'but'. Their use is mostly similar to those in the American data. Nevertheless, a proper account of the general use of prefaces in Hungarian is out of the scope of this study. Such a study would need a large database of prefaces. It could also show cross-linguistic differences of their use.

To summarise, broadly same elements and syntactic patterns are used for constructing self-deprecations. There is a basic language based difference in the mentioning of the first person singular subject: for American self-deprecations the first person subject is always explicitly mentioned through

the use of a personal pronoun (*I*), whereas for Hungarian subjects (or *topics*) are routinely expressed through the inflection of the verb. In the American data the elements of self-deprecating sentence are similarly to prior studies: [Pronoun] + [Verb] + [Noun/Adjective]. In the Hungarian data the patterns [Adj.]+[copula] and [Negation] + [Verb] occur. In sum, these patterns are easily recognised and can be used as prototype formulas by the speakers. Finally, prefaces routinely precede self-deprecations.

6.2 Semantic characterisations of self-deprecations

6.2.1 Assessment terms

According to Manes and Wolfson (1981:116): "every compliment must include at least one term which carries positive semantic load". From a CA perspective the view that the function or meaning of an utterance could be tied to a single word is too categorical. On the one hand, there is no need to split utterances into smaller parts since participants more likely understand them as coherent multi-functional units (Tainio 1993:16). On the other hand, semantic load (positive or negative) can be expressed with assessment signals, such as intonation (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992a:155).

Nevertheless, the negative character of self-deprecations is mostly visibly in the lexical choices of these utterances. According to Goodwin & Goodwin (1992a:154), adjectives are prototypical assessment terms. Also in my American data negatively loaded adjectives occur: *fattening, bad*.

In some cases *negation* can be seen to carry the negative semantic load. Negation is rather frequent in my data. For example:

(9)   [Am: 2-3] participants have been describing what they have eaten that day:

01   B) I had (---). (.) and some cookies(h). AND A MUF(h)FIN. (.)
02   A) ehh hh=
03 → B) =so I'm not doing that good today (either).

Here B's self-deprecation is syntactically achieved through negation of a positive assessment (doing good). Negation is thus a potential way to build self-deprecations. Negation in the American data includes also: *not that good, I shouldn't have, (I would) never make it up at five, I'm never gonna make it, I don't get that much accomplished.*

Negation is semantically less direct and overt than using negatively loaded adjectives. That is, for instance: *I'm not doing that good today* is intuitively less negative than: (invented) *I'm doing badly today.* Following this logic, disagreeing with such self-deprecations can be potentially more easily achieved. Similarly, according to Manes and Wolfson (1981:117), most compliments included adjectives with weak semantic load (*good, nice*). This suggests that people often assess themselves or their co-participants mildly. Finally, maybe the use of negation displays sensitivity towards the participants privacy (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987:6-7). That is, strong assessments invite their recipients to display their stance strongly.

Also verbs can carry negative or positive (e.g. *hate, love*) semantic load, nevertheless in my American data there are no verbs that are clearly negative. Finally, in one example the assessing is done through intonation, not through an assessment term: *I had (---). (.) and some cookies(h). AND A MUF(h)FIN.* (see also p.46).

In the Hungarian examples similar assessment terms are used. That is, negatively loaded adjectives: *hülye* ('stupid'), *borzasztó kész* ('awfully finished'). In addition, also adverbs are used: *idáig vagyok* "I'm up to here" or "I'm fed up". Finally, as already mentioned (p.75) negation of the verb is frequent in the Hungarian data, e.g. *nem fogom tudni* ('I won't know'), *nem bírom továbbolvasni* ('I can't read further'), *nem tudom végigvenni* ('I can't read through').

To sum up, the negative character of self-deprecations in my data are accountable through (i) a negative adjective, (ii) intonation or (iii) negation of the adjective or the verb.

6.2.2 Verbs

The verbs in my American data vary. Only copulas which are typical for assessments, can be seen as a common verb type (6/12). These are prototypical assessing utterances (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992a; Tainio 1993:29). That is, assessing is then the most apparent activity, for instance:

(10)   [Am: 2-3]
       participants have been describing what they have eaten that day:

01   B) I had (---). (.) and some cookies(h). AND A MUF(h)FIN. (.)
02   A) ehh hh=
03 → B) =so **I'm** not doing that good today (either).

In this example, B first (line 01) *reports* (see Tsui 1994:138-142) what she has eaten that day. Then she visibly *assesses* her day (line 03) using the prototypical assessing pattern (Pronoun + [copula] + Adjective/Noun).

Other verb phrases include *have, crave, make it up, get accomplished* etc. In these cases, the assessing can be clearly seen as *one* of the activities that the participants are doing in these utterances:

(11)   [Am:1] Participants are tasting and evaluating a food that one of them has
      made:

01   B) =sure it's something easier than (.) other things like-=
02 → C) =@<yeah and it's healthy. hh (.) but then I **crave**. hh (.) fattening
      things like the Twix. hh>@ (--)

Here the self-deprecation in line 02 is produced as a report of C's eating habits. This report can be seen as a self-deprecation since it is clearly connected to the speakers self and it is negative. Another similar example is: *I took the long way around* or *I don't get that much accomplished*. In these cases the self-deprecations are produced in the form of negative reportings of one's deeds, in any case, they are easily recognisable as self-deprecations.

In the American data the verbs predicate past (3 cases), present (7) and future events (2). In other words, participants in my data (and in Pomerantz 1975,1984) not only criticise their present, more or less general characteristics, but also report past miscomings and predict potential future failures.

Also in the Hungarian data, the self-deprecations can be divided to two types by virtue of the verbs they include. In the Hungarian data there are four cases where a copula is used. For instance:

(12)

　　[Hun:3]
　　Participant 4) has been describing what exams she has:

01　　4) Nyolcadikán megyek. >nyolc napot hagytam Terényire. < **jaj de hülye vagyok Istenem,.**
　　　num(8)-SUPESS go-SG1 eight day-ACC leave-SG1-PAST name-SUBLAT **part**
　　　but fool be-sg1 God-GEN,SG1
　　　I'll go on the 8ᵗʰ I left 8 days for Terényi. I am a fool oh my God.
02　　(1.0)

Here the self-deprecation is: *hülye vagyok;* [fool be-sg1]; ('I'm a fool'). It is produced in the form: [Adjective] + [Copula]. As mentioned, the difference to the American assessment type is that there is no explicit *topic* (or subject) in the sentence.

Other verbs include among others *tudom* 'I know'; *bírom* 'I manage', they are negated. That is, in some of the Hungarian examples, the self-deprecations are constructed through displaying incapability of the speaker, for instance: *nem fogom tudni* ('I won't know'), *nem tudom végigvenni* ('I can't read through').

Hungarian verbs include 1 past event, 3 future events and mostly present events. That is, also in the Hungarian data present tense events dominate.

To sum up, the evaluating character of an utterance is clearest, when a copula verb (*be*) is used. This is a frequent pattern in my both materials. Other cases include negative reports of one's doings (American materials), or displays of incapability (Hungarian materials). Finally, the verbs used in self-deprecations show that self-criticism can be connected to past, future or present events.

6.3 Summary and conclusions

In this chapter I have analysed the linguistic structures of self-deprecations in my data. The goal of this analysis was to seek for a possible linguistic "key" to recognise self-deprecations, furthermore, to lay a ground for cross-linguistic analysis.

First the possibility of a syntactic formula for self-deprecations was investigated. The self-deprecations in the American data fit the typical syntactic pattern of assessments given by Goodwin & Goodwin (1992a). That is, they have the following prototypical syntactic format:

[I/it] + [Copula] + [A/N] / [A + N]

Here *it* is a referent that is connected to the speakers self.

In the Hungarian self-deprecations, largely same elements are present, with the exception that the first singular subject is expressed through the inflection of the verb. In other words, the first element of the formula is optional in Hungarian. Furthermore, the Hungarian structure is better described through the notions of *topic, comment* and *focus*. In the Hungarian data, there are two basic patterns of self-deprecations: [Adj] + [Copula] and [Negation] + [VP]. In sum, both materials have a restricted set of sentence patterns that are used for constructing self-deprecations.

A problem in the syntactic analysis was that there is no cross-linguistic general framework to describe the syntactic surface forms that occur in interaction. For the American data a CA framework was applied, whereas for the Hungarian data a formal framework was used. From this point of view, there is a need for further study to develop a better cross-linguistic interactional framework.

From the point of view of semantic meaning, self-deprecations are negative. This negativity is expressed in three basic ways: negation of verbs or adjectives, negatively loaded lexical elements (typically adjectives or verbs) or intonation. In other words, not only assessment terms (e.g. adjectives), but also assessment signals (e.g. intonation) can carry the negative semantic load.

As my data illustrates, potentially recurrent patterns for self-deprecations can be explicated. The recognition of self-depreciative activity or stance is, at least partly, based on these constructional patterns. Also my examples are undoubtedly chosen on such bases. Some potential self-deprecations have not been investigated here since they are not clearly assessments, or they do not seem to have clearly negative elements or elements that are transparently connected to the speaker. As Tainio (1993) has demonstrated, linguistic structure is a possible analytic criteria for categorisation also for conversation analysis.

It must be noticed that my collection of self-deprecations is too smal for generalisations. In any case, it is enough for preliminary noticing of relevant patterns. From this perspective, topics for further research can be suggested: First, more variation of self-depreciating patterns in both languages is undoubtedly discoverable. Secondly, these patterns could be compared with linguistic structures of similar, related activities such as other subclasses of assessments (see chapter 4, figure 2) or complaints (see 7.3).

Finally, the descriptions in this chapter presented just the first steps towards an interactional analysis of the linguistic structures. According to Heritage (1984:245):

> CA is ... primarily concerned with the ways in which utterances accomplish particular actions by virtue of their placement and participation within sequences of actions. It is sequences and turns-within-sequences which are thus the primary units of analysis.

In other words, the rest of this study will be focused on this task, starting with an investigation of the turns following self-deprecations. Furthermore, in chapter 8 the sequential and turn internal placement of self-deprecations is investigated. The linguistic structures described here will then serve as a partial basis for recognising self-deprecations.

7 SECONDS TO SELF-DEPRECATIONS

In this chapter, the turns that follow negative self-expressions are investigated. That is, the question: how do recipients react to self-deprecations? is entertained. As noted before (see pp.44-48), self-deprecations are a subclass of assessments. They evaluate the actor, or a referent linked to her and their assessment is negative. This has consequences for the following turns. That is, a some sort of a second evaluation – displaying agreement or disagreement – is expected.

Prior studies have shown that for assessments agreements are invited as seconds, but for self-deprecations disagreements are invited. Disagreements are *preferred* in this case because agreements would lead to criticisms of a co-participant. *Dispreferred* seconds (agreements) are accountable by virtue of *dispreference markers,* that is, silence, prefaces and other devices that delay the agreement components in the turn. In brief, preference organisation is a major factor governing the activity types and turn formats of seconds to self-deprecations.[1]

In this chapter, I will analyse the second turns to self-deprecations and the preference organisation they display (7.1-7.3). I will also search for differences in my American and Hungarian data. Finally, in 7.4 the notion of preference organisation in relation to self-deprecations will be reappraised with the help of two cases that run of somewhat differently.

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[1] Note yet again that participants use of preference organisation is, in a conversation analytic view, mostly unconscious (see Levinson 1983; Schegloff 1988; Drew 1989). Also the term *agreement* should therefore be understood as visible patterns of interaction, rather than some sort of shared state of cognitive consensus (see Goodwin & Goodwin 1992b:78).

7.1 Preferred seconds to self-deprecations

The following examples illustrate the basic turn format for a preferred second to a self-deprecation. I will begin with an example from Pomerantz (1984:84):

(1)
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R: Did she get my card.
C: Yeah she gotcher card
R: Did she t'ink it was terrible
→   C: No she thought it was very adohrable.
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First, we can explicate why the action in R's second turn is considered self-depreciative. To start with, in Pomerantz's example a *card* is being assessed. This *card* is a referent linked to speaker named R. Evidence for this is provided by co-text where *my card* is mentioned. Furthermore, *terrible* is clearly a negative evaluation. In sum, the activity at hand can be called self-deprecation with *apparent validity* (Peräkylä 1997:63). In other words, the naming of the activity as self-depreciative is convincing as you read the transcript. This is of course not always the case, other more implicit cases can be named only due to the larger context of prior talk, placement in a sequence and the participant interpretations of the activity in the following turn (see pp. 44-48).

For the analysis in this chapter, the second assessments after a self-deprecation will be important. In this case the second assessment (marked with an arrow) has all the typical structural characters for a preferred disagreement: it is overt, explicit and produced immediately. The disagreement starts with a negation *no* and continues with a positive assessment (*she thought it was very adohrable*). In this manner, C not only delivers a negation, but also challenges R's self-criticism with a compliment. According to Pomerantz (1975:101), such contrastive compliments are "optimal" or "strong" disagreements. Furthermore, it is through such preferred seconds that participants accountably construct, maintain and invoke solidarity and sociability.

In my American data no "optimal", "strong" or overt preferred seconds to self-deprecations appear. The disagreements that occur in my data, can be

considered 'weak disagreements' (see pp.50-51). They will be investigated together with dispreferred seconds to self-deprecations. The reasons for the occurrence of dispreferred seconds are unclear since they are seldom explicitly indicated by the participants. Nevertheless, some possible reasons are discussed in passing during the investigation of dispreferred seconds to self-deprecations.

Also in my Hungarian data dispreferred seconds to self-deprecations dominate. Nevertheless, there are at least two clear cases of preferred seconds:

(2) [Hun:1-2]
     Y is going to have an exam, the discussion goes on her preparation to the exam:

01   Y) ...de hát nem tudom mert az hogy elolvastam még semmi.
     but well no know-SG1,DEF because that pron PFX-read-SG1,PAST yet nothing
     ...but, well I don't know, that I have read it trough means yet nothing
02 → B) =dehogynem kezedben volt [manuálisan-]
     but-pron-no hand-GEN,SG2-INESS be-PAST manually
     but of course, you had it in your hands manually-
03 → A)   [a lényeges] az hogy elolvastad
                                          DEFART important that pron   PFX-read-
                                          SG2,PAST
                                          the main thing is that you have read it.

     ((lines deleted))

04   Y) a Tőkét azt kapásból nem fogom tudni.=
     DEFART book title that-ACC IDIOM (off the cuff) no AUX (FUT) know-INF
     off the cuff I won't know The Capital
05 → B) =dehogyisnem
     but-pron-too-no
     but of course you will

These examples illustrate how the norm, first described by Pomerantz (1975), is apparent in the Hungarian data. That is, preferred seconds (lines 02,03 and 05) to self-deprecations are produced instantly and without prefaces.

The first self-deprecation in line 01 comes after a longish description of how Y has been preparing for an exam. After the description she undermines her preparation and evaluates her prospects poor. This assessment is instantly challenged by B, who produces what the dictionary (*Magyar értelmező*

kéziszótár 1992) calls as (translated) "emphatic negative response" (*dehogynem*). This contrasting device is further intensified with the stressing of the element *de* ("but") which is positioned right in the beginning of the turn. In line 03, overlapping with B, A re-evaluates Y's prospects with an upgrading assessment. In other words, Y asserts that reading the books does not mean that she would do well in the exam, whereas A challenges this by claiming that reading through the works is all that counts. The pattern in lines 01 and 02 is reproduced in lines 04 and 05. There the self-deprecation is constructed on "not knowing the Capital". The disagreement is produced again at once, and with an intensified contrasting device.

These examples support the descriptions of strongly preferred seconds to self-deprecations in the literature: First, preferred seconds to self-deprecations are produced at once and without prefaces. Secondly, they function as clear or overt disagreements, contrasts or challenges. In sum, also in the Hungarian example both disagreement components and the organisation of turns in which they appear reflect the status of disagreements as preferred second activity to self-deprecations.

Investigating the role of these self-deprecations on a general social level, we can retrieve the assertion that through producing disagreements to self-deprecations speakers display and construct sociability and solidarity. In Launspach's (frth.:chapter 5) materials participants show their quilting products and "the quilter uses self-deprecatory assessments, while her coparticipants [...] [use] disagreement preferred responses which (re)evaluate her skill as a quilter". Similarly, in my Hungarian example Y is going to an exam and evaluates her prospects poor, whereas A and B produce disagreements to her assertions. In both materials the participants support the self-deprecator's self through disagreements.

Preferred seconds to self-deprecations present the norm of displaying support and solidarity. Nevertheless, in my materials dispreferred seconds to self-deprecations dominate. Accordingly, my analysis will concentrate on these

cases. Dispreferred seconds to self-deprecations have been slightly less studied than preferred seconds. For instance, both Pomerantz (see 1975:102) and Launspach (frth.) focus on preferred cases. In fact, Launspach's data includes hardly any dispreferred seconds to self-deprecations. Moreover, "optimal" disagreements, that is, compliments dominate in her materials. In contrast, my materials have hardly any "strong" disagreements to self-deprecations. A candidate explanation for this difference could be that the typical seconds to self-deprecations in Launspach's data are connected to the situation where they occur (see pp.56-58 for details).

7.2 Dispreferred seconds to self-deprecations in the American data

In the next analysis I will concentrate on cases where, at least partially, self-deprecations are followed by agreements. According to Pomerantz (1975:102):

> Both agreement components and the organisation of turns in which agreements are performed reflect the status of agreements as dispreferred.

This means that the components are either not stated (e.g.: no talk, not related talk), or at least weak cases of agreements (e.g.: similar accounts or weak confirmations). The turns where these components occur are delayed, or prefaced by dispreference markers such as: silence, laughter, hesitation, *well, I know* (see pp.30-33,53-56). For instance (Pomerantz 1975:104):

(3)
W: ..Do you know what I was all the time?
L: (No).
(sd)   W: Pavlov's dog.
(gap)   (2.0)
(agr)   L: (I suppose)
W: D'you remember that [story?
L: [Yes, I do.
W: Yah. She, was brainwashing me Lila,
L: Oh yes! (0.7) ['N you were pickin' it up like mad.
W: [And-

The second to the self-deprecation (sd) is delayed by a gap of 2.0 seconds, and the agreement component (agr) is weak: *I suppose*. In comparison, disagreements are overtly stated, explicit and instantly produced.

In the following analysis I will first investigate two agreement components that are typical to my American data: similar accounts (7.2.1) and negations (7.2.2). Secondly, I will focus on some frequent dispreference markers which characterise the turn formats: gaps (7.2.3), laughter (7.2.4) and other prefaces (7.2.5), such as *well* or hesitation. Agreement components and dispreference markers are linked phenomena. Accordingly, dispreference markers are observed in passing during the detailed analysis of components and vice versa. Furthermore, I will focus on adjacent structures. Such features that are more central to topical organisation will be investigated in chapter 8.

In the analysis three longer segments of talk with several self-deprecations and self-deprecation sequences are investigated. The characterisation of these sequences as self-depreciatory is explicated at their first appearance. Finally, in 7.2.6 the findings of this section are summarised and reflected on a general level comparable to Pomerantz's conclusions.

7.2.1 Similar accounts

First, I will start with a class of agreements that are typical "weak agreements", that is, *similar accounts*. According to Pomerantz (1984:90; cf.1975:97-98), agreements of this type are weak agreements in that:

> Though they agree they simultaneously undermine the prior self-deprecations by proposing that the prior deprecating attributes are more generally shared and/or less negative than prior speakers had proposed.

One of her cases is (ibid. 90):

(4)
    B: Not only that he gets everything done.
        (pause)
    B: Everybody else- not everybody else, I have my desk full of trash.
    → S: Me too ...

In other words, responses such as *Me too* mitigate the self-deprecation, but do not disagree with it.

In the next example two similar accounts are marked with arrows:

(5)   [Am:8]
        B describes how she has been writing an essay:

01   B) =I know I am so a- you know when I
        [was sitting at that computer this morning I]
02   A) [@hhehheh I know you were heh@]
03   B) thought I was going to pass out.
04   (.)
05   B) and I was like ohh my God I am so tired. seems I'm never gonna make it.
06   (0.3)
07   B) >but (.) I just- it seems like I got a lot typed. but I mean it seems like- (.)
        like I don't get that much accomplished=and I don't know its like- like- (.) all
        it is- is like- like straight from the Internet (stuff)=its not like anything in my
        words yet so< hh. (.) ([--)
08 →   A)   [but] that's what I usually have to do:. sometimes it's
        mo:re time [consuming-
09   B)   [↑yeah that-] that's what I'm talking. I think like I took the long
        way around because then I had to go through and change everything around
        ann,
10 →   A) =but I can't read my own handwriting. so I have to do it that way hhehhh
11   B) =yea I know, yeah right in class of course-...
        (B starts describing what they did in class)

In the beginning of this excerpt (lines 01-06) B describes how she has been writing an essay that morning. In lines 05-07 she criticises her method of writing. First, she produces an evaluation of her efforts that day (line 05): *seems I'm never gonna make it.* This initial self-criticism is not answered[2], and B expands her evaluation with (line 07): *I don't get that much accomplished; it is- is like- like straight from the Internet (stuff); its not like anything in my words yet.* These self-deprecations are then answered by A through a similar self-deprecation in line 08. That is, A asserts that also she works with the same method of collecting notes with the computer: *[but] that's what I usually have*

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[2] The structure in lines 05-07:
        05   B) [self-deprecation]
        06   [gap]
        07   B) [resumption]
will be analysed in 7.2.3.

to do:. sometimes it's mo:re time [consuming-. In this manner, A displays that the method is generally shared and thus relatively less negative than B indicates.

The two self-deprecations in lines 07-08 connect the participant selves in a supportive and tying manner even though not in positive terms. Therefore, it can be seen less sociable than disagreement with the initial self-deprecation, since the second assessment still confirms the initial self-criticism. This is in line with the interpretation B makes clear in line 09. There she first agrees with A's prior interpretation: *↑yeah that- that's what I'm talking.* Then she reasserts that she still thinks that her method of working is wrong: *I think like I took the long way around.*

In line 10, A produces an account or explanation on why she has to work that way: *but I can't read my own handwriting. so I have to do it that way.* That is, the structure:

B) [self-deprecation]   A) [similar account]

is repeated here.

Considering the linguistic structure, notice how A's both turns (in lines 08 and 10) begin with a typical contrasting device: *but.* In other words, A first projects disagreement with the assessment (preferred activity) and then produces an agreement (dispreferred activity). In this way, A prefaces or delays her dispreferred second assessments. Pomerantz (1975:88) describes this structure as:

[Preferred Activity Token] + [Dispreferred Activity]

According to her, it is a typical format for critical evaluations. Finally, A's turn in line 10 ends with laughter indicating that the shared negative quality is not to be taken too seriously, that is, she can deal with it.

In the end of this assessment chain, B's turn in line 11 begins with acknowledgement tokens (*yea I know, yeah right*). That is, she displays agreement with A's similar account. Furthermore, such a list of acknowledgement tokens is routinely used to mark topical shifts (Levinson

1983:313; Jefferson 1984:216). Also here these tokens are followed by an accountably new topic: what happened in a class B attended.

The investigated activities in brief:

07 B) Self-deprecation
08 A) [but] + Similar account (weak agreement)
09 B) Agreement + reassertion
10 A) [but] + Similar account (weak agreement)
11 B) Agreement + topical sift

The turn formats and agreement components (similar accounts) A uses do not display overt disagreement. In this manner, the "tentative" or "proposed" negative evaluations (see Pomerantz 1975:106; p.54) B makes, are first validated by A. Even though in an undermined, shared version. Also B confirms the shared quality of working inefficiently in line 09 and 11 with an agreement. This supports Pomerantz's (ibid.) suggestion that self-deprecations that are not disagreed with are treated as confirmed evaluations.

In the next example several participants produce similar accounts, the initial self-deprecation and similar accounts are marked with arrows:

(6)
  [Am:1-3]
  Participants are evaluating a food that they have just tasted:

01 A) =it's not that bad.
02 B) =sure it's something easier than (.) other things like-
03 → C) = @<yeah and it's healthy. hh(.) but then I crave. hh (.) fattening things like the Twix hh>@ (--)= but I- but I have barely eaten.
04   (0.8)
05 → A) well I ate- I have been eating bread all day (--)
06   (1.0)
07 → B) I had (---). (.) and some cookies(h). AND A MUF(h)FIN. (.)
08 C) =ehh hh
09 → B) =so I'm not doing that good today (either).
10   (1.5)
11 A) I think I'm going to get up at <u>five</u>.

(Participants move on to discussing their studies)

In line 03 C produces a multi-unit turn, starting with an agreement (upgraded assessment) with the preceding talk. Then she uses a transition marker (*but*) which starts a self-critical assessment. The assessable is changed from *it (it's healthy)* to *I (I crave)* in line 03. This evokes a different framework for the interaction, since the assessments are from here on connected to the speaker, not to a "neutral" *it*. Furthermore, C evaluates herself as craving "fattening things like the Twix" which is clearly a negative judgement of her eating habits. Finally, C delivers a report of what she has eaten that day: *I have barely eaten*. This might be seen as an explanation for craving "fattening things".

We can consider the turns in lines 04-09 as seconds to C's self-deprecation. The whole sequence is characterised by critical assessments of eating habits: A and B produce similar accounts, and thus implicitly agree with the prior instance. These agreements are produced in dispreferred turn formats. That is, both of the turns in lines 05 and 07 are delayed by a gap. Furthermore, A's turn in line 05 starts with a typical dispreference token *well*.

Consider the reports participants make about what they have eaten that day:

(i) ...I crave. hh (.) fattening things like the Twix hh>@ (--)= but I- but I have barely eaten. ((C in line 03))
(ii) I have been eating bread all day ((A in line 07))
(iii) I had (--). (.) and some cookies(h). AND A MUF(h)FIN. ((B in line 09))

In all three cases, the participants not only assess themselves from the same perspective (how they have been eating today), but they also take the same stance: they have all been eating badly. The negative character of these evaluations is escalating in its character. The turn in line 09 is semantically the "worst" self-critical account, since B reports having eaten two (or three) items clearly of the "fattening things" category. Finally, a climax, or a metalanguage summary of the sequence is produced by B in line 09: *so I'm not doing that good today (either)*.

To sum up, in this section I have investigated two similar accounts as seconds to self-deprecations. They on the one hand agree with prior self-deprecations, and on the other hand undermine or challenge them. That is, the investigated similar accounts confirm that the self-criticism are valid, but they also re-evaluate them as shared, normal and general attributes.

The analysis suggests that similar accounts are near to preferred seconds as "agreement components" (Pomerantz 1984:90). This ambiguity is readable also in Pomerantz's slightly controversial reports on them: First, in her dissertation (1975:97-98) she categorises them as "undermines" which are typically used to disagree with self-deprecations. Nevertheless, in her later article (1984:90) she describes them as "weak agreements", and as dispreferred seconds. In any case, it is clear from her both reports that similar accounts are neither "optimal" disagreements (Pomerantz 1975), nor "strong" or overt agreements (Pomerantz 1984).

In the cases analysed here similar accounts were prefaced by silence or other dispreference tokens. In other words, the organisation of their turns display that they are not the normative, invited, or optimal second actions. This structural perspective supports their characterisation as dispreferred seconds to self-deprecations.

7.2.2 Negations

Another type of 'weak disagreement' to a self-deprecation is a *negation*. In Pomerantz's collection of preferred seconds to self-deprecations negation appears routinely together with a positive assessment, typically a compliment. In other words, negation alone is not a strong disagreement, whereas for instance:

no + [positive assessment]

is a clearly preferred second to a self-deprecation (see pp.83-85 and Pomerantz 1984:85-86 for examples).

In the following example there is a plain negation as a second to a self-deprecation. The self-deprecation and the following two turns are marked with arrows. For the sake of understanding the context of this sequence, also previous and following talk is provided. The content of this excerpt is summarised before the transcript:

(7)　　[Am:4,13]
　　　　The participants are evaluating a food that A has prepared and that B is about to taste. First, B is rather reluctant to taste this food. Nevertheless, A successfully talks B into tasting the food (lines 01-16). After B has tasted the food (line 17) the participants evaluate the food anew (lines 18-36).

01　　A) you are scared of it everyone was.
02　　B) =no aerr err::
03　　A) =it's not- it doesn't taste that much different than that one- that other one (was fresher- anything) [hot]
04　　B)　　　　　　　　　　[yes]
05　　A) =but it's not- you had it like that before though- and you [can]
06　　B)　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[no] I couple (.) well it was like-
07　　A) =heh heh
08　　B) =you know it was like candy stuff at home that's [not-
09　　A)　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[it's] better for you than COOKIES
　　　　　　　((lines deleted))
10　　B) yea [something-]
11　　A)　　[JUST TRY] IT.
12　　(.)
13　　A) ehh=
14　　B) =I know (.)
15　　A) but it's gonna be really hot (.) (of it if you ask about it or not) (.)
16　　B) right I do (.) I wanna give it one up.
17　　((B tastes the food))
18 →　A) is it that bad=
19 →　B) =no.
20 →　A)　　　it's [not that bad.]
21　　B)　　　[no　　no]
22　　A) =I think its that- I don't even think they have anything like that in- in America. (.)
23　　B) it was like chunky (.) just like- [I　think there is like ham in it or something]
24　　A)　　　　　　　　　　　　　>[(because I was thinking-)] it's I mean it's floury< considering that to be canned stuff-
25　　B) =hh no
26　　A) =that's not too bad.
27　　B) =no yn: no

28   (.)
29   B) yn: yn: no no
30   A) I thought- I think I have a little chunk to handle it. (.) right I give the towel
31   B) it doesn't taste like too [bad
32   A)   [I] think (it does) but it doesn't have very [much-
33   B)   [yea](it
        definitely does) it's not so bad. (.)
34   A) it's not <u>that</u> bad.=
35   B) = sure is something easier than other things, like-=
36   C) = yeah and it's healthy hh (.) but then I crave (.) fattening things like the
        Twix:: hh>@ (--)= but I- but I have barely eaten.

        (Participants start talking about what they have eaten that day)

The focus in this analysis will be on the evaluations after B has tasted the food
(line 17). The initial self-deprecation can be identified in line 18 where A
delivers a negative assessment of a food (*it*) that she has made. The sequential
placement and linguistic form of this self-deprecation has already been
analysed earlier (see pp.45-46). To reiterate, in a situation where one displays
one's products (painting, sewing, food) a co-participant praise is awaited. If no
praise is delivered then it is relevantly absent (Bilmes 1988:16). In brief, on
cultural basis, A has reason to believe that B does not like the food.[3] This is
displayed also in the negative orientation of the question (*is it that bad*).

        The next turn after this self-deprecation consists of a *no*..

(8)   [Am:4]

17   ((B tastes the food))
18   A) is it that bad=
19 →   B) =no.
20   A)   it's [not that bad.]
21   B)   [no   no]
22   A) =I think its that- I don't even think they have anything like that in- in
        America. (.)
23   B) it was like chunky (.) just like- [I   think there is like ham in it or
        something]
24   A)   >[(because I was thinking-)] it's I mean
        it's floury< considering that to be canned stuff-
25   B) =hh no

---

[3] We can add, that in this case a video taped recording of B's tasting the food would yield
further insights. That is, her mimic expressions may indicate, that she does not like the food.
Furthermore, a video recording would enable the identification of the point when B is no longer
"doing tasting". Then we could measure the silence which might verify that the positive
assessment is noticeably absent.

26   A) =that's not too bad.

27   B) =no yn: no

A's self-deprecation is followed by a negation and a fall of intonation. This "minimal disagreement" (Pomerantz 1984:86) is stated and occurs at once. Nevertheless, *no.* is not enough to convince A that B likes the food. This is indicated in lines 20-21 where A delivers another similar assessment: *it's not that bad.* It can be seen as a candidate understanding of B's disagreement which invites B to extend her minimal response (*no.*). In the next turn (line 21) B does not confirm this (e.g. with "it's not that bad" or "no it's not that bad at all"). In this manner, B's minimal disagreements (*no no*) implicate rather clearly a negative assessment of the food she is tasting. A in turn attempts to elicit a positive assessment which B declines to provide. Finally, in line 22 and onwards, A seemingly seeks for some explanations why B would not like the food (e.g. it is strange: *I don't even think they have anything like that in- in America*).

      Similar assessment pairs occur lines 26-34. Consider one of the later assessments:

(9)   [Am:13]

33   B) yea] (it definitely does) it's not so bad. (.)

34 → A) it's not <u>that</u> bad.=

35   B) = sure is something easier than other things, like-=

Here the participants yet again recycle the initial assessment after B has tasted the food: *it's not so/<u>that</u> bad.* It is notable how A downgrades B's assessment by stressing the adverb *that*. Here the difference between B's *it's not so bad* and A's assessment is minute. In general, it is typical for this sequence that A produces slightly *downgrading* assessments in comparison to B's assessments. B in turn mildly *upgrades* A's assessments on the food.

      Studying B's turns we can characterise them as weak disagreements. In the follow-up, B produces two similar turns which consist of plain negations (lines 27 and 29). Her other assessments are also neither explicitly critical nor clearly positive:

i) [line 23] it was like chunky (.) just like- [I think] there is like ham in it or something
ii) [line 31] it doesn't taste like too [bad.
iii) [line 33] it's not so bad. (.)
iv) [line 35] sure is something easier than other things, like-=

None of these evaluations can be considered as a strong positive assessment (e.g. compliment). As mentioned, they are mild upgradings of A's original self-deprecation. Furthermore, no clear dispreference markers occur in this sequence. As a conclusion, plain negation as a second to a self-deprecation can be considered similar to same assessments as seconds to assessments in general (see pp.29-30). That is, structurally they belong to the ambiguous area between prefererred and dispreferred seconds. In any case, negations are not clearly preferred seconds, since they do not "strongly", clearly and overtly challenge the self-deprecations. In fact, at least in this example, they were interpreted as rather clear agreements of the self-deprecation.

It was asserted in 7.1 that the reasons for producing a preferred or dispreferred second cannot be explicated. Also for this sequence it is an apparent puzzle, whether B likes the food or not. One accountable solution to this is given in the end of the whole conversation (about 25 minutes from this sequence). While B is about to leave, she says: *eat your damn green puke*. Without going into details of that part of the conversation, it is obvious that B does not like the food she has been talked into eating. From this perspective, it is clear how B is doing her best to socially "fabricate" an account on how the food "is not that bad", even though she "privately" hates it. According to Drew (1989:111-112; see p.33), it is typical that in situations like this people display the preference organisation, rather than their "private" thoughts.

7.2.3 Gaps

One of the dispreference markers is silence which delays the agreeing second turn. Pomerantz (1975:104) uses the term *opportunity places* for sequential locations where a self-critical party has come to a possible turn transition place. These opportunity places are slots for disagreement or agreement. If these opportunity places are left silent, then this silence can be attributed to the recipient of the self-deprecation. According to Pomerantz (1984:79), such silences get routinely interpreted as withholds of coparticipant criticisms. In other words, silences are treated as implicit, not said criticisms. Her evidence is not only analysis of following turns which indicate such an interpretation, but also naturally occurring reports of such events. (Pomerantz 1984:80):

(10)

    C: An I said now <u>wait</u> till you see me get all this stuff on. Well you know what
    I looked like. I looked like I was thirty-six old- years old tryin to look sixteen
    J: Ohhh Go:[d]
→ C: [An] you know everybody just sorta stood there an nobody wanned to say well you look pretty stupid h-h-h mo:ther

Here, C makes an explicit statement how she interpreted silence in a particular situation, this account verifies Pomerantz's analyses of similar cases.

In the next example, A and B and produce *delayed* similar accounts. As earlier observed, these second assessment components are dispreferred seconds since they do not disagree with the self-criticism:

(11)   [Am:1]

01   C) = @<yeah and it's healthy. hh(.) but then I crave. hh (.) fattening things like the Twix hh>@ (--)= but I- but I have barely eaten.
02 →   (0.8)
03   A) well I ate- I have been eating bread all day (--)
04 →   (1.0)
05   B) I had (---). (.) and some cookies(h). AND A MUF(h)FIN. (.)

The silences (gaps) in lines 02 and 04 are notable missing talk. That is, they delay the forthcoming dispreferred second turns. In this manner, they can be seen to indicate reluctance or unwillingness to produce a dispreferred second.

Such delaying silence is notable silence, since it occurs after a self-depreciating turn that has accountably been brought to completion. It should be separated for instance from turn internal silence, such as the micropauses in line 01 or 05.[4] In sum, the gaps in this example fill the opportunity spaces, thus indicating a forthcoming dispreferred second.

There is also another typical structure appearing after silence. Namely the current speaker might continue:

(12)   [Am:8-10]

```
01      B) and I was like ohh my god I am so tired. seems I'm never gonna make it.
02 →           (0.3)
03      B) >but (.) I just- it seems like I got a lot typed. but I mean it seems like- (.)
        like I don't get that much accomplished=and I don't know its like- like- (.) all
        it is- is like- like straight from the Internet (stuff)=its not like anything in my
        words yet so< hh. (.) ([--)
04      A)                       [but] that's what I usually have to do:. sometimes it's
        mo:re time [consuming-
```

In line 01 B delivers a self-deprecation (*seems I'm never gonna make it.*) which she accountably brings to an end. That is, the turn is syntactically, pragmatically and intonationally complete. Nevertheless, as nobody takes the turn, she continues herself. Her continuation in line 03 can be seen as a reformulation or a *resumption* (Pomerantz 1984:92). Following Pomerantz, after a gap the speaker typically reformulates her prior assessment so that the recipient(s) can more easily align their talk to her talk. In this example the general: *seems I'm never gonna make it.* is expanded to a more detailed account on the difficulties B has had in writing an essay, for instance: ...*all it is...like straight from the Internet (stuff)=its not like anything in my words yet....* Finally, the recipient of the self-deprecation delivers a second assessment after the resumption (line 04).

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[4] See Levinson (1983:298-299,326-330) for a summary of the role of silence in interaction. In brief, as Levinson (ibid. 329) writes: "Silence has no features of its own: all the different signifigances attributed to it must have their sources in the structural expectations engendered by the surrounding talk."

These two examples of gaps and their second turns fit Pomerantz's (1984:92) concept of two basic dispreferred structures (numbering added):

    1. Potential Agreement Is Actualized
    A: Self-deprecation
       [Gap]
→   B: Agreement

    2. Potential Agreement Is Unactualized
    A: Self-deprecation
       [Gap]
→   A: Resumption

In other words, silence as a second to a self-deprecation has two basic simultaneous functions: It can preface (delay) an agreement or it can give the speaker an opportunity to revise her critical assessment. Finally, my data supports Pomerantz's (1984:92) conclusion that: "A recipient silence after a self-deprecation [...] is a response that makes an opportunity for minimising stated coparticipant criticisms.".

7.2.4 Laughter

In the following example a self-deprecation is followed by an activity that is interpretable as something else than a clear agreement. That is, the recipient of a self-deprecation may laugh. Here, laughter is invited by the self-depreciative participant:

(15)   [Am:1-3]
        participants are talking about what they have eaten that day:

01   C) = @<yeah and it's healthy. hh(.) but then I crave. hh (.) fattening things like the Twix hh>@ (--)= but I- but I have barely eaten.
02   (0.8)
03   A) well I ate- I have been eating bread all day (--)
04   (1.0)
05 →   B) I had (---). (.) and some cookies(h). AND A MUF(h)FIN. (.)
06 →   C) =ehh hh=
07   B) =so I'm not doing that good today (either).
08   (1.5)

In line 05 B produces a report on what she has eaten. Laugh tokens (*h*) as well as the rise of volume produce a self-ironic account. Furthermore, the turn appears as a delayed similar account to a previous self-deprecation (see 7.2.1). In brief, by virtue of the intonation of this turn and its sequential placement it can be called a self-deprecation (see also pp.45-46). The turn has a rise of volume towards its end which together with the listing of "fattening things" and laugh tokens creates a laughter provoking effect. In other words, it is a clear self-deprecation, but it also engenders laughter and joke-type prosody and thus interprets the prior self-criticisms as non-serious.

As Glenn (1992:142; see p.55) has observed, self-deprecations are typical cases where the current speaker initiates "laughter *with* current speaker *at* current speaker". Here C's laughter in line 06 supports his finding. By joining this laughter in line 06, C aligns with B in a shared activity. Finally, as B's turn in line 07: *so I'm not doing that good today (either).* indicates, this laughter is interpreted as an implicit agreement and the previous self-deprecation is considered confirmed.

To sum up, in the analysed case both the agent and the recipient of a self-deprecation included laughter or laugh tokens in their turns. That is, both participants can attempt to categorise the self-deprecations as non-serious through laughter: On the one hand, the self-deprecating party can indicate that she is dealing with the self-deprecation. On the other hand, the recipient can produce an implicit, minimised agreement with laughter. Furthermore, the recipient laughs typically, if the self-critical party has invited laughter by producing laugh tokens first. Finally, laughter from the recipients side after self-deprecations neither agrees nor disagrees with the prior assessment. Thus, laughter can be seen as a dispreferred second to self-deprecations, since it does not overtly and clearly disagree with it.

7.2.5 Other dispreference markers

Cases of gaps and laughter have been analysed as devices that routinely precede agreements, and which as such project agreements to self-deprecations. Other similar dispreference markers are for instance *well* or *I know*. According to Pomerantz (1984:72), such tokens are standard devices delaying the dispreferred semantic components, that is, the agreement components in the case of self-deprecations. She asserts that through dispreference markers participants display reluctance or discomfort.

In the next example a dispreferred second to self-deprecation is prefaced by a *well*:

(16)   [Am:1]

01   C) = @<yeah and it's healthy. hh(.) but then I crave. hh (.) fattening things
        like the Twix hh>@ (--)= but I- but I have barely eaten.
02   (0.8)
03 →   A) well I ate- I have been eating bread all day (--)

Here the second to a self-deprecation includes also other dispreference markers. That is, a gap (in line 02) and self-repair (*I ate-*). Also these tokens display the dispreferred status of this turn. Furthermore, the activity type of this turn is dispreferred (i.e. a similar account, see 7.2.1). In sum, this case demonstrates how prefaces belong to the structural routines of producing a dispreferred second.

7.2.6 Summary and discussion

Next, I will briefly summarise the findings so far and indicate further directions. The main focus in the investigation was on the adjacent structures. That is, on the seconds to self-deprecations. Several important points in relation to self-deprecations came into light by this analysis on my American data.

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First, components or activity types that do not clearly and overtly disagree with self-deprecations were investigated: similar accounts and negations. This supports Pomerantz's (1984:90) observation that agreements are overwhelmingly accomplished with weak agreement types. Furthermore, their status as dispreferred seconds is slightly ambiguous since they, to a certain extent, disaffiliate with the self-deprecations. Nevertheless, the analysed cases demonstrated that similar accounts or negations are not enough to challenge the self-deprecations. Furthermore, as Tainio (1997:96-104 see also Pomerantz 1975:88) has shown, most dispreferred seconds have at least one characteristic that is typical for preferred seconds. That is, negations are 'weak disagreements', similar accounts share the negative evaluation, and laughter is routinely produced as a shared activity. In sum, participants orient to delivering a second that at least resembles a preferred second to some extent.

Secondly, these dispreferred seconds to self-deprecations were delayed by dispreference markers. Gaps, laughter and prefaces occurred in initial positions of the second turns. Furthermore, some of these tokens, such as laughter and gaps, were interpreted as projecting dispreferred seconds. Accordingly, the self-deprecating party in my data resumed her prior account, thus filling the slot provided by her own self-critical assessment.

To reiterate, the following two structural patterns appeared in my data:

A) Self-deprecation
B) [Gap]/ [Preface]+ Weak agreement
or
A) Self-deprecation
B) [Gap] / [Laughter] / [Negation]
A) Resumption

So far few cases have contradicted Pomerantz's view of preference which Schegloff (1988) calls the *practise based* view. That is, participants routinely follow the practice of delaying agreeing seconds to self-deprecations with dispreference markers.

Only negations can be seen as an exception where something else than a preferred second is produced at once. This is a result of that:

i) *no* + [positive assessment]
ii) *no.*

i) is preferred, but a ii) is a dispreferred turn format. As a conclusion, here the status of plain negations as weak (dis)agreements is the main criteria, not dispreference markers. Finally, this shows that there are some ambiguous formats between strong preferred (e.g. compliments) and clearly dispreferred cases (agreements containing dispreference markers). This supports the idea of seeing the amount of preference as a continuum (see p.32, figure 1; p.51 table 1; Tainio 1997:104). The cases so far analysed can be put into a continuum as follows:

| *Clearly preferred*		(Clear disagreements)	
	↑	Negations	↑
	‖	Similar accounts	‖
	‖	Laughter	‖
	‖	Silence	‖
Clearly dispreferred	↓	(Stated agreements)	↓
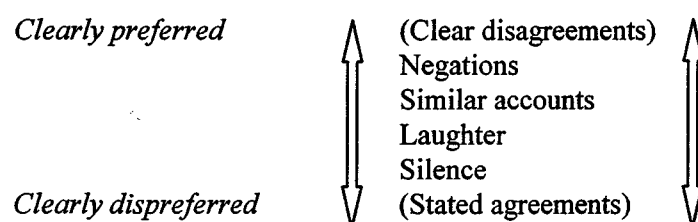
Figure 5: continuum of preference in the American data.

Neither of the ends of this continuum occurred here, therefore they are given in brackets. The order of negations and similar accounts might seem arbitrary, nevertheless, the order here reflects how similar accounts in my (and Pomerantz's) materials combine with clear dispreference markers. That is, similar accounts are less preferred since they are also prefaced by dispreference markers. Finally, laughter is more preferred than silence since it was produced as a shared activity together with the self-depreciating party.

To sum up, the analysis largely supports Pomerantz's (1975,1984) findings on the preference organisation of seconds to self-deprecations (and also later studies by Tsui 1994 and Launspach frth.). As a new perspective, the status of negations was investigated and some examples of ambiguity in the practice based view of preference organisation discovered. This by-product emerged from the data in relation to the phenomena at hand. Next, I will

investigate whether a similar preference organisation is in operation in the Hungarian data as well.

7.3 Dispreferred seconds to self-deprecations in the Hungarian data

Next, I will investigate some dispreferred seconds to self-deprecations in the Hungarian data. Hungarian preferred seconds to self-deprecations were already analysed in 7.1. There it was observed that, similarly to Pomerantz's studies, a preferred second in the form:

[negation] + [positive assessment]

was produced at once.

In the following investigation of the Hungarian data, the same kind of analysis is carried out as in the previous section: first the self-depreciative sequence is isolated, then the adjacent structures (seconds to self-deprecations) are investigated.

7.3.1 Gaps

In the Hungarian materials the most typical second turn to self-deprecations is silence. In line 02, Z delivers a self-deprecation ('I'm a fool oh my God') as an evaluation of how 'badly' she has been preparing for an exam. This is followed by a noticeable silence:

(17)   [Hun:3]
        Z has been describing her preparations for exams, Terényi is the name of the
        teacher keeping an (oral) exam. Z is asked when will she go to that exam:

01   D)... te már egyetemesből vizsgáztál? (0.3) vagy még ebből fogsz?=
        ... you already world-history-ELAT (take an exam)-SG2-PAST or still pron-ELAT
        AUX(FUT)-SG2
        ... you took the world history exam already? Or you'll take it now?
02 → Z) nyolcadikán megyek. >nyolc napot hagytam Terényire. < jaj de hülye
        vagyok Istenem,.
        num(8)-SUPERESS go-SG1. eight day-ACC leave-SG1-PAST Terényi-SUBLAT part
        but fool be-sg1 God-GEN,SG1
        I'll go on the 8th I left 8 days for Terényi. I am a fool oh my God

03 → (1.0)
04 Z) másfelet majd csak tanulok. (.) hhh
(one and half)-ACC soon just learn-SG1
I'll just study one and a half
05 → (1.5)
06 Z) csak az a baj hogy könnyen megüti a guta és akkor más (0.3) vizsgáztat.
hh (.)
only that ART trouble that easily (get a fit)- SG3 and then else (keep an exam)-SG3
*The problem is just that he may easily get a fit and then somebody else will be
the examiner.*
07 D) gondolod?
think-SG2-DEF
Do you think so?

(participants continue with talk on how often the professor is ill)

In line 02 Z produces a self-deprecation ('I'm a fool'). Topically the self-deprecation is an evaluation of Z's prior talk. That is, first Z describes how she has prepared for an exam and then evaluates her preparations. As noticed earlier (Pomerantz 1984:58; see pp.37-38), assessments are typically located after an account of an event.

After the self-deprecation ('I'm a fool oh my God') a gap appears, indicating from the speakers side that a second assessment would have been expected. From the recipient's side a gap after an assessment is typically dispreference implicative (see p.31). Therefore, Z reformulates her previous stance. She gives a slightly upgraded evaluation of her prospects, indicating that she will "just somehow manage". This re-evaluation gives the recipient(s) another possibility to produce a second assessment. Yet again a notable silence of 1.5 seconds follows. This silence can be seen as another dispreferred second to Z's resumption. A preferred second could have been for instance complimenting Z on achieving to read that much.

Finally, a new subtopic is developed by Z. He turns the conversation towards how the actual problem is that there might be somebody else keeping the (oral) exam. From here on the self-deprecation is given no notice. The turn in line 07 is a disagreement implicative next turn repair initiator. In other words, it challenges Z's assertion that the professor is often ill. Nonetheless, it does not challenge the self-critical statement (that Z was, for instance, stupid or

lazy to leave only 8 days to read for the exam). In this manner, the topic of Z's preparations is closed for the time being.

The structure in brief:

01	D) Question
02	Z) Answer + Self-deprecation
03	[gap]
04	Z) Resumption (solution)
05	[gap]
06	Z) New subtopic
07	D) Elaborates on the new subtopic

Looking at the whole excerpt, the participants seem to be socially unsupportive towards Z's self-deprecations. In contrast with the preferred seconds analysed in 7.1, the recipients do not challenge Z's self-critical evaluations. On the contrary, Z's tentative self-deprecations are confirmed as real. Structurally, participants agree with Z's self-deprecations in an implicit manner with gaps.

In the following excerpt a self-deprecation is followed similarly by silence and a resumption. Sequentially, the self-deprecation is produced after some complaints which presents a new dimension for the analysis:

(18)   [Hun:11] Z is describing how she failed a course. The lecturer (Székely) did not sign her transcript and thus she had to have the course deleted from it by the deans office. There is a charge for deletion:

01   Z) húsz forintomba került a guta úgy haragszom rá. (.)
        twenty forint-POSSFX-ILLAT cost ART fit so (be angry)-SG1-DEF PFX
        That fit cost me twenty forints, I'm so angry at him

02   C) miért? (.)
        why

03   Z) NEM írta alá az indexemet.
        no sign under ART transcript-POSSFX-ACC
        He didn't sign my transcript.

04   D) =Székely?
        proper name
        Székely?

05   Z) =Székely.(.)
        Székely

06   D) miért? (.)
        why?

07   Z) nem mentem be utolsó órára. (.) beküldtem az indexet,(.) nem írta alá.
        no go-sg1-PAST PFX last class-SUBL PFX-send-SG1-PAST ART transcript-ACC no

sign-PAST under
I didn't go to the last class. I sent in my transcript, he didn't sign it.

08   (2.5)

09   Z) bemenni meg nem mertem, (.) mer volt rá eset hogy röhögve kivonultunk
hh fél előadás után,(.) Székely megjött utánunk.
PFX-go and no (have courage)-SG1-PAST, because be-past on case that laughing
PFX-(march out)-PL1-PAST half lecture after Székely and come-past after-PL1
I didn't have the courage to go in myself, because there was this case that we
marched out laughing in the middle of a lecture, Székely came after us

10   (1.7)

11   Z) aztán mondom nem megyek be mert elkezd ordítozni, azt meg nem
tudom ↑elviselni (.) húsz forintért kihúzták.
then say-Sg1-DEF no go-Sg1 in because PFX-start-Sg3 shout that and no can PFX-
bear twenty forint-CAUS delete-PL3
Then I tell you I won't go in because he'll start shouting, that's something I
can't bear. They((the deans office)) deleted me for twenty forints.

12   X) =hhh. heh heh

13   (1.0)

14 →   Z) hh borzasztó, (.) kész vagyok.
awful finished be-Sg1
terrible, I'm finished.

15 →   (0.6)

16   Z) testnevelést halasztottam ↑ ötven forint hehe ↑ húsz a Székely az már ↑
hetven-
(physical education)-ACC postpone-SG1-PAST fifty forint twenty ART Székely that
already seventy
I postponed physical education, that's fifty forints hehe Székely is twenty
that's already seventy-

17   X) = hheh kár [is bemenni
useless too PFX-go
hheh it's useless to go in

18   Z)   [még egy-két] helyről kirúgnak akkor. hhh
yet one-too place-DELAT PFX-kick-PL3 then
They'll kick me out from a couple of more places then

19   C) =halasztottál te is?
postone-Sg2-Past you too
Did you postpone too?

20   Z) =(---)

21   C) =miért?
Why?

(talk on postponing studies follows)

In this excerpt Z first describes how she failed to get the lecturer to sign
her transcript. Here we should know that in Hungarian universities some
courses have no exam or course assignment, but participation is obligatory (at
least in the time of the recording it was so). In the end of such courses the
teacher signs the transcripts of the students. In lines 01-11, Z tells the

background of her failure to get the teacher's signature. That is, due to a conflict ('we marched out laughing in the middle of a lecture') she did not have the courage to ask for the signature herself. Instead, Z asked somebody else to go to the last class and do it for her. Nonetheless, the teacher did not sign the transcript. Finally, Z ends this story with: *húsz forintért kihúzták.* ('They deleted me for twenty forints') which can be seen as a final result or a conclusion of her story. That is, it cost her money to get the course officially deleted from her transcript.

The story in lines 01-11 can be categorised as a *complaint*. Following Drew (1998:302-306), complaints are typically about a non-present party and they have the speaker as their "victim". Furthermore, complaint sequences typically begin with negative announcements and story introductions, such as "That fit cost me twenty forints, I'm so angry at him" here. Finally, (ibid. 303) "a co-participant may be expected to affiliate with the complaint's sense of the impropriety or injustice of the others' conduct".

The story from Z is receipted with laughter which has been analysed as a minimal response to a story (Routarinne 1997:150). Here this minimal response does not display much affiliation with Z. That is, it is not enough to indicate that Z is a victim of a transgression.[5]

After laughter Z continues with a self-deprecation: *borzasztó, (.) kész vagyok.* ('Terrible, I'm finished'). The assessment of the self displays a slightly different stance towards the talk. That is, Z is no longer justifying her behaviour, instead she is putting the blame on herself. Furthermore, also the

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[5] Even though Drew focuses on construction of complaints and the moral work they accomplish, he also provides an example of how a participant displays affiliation with the complainant. For instance (Drew 1998:311):

> (Emma's husband has left her)
> Emma: ...Isn'he re:diculous?
> (1.0)
> → Lottie: He's cra:zy.
> (0.4)
> Emma: Oh: God dammit...

In this example, Lottie displays affiliation through a similar expression of indignation as Emma.

expectations to a supportive second are different, here the recipient should display disagreement, rather than indignation. From a strategic perspective, it can be seen as a participants resource to deliver different criticisms (complaints and self-deprecations) in the seek of support. In a such a chain complaints defend the self, whereas self-deprecations expose it (cf. Drew 1998:296). In any case, both may potentially find support from the co-participants and thus align the interlocutors selves.

In line 15, the self-deprecation is receipted with a gap of 0.6 seconds. This silence can be seen as an implicit agreement with Z's self-critical evaluation. This is verified by the following talk: after the gap Z produces a list of her failings and how much they have cost her "fifty forints hehe Székely is twenty that's already seventy-". That is, she further extends her negative assessment which shows that her self-criticism has not been challenged. Here Z first produces laugh tokens and ironically stresses the sums in the list. In this manner, she invites laughter at herself, maybe suggesting that she can deal with these troubles.

The laughter in line 16 is shared by X. In this manner, Z and X are involved in a shared activity. Following this, X first comments on the story told by Z with "hehh it's useless to go in". This second does not challenge Z's self-deprecation, moreover it returns to the aspect of complaining even though not showing clear indignation towards the teacher. In this manner, X's second in line 17 displays very little involvement towards Z's personal accounts. Finally, it may be that seconds to complaints are less committal than seconds to self-deprecations. In any case, returning to a previous activity is undoubtedly unrelated to the self-deprecation and thus a dispreferred second activity.

The return to complaining instead of self-deprecating is in line with Z's following critical account (line 18) "They'll kick me out from a couple of more places then.". Here Z has herself as the object of this critical account (complaint), not as the subject. This sequence is brought to an end in line 19 where a new topic is introduced by C.

To sum up, two things are apparent in this analysis. First, the structure:

A: [self-deprecation]
[gap]
A: [resumption]

occurs also in the Hungarian data and it follows the preference organisation observed in the analysis of American data. Secondly, self-deprecations can be combined with complaints, that is, criticisms of a third party which have the speaker as their "victim" and thus defend the self. There, co-participants can display solidarity by complaining together about a third party (see Drew 1998). Nevertheless, here the recipients did not show any clear indignation towards the third party.

7.3.2 Other forms

Only implicit agreements on self-criticisms were analysed in 7.3.1. In the following segment there are both implicit and stated seconds to self-deprecations:

(19) [Hun:6-10]
      The example is the beginning of the conversation in my Hungarian data. Z has just walked into a dormitory room, another participant has just left. The participant Z has been telephoning and enters a room where 4 people are chatting. In the beginning a longer topical entity begins from turn 2 where the participant marked Z starts to tell about her troubles in studies. An exam period is going on. [6]:

01   A) =hova mégy hogy ilyen szép vagy.
      where go-SG2 that so beautiful be-SG2
      where are you going that pretty?
02   Z) =telefonálni voltam. (.) megüt a guta.(.)
      phone-INF be-PAST+SG1 PFX-hit ART braindamage [IDIOM]
      I was phoning. I'm going mad
03   D) miért=
      pron
      why
04   Z) >= én nem megyek be holnap vizsgáz[ni.

---

[6] "Viszgaidőszak", the exam period in December-February and May-June in Hungarian universities, consists of larger exams. Most of the exams are oral and the students are expected to be dressed formally for the exams.

no go-SG1 PFX tomorrow (do an exam)-INF
I won't go to the exam tomorrow

05   D)   [miért]
                                                     pron
                                                     why?

06   Z) =az szentség.
     pron holy
     sure as hell.

07   (many speakers) hhh hh

08   C) =miből vizsgázol.
     pron+ELAT (do an exam)-SG2,INDEF
     What's the exam on?

09   Z) =magyar [töriből,.
     Hungarian history+ELAT
     Hungarian history

((lines deleted, 4 is asked to sit down, further questions on the exam are asked.))

10   Z) mert nem tudom végigvenni és már idáig vagyok.(.)
     because no can-SG1,DEF PFX-TERM+bring-INF and already here+TERM be-SG1
     'Cos *I can't read it all and I'm already fed up*

11   B) nn mit akarsz te végigvenni(.)
     pron+ACC want-SG2,INDEF you (bring to an end)-INF
     nn what is it that you are reading?

12   Z) a jegyzetet azt a hülye Léderer-Elekes-Széke(h)lyt. =
     DEFART notes+ACC pron+ACC DEFART stupid name-name-name+ACC
     The notes, that stupid Léderer-Elekes-Széke(h)ly

13   (many speakers) = HEH HAH HAH

14   Z) és Mátyásnál megakadtam és az úr[istennek nem bírom
     tovább(heh)olvasni]
     and name+ADESS PFX-stuck and DEF,ART lordGod+DAT no manage-SG1,DEF
     (read on)-INF
     and by Mátyás ((A 15th century Hungarian king)) I had enough and there is
     no way I'll manage to read heh on

15   (many speakers):   [HAH
     HAH] HAH

16   B) =@egy titka van hogy lapozni kell.@
     one secret be that (page)-INF AUX(must)
     The key is to flip through

17   Z) =@ hát jó VICC@
     part good joke
     well, that's a good joke.

18   B) =@ bátran.@ (.)
     bravely

19   Z) @ majd lap(heh)ozok,. @
     soon (page)-SG1,INDEF
     I'll flip

20   X) heh heh

21   Z)=@ha valami megmarad (mi ha) bátran lapozok,. @(.)
     if something PFX-remain what if bravely (page)-SG1, INDEF

if there'll be something left, what (if I'll) bravely flip through.
22   B) de talán a végére jutsz.
      but maybe DEFART end+POSSFX,SG3+SUBL get-SG2
      but you might get to the end of that.
      (further talk on the exams follows)

In line 02 the second part of turn ('I'm going mad') initiates a sequence where Z tells how she has been preparing for exams. This topic initiator is located in the beginning of the conversation, after a question ('where are you going') and a compliment ('that pretty'). Such utterances provide what Levinson (1983:312-313) calls a *first topical slot* which is "the only one that is likely to be almost entirely free from topical constraints arising from the prior turns.". That is, they give the recipient an opportunity to pursue any topic through questions like "what's up?".

The utterance translated "I'm going mad" projects a clearly negative stance towards the contribution Z is about to elaborate. Furthermore, in line 04 she delivers a similar negative report: "I won't go to the exam tomorrow". As Tsui (1994:147) has observed, criticism is often presented in the form of a report. Here the implicitness of these criticisms makes it impossible to say, why Z is "going mad" or "not going to the exam". In this manner, Z's account invites others to request elaboration. Accordingly, in lines 03, 05 and 08 recipients accept this role and produce questions like "why?", "what's the exam on?".

The answers Z gives to these questions consist of complaints and self-deprecations. That is, the reason for her troubles are the "stupid notes" (line 12) that she is "fed up" (line 10), and that she "can't manage to read on" (line 14). The criticism of a "third party" can be seen as complaint, whereas the other negative assessments can be seen to be connected with Z's self. [7]

The accounts Z produces are not evaluated for some turns. The reason for this can be seen in the lack of knowledge from the recipients side which is a

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[7] The topic initiators in lines 02 and 04 could also project troubles telling (Jefferson 1988) where the invoked expectations for next actions are different (see 4.1.2). The characterisation of this segment as containing criticisms (complaining and self-deprecating) comes clear in lines

typical reason for not producing an assessment (see pp.25-26). First evaluative seconds are the two turns in lines 13 and 15 containing laughter. They are the first turns that respond to Z's talk in other ways than requesting more information. In other words, they take a stance of some sort.

We can begin the actual analysis of seconds to the self-deprecations from line 15. There recipients deliver laugh tokens together with the agent of the self-deprecation. The laughter is initiated by the speaker, who produces a clear laugh token towards the end of her turn. Laughter, similarly with gaps, is an implicit agreement token, even though it engages the participants in a common activity (see 7.2.4).

After laughter, B proposes advice for Z:

(20)

16   B) @egy titka van hogy lapozni kell.@
      one secret be that (page)-INF AUX(must)
      The key is to flip through

The advice given by B is marked by a change of voice. The voice could be characterised as wisecracking or witty. The advice can be seen as a "pending" explicit second assessment to the accounts Z has produced. As a delayed, preceded by laughter and change of voice, it is delivered in a dispreferred format. As activity it does not clearly disagree with the prior self-deprecation. Instead, it trivialises Z's "trouble" and does not take it seriously. This might also indicate, that others (i.e. B) can deal with the exam period better, or at least do not take it so seriously.

Next, I will investigate how the self-deprecating party reacts to the structure Z:[Self-deprecation] B:[Advice]. Notice how the agent of the self-deprecations explicitly categorises the activity as a joke:

(21)

17   Z) =@ hát jó VICC@
      part good joke
      well, that's a good joke.

13-16 where the "trouble" gets evaluated as an assessable rather than a fact.

One of the elementary findings of Harold Garfinkel (1967) is that in general the participant interpretations on what is going on in a conversation are implicit. People routinely make their activities accountable without saying things like:"...This was a question.". Explicit categories are typically used when the ordinary, expected or normative course of conversation does not work. In this manner, interlocutors do use: "It was a question." as a one possible method to repair the recipients reactions to their activities (i.e. to get an answer). In brief, the use of explicit categorisations in interaction point to uninvited interpretations and unnormative second activities (Garfinkel 1967, cf. Haakana 1996).

In this particular case the turn in line 16 has been categorised as a joke. Evidently, a joke was not the invited second activity of Z's self-deprecations. Furthermore, the explication in line 17 can be analysed also as critique towards how the second assessment or solution is produced. By virtue of changing her voice in a similar manner as B, Z indicates how she not only has understood the solution as a witty remark, but also rejects the course that the interaction has taken. In other words, Z makes a clear argument on behalf of returning to more serious talk. After some similar witty remarks in lines 18-21 (mainly from Z), B takes a different stance:

(22)

22   B) de talán a végére jutsz
       but maybe DEFART end+POSSFX,SG3+SUBL get-SG2
       but you might get to the end of that.

This turn can be seen as an invited return to serious talk. It reformulates the prior solution from a "joke" towards a more "serious" solution. B's talk is no longer marked by a change of voice, also this can be interpreted as a move to normal, serious talk. The token, *de* ('but') in the beginning of the turn contrasts the utterance with the prior turn. Here *de* simultaneously links this turn with B's previous turns (line 16). B's turn can be characterised as an explanation of her previous accounts. That is, B delivers an explanation, why he thinks that Z should just "flip through" the books she is reading. Finally,

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following Tainio (1997:100-104 see also Levinson 334-335) explaining (from the recipients side) typically indicates that a dispreferred second has been delivered. That is, normative, expected, invited activities are seldom explained. In brief, also this turn supports the claim that B's witty remark in line 16 is interpreted as an uninvited, dispreferred activity.

To reiterate, this Hungarian example illustrates how laughter and non-serious talk as seconds to self-deprecations were interpreted as dispreferred (i.e. uninvited) turn formats and activities. Furthermore, also in this case, self-deprecations occurred in the environment of complaints.

7.3.3 Summary and discussion

The Hungarian examples of dispreferred seconds to self-deprecations possess similar characteristics as the American examples. The basic structure for dispreferred seconds started with a gap. Furthermore, laughter and a non-serious second to a self-deprecation were interpreted as an uninvited second activity.

The basic preference organisation of self-deprecations is shared in the scope of the investigated materials. That is, both the practice of using dispreference markers and dispreferred turn formats (weak (dis)agreements) occurred in both materials. In all cases where self-deprecations were not overtly or clearly disagreed, some dispreference markers (gaps or laughter) appeared. Or, in other words, only overt disagreements appeared immediately in turn initial positions (see the Hungarian cases in 7.1).

The analysis so far gives some evidence that preference organisation of seconds to self-deprecations might belong to what Moerman (1988:31) describes as the basic sequential organisation which in its general characters is same in most language and most conversations. There were of course some differences, for instance in the American data no clearly preferred seconds

appeared, whereas in the Hungarian data two cases were observed. Furthermore, some dispreference markers that occurred in the American data (e.g. self-editing or hesitancy) were not observable in the Hungarian data. Nevertheless, as Tainio (1993:166) asserts, such differences rather illuminate the chosen data than different cultural practises.

Finally, a new dimension of self-deprecations was found out: self-deprecations may appear in the context of complaints, that is, third party criticisms which have the self-deprecator as their victim (Drew 1998). In the Hungarian data participants tell about their problems in studies and criticise both themselves and the university institution (for instance: lecturers, course books or the deans office). Similarly the recipients alternate in their second assessments where they thus have a possibility to ignore the self-critical dimension of these assessment chains. In any case, such seconds were produced as dispreferred seconds, and did not support the self-deprecating co-participant.

7.4 Moving out of preference

So far I have described seconds to self-deprecation in my data from the perspective of preference organisation. Nevertheless, not all turns following self-criticisms are best illuminated by it. In this section I will analyse two such cases. First, in a Hungarian case a self-deprecation is produced as a second activity that does not invite disagreement as a second activity. Secondly, in an American piece of data, a self-deprecation is responded with teasing. In both cases participants accountably orientate to other constraints and strategies than those analysed so far in this chapter. Finally, some of the societal or pragmatic questions that these analyses adumbrate are discussed.

7.4.1 Self-deprecations as second activities

There are cases where self-deprecations are produced as seconds to some other initial activities. One well studied example where a self-criticism routinely occurs is after compliments (see Pomerantz 1975:chapter 5; 1978; Launspach frth.). There the self-criticism can be seen as merely negotiating the amount of positive credit to the self (Pomerantz 1975:136ff).

In the following example a self-deprecation is produced after some "frightening":

(23)
> [Hun:4]
> D and Z are discussing some possible questions of an oncoming exam. D has been asking and Z answering. In the excerpt (line 05) Z changes the topic to a difficult exam that she has already taken, but which D has not.

01   D) =de volt egy Kinizsi Pál is (.) nem? (.)
           but be-SG3-PAST INDEFART name also no
           but there was this Kinizsi Pál aswell, no?

02   4) >hát Kinizsi Pál egyszer meghalt NEM? he he he (.)
           part name once PFX-die-SG3-PAST no
           well Kinizsi Pál died once, didn't he? he he he

03   D) de (.) de király mellett tevékenykedett,.=
           but but king next act-SG3-PAST
           but he acted near to the king

           ((lines deleted))

04   (many speakers) heh heh

05 → Z) HÁ↑ jó neked te kedden mész, de ne félj a Terényi kikészít.=azt hiszem
           ilyen fejjel jössz haza hah,.
           Há, good pron(SG2)-GEN you Tuesday go-SG2 but no fear-IMP-SG2 ART name
           finish-SG3 that believe-SG1,DEF such head--INSTR come-SG2 home
           HÁ, good for you, you are going on Tuesday, but don't be afraid, Terenyi will
           finish you. I believe you'll come home with a head like that heh

06   D) =gondolod? ((smiling voice))
           think-SG2,DEF
           do you think so?

07 → Z) =el tudom képzelni mert én olyan- olyannal jöttem.
           PFX-can-SG1,DEF imagine-INF, because pron(Sg1) such- such-INSTR-COMIT
           come-SG1,PAST
           I can imagine because that's how I came

08   (2.0)

09   X) [(---)]

10   Z) >[olyan] hülye négyest adott képzeld el hozzá jártam szemináriumra
        négyest adott (0.4) emlékszem erre a szemináriumra (.) ilyen hülye tag, hogy
        mert négyest adni.< heh =
        such fool 4-ACC give-SG3-PAST imagine-SG2-IMP PFX   pron-ALLAT go-SG1-
        PAST seminar-SUBL num(4)-ACC give-SG3-PAST remember-SG1 that-SUBL ART
        seminar such fool bloke how dare-SG3 4-ACC give-INF
        *Such a fool, he gave me a 4, imagine I took his seminar, gave me a 4. I
        remember that seminar. Such an idiot how dear he give me a 4 heh*

D has been asking Z questions, such as "do you know this and that". D has also
pointed to some lack of knowledge by Z (e.g. lines 01 and 03). Furthermore,
there has been some general laughter on Z, such as in line 04. Apparently, Z
has become annoyed by these questions and laughter. Accordingly, in line 05
she 'strikes back'. That is, Z teases, criticises or frightens D about an exam that
she has already taken but D has not: "don't be afraid, Terényi will finish you.",
"I believe you'll come home with a head like that heh". This minor 'counter
attack' is softened by laughter.

Following Tsui (1994:191-192; cf. Kotthoff 1993), criticisms of a co-
participant are typically receipted by, at least modest, challenges or rejections.
Here, D receipts Z's attack by a mild challenge ('do you think so?'). This
challenge defends D's position by not accepting the negative prediction ('you'll
come home with a head like that'). For instance, receipts such as 'I know' would
have confirmed Z's assertions. Finally, this answer invites Z to elaborate or
explain her criticism.

After the challenge Z delivers a self-deprecation as an explanation:
"that's how I came", indicating that she had difficulties in the exam and thus D
should have difficulties as well. In this manner, Z answers D's challenge or
request for clarification. Z also changes the direction of criticism. That is, she
is no longer criticising only D, moreover, she is sharing the criticism. In this
manner, not only can criticism of a third party be turned into a self-deprecation
(see examples (18) and (19)), but it can be used also after criticism of another
participant.

This self-deprecation can be seen as a second activity to the mentioned
prior activities. Furthermore, here a self-deprecation can not be seen to invite a

disagreement from it's recipient, since that would mean that D would have to agree with the minor attack. In other words, preference organisation of seconds to self-deprecations is not the best way to illustrate this case, since the self-deprecation is a *second*, not *initial* activity in the first place (cf. Tainio 1993:31). Secondly, the prior activities invoke expectations which are different from the general preference organisation described before. Finally, self-deprecations can have also other functions than just putting forward a personal view or inviting compliments.

7.4.2 Teasing as a second to a self-deprecation

Beyond such self-deprecations that cannot be seen as initial activities, there are cases where preference organisation is seemingly not followed. That is, a clearly dispreferred second (an agreement) may be produced immediately after a self-deprecation.

Schegloff (1988:453-456, see also Tainio 1997:104-105) in his discussion on two types of preference points to problems in the *practice based* approach (ibid. 454):

> There are exchanges in which the form of response is that of a "preferred" response, but in which that response seems clearly to be dispreferred – and dispreferred by virtue of the sequence type involved, what is being done through it, and the status of that activity type for the parties.

For demonstration of this phenomena he gives the following example (ibid. 454):

(24)   two girls who once attended college together until Bee transferred to another school are talking on the phone after a long hiatus. After Ava describes a "Speech" course she is taking, Bee inquires about Ava's current contacts:

Bee: Eh-yih have anybuddy: thet uh:? (1.2) I would know from the English depar'mint there?
Ava: Mm-mh. Tch! I don't think so.

In the example Bee's question is searching for common ground in order to intersubjectively develop a topic. A refutation to such a search that is not

performed in a dispreferred turn format appears very unsociable. According to Schegloff (1988:454): "something potentially notable and consequential for the occasion and for the relationship is introduced into the interaction with a such a second". Methodologically, the significance of sequences such as these is that one can not rely solely on the *practice based* notion of preference. In order to recognise such cases we have to contrast the characterisations of the activity *and* turn format.

In the following example a self-deprecation is answered with a tease:

(25)   [Am:8]

```
01      B) hm
02      A) =I think I'm goin to get up at fi:ve,
03      B) =what? (.)
04      A) becos I have a class at eighti:,
05 →    B) =hmm oh? .hh God yeah- if I go to bed now I would never make it up
        at fi(h)ve heh
06 →    A) =@you can't even make it out of bed at nine@ ((smiling voice))
07      B) =I know I am so a- you know when I
        [was sitting at that computer this morning I]
08      A) [@hhehheh I know you were heh@]
09      B) thought I was going to pass out.
10              (.)
11      B) and I was like ohh my god I am so tired. seems I'm never gonna make
        it.
12              (0.3)
13      B) >but (.) I just- it seems like I got a lot typed. but I mean it seems like- (.)
        like I don't get that much accomplished=and I don't know its like- like- (.) all
        it is- is like- like straight from the Internet (stuff)=its not like anything in my
        words yet so< hh. (.) ([--)
```

In line 05 B delivers a negative assessment of her sleeping habits: *God yeah- if I go to bed now I would never make it up at fi(h)ve heh*. This self-deprecation is answered by an overt, upgraded agreement: *you can't even make it out of bed at nine*. A's stated agreement is produced at once, latched to the next turn. In other words, it is produced in a preferred turn format (*practice based preference*), but its activity type (*structure based preference*) is a strongly dispreferred one.

This is how far we can get with the notion of preference organisation. In order to further analyse the case from my American data, we should

characterise the activities after the self-deprecation in a more specific manner. The activity in line 06 can be characterised as *teasing*, that is "provoking in a playful or unkind manner" (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 1995*). Drew (1987) has studied such special cases with CA methodology. His framework will be introduced and used in the following analysis.

According to Drew (1987:232-233), teasing is sequentially placed as a *second* to some prior utterance(s) of the one who is teased. The prior utterance is characterised as a *vulnerable* turn (ibid. 235ff). The vulnerability is typically visible in the turns *overdoing* character. In Drew's materials overdoings consist of (ibid. 242, emphasis added):

> Outraged complaining, extolling the virtues of someone/something, bragging, lecturing or going on about something, telling far-fetched or farcical story, or impossible joke, *extreme self-deprecation, freely admitting to being lazy/sloppy*, and playing innocent.

One of his examples is an extreme self-deprecation mounting to almost self-pity (ibid. 224,236):

(26)   Bill has reported being sick in the night and has elaborately described the symptoms of what he is attributing to food poisoning:

> Arthur: ...you feeling better now.
> Bill: Uh:m mNo:.
> Arthur: Oh you poor cunt, .hh
>   (0.4)
> Bill: ee I think it was food poisoning (last night)' cause I was
> Arthur: (look   )
> → Bill: I'm still gettin:g you know, hh .hh stomach pains I spewed last ni:ght ... chronic diarrhea as we-e-ell, just before I went to bed and ... this morning (well) I've had this stomach. So I guess the same's gonna happen tonight... I've been getting funny things in front of my eye:s actually. .hh A bi:t, just slightly, Li:ght flashes.
>   :
> Bill: But uh, (0.3) tsk (sti:ll.)
> → Arthur: Well you probably got at least a week

Bill overdoes a description of feeling ill. This is pointed out by Arthur, who does not take Bill's account seriously. That is, he interprets Bill's overt self-deprecations sceptically by a tease of "having a week left".

In my case the self-deprecation in line 05 can be seen as a vulnerable turn:

(27)　[Am:8]

```
05  →  B) =hmm oh? .hh God yeah- if I go to bed now I would never make it up
           at fi(h)ve heh
06     A) =@you can't even make it out of bed at nine@ ((smiling voice))
07     B) =I know I am so a- you know when I
```

Here B describes herself as somebody who could never get up very early. In line 06 A points out that B could not even get up on a normal time. In other words, the tease is constructed on this admittance of being a bit lazy.

According to Drew (1987) *teases* are a form of social control against minor interactional transgressions or overdoings. Furthermore, they attribute deviant actions or identities to their recipients (e.g. gossiper, lazy). Linguistically this is done through the use of contrastive lexical components (Drew 1987:230-232). In my example the 'early' *five* is contrasted with a 'late' *nine*. That is A claims that B cannot even get up on a normal time. Note that not getting up at five can be considered normal, whereas sleeping at nine is a deviant activity. Furthermore, the tease is produced at once and with a smiling voice. That is, it is delivered as a humorous remark, not as a serious criticism. (cf. Drew 1987:232.)

These deviant identities, are "close to the bone" insofar as their recipients have just elaborated these roles and the teaser is merely recycling and reformulating their prior accounts (Drew 1987:234-237). Here, B has first evaluated her sleeping habits, which A reformulates. Linguistically A uses the same elements, for instance *bed, make it*. Further, she reformulates *at five* to *at nine*. As a consequence, the recipients routinely respond also seriously to these humorous remarks in order to defend their identities and resist such social control.

In my example the tease is responded by a new self-deprecation:

(28)　[Am:8]

```
05     B) =hmm oh? .hh God yeah- if I go to bed now I would never make it up
```

```
        at fi(h)ve heh
06      A) =@you can't even make it out of bed at nine@ ((smiling voice))
07 →    B) =I know I am so a- you know when I
        [was sitting at that computer this morning I]
08      A) [@hhehheh I know you were heh@]
09      B) thought I was going to pass out.
10                (.)
11      B) and I was like ohh my God I am so tired. seems I'm never gonna make
        it.
12              (0.3)
```

In line 07 B first starts to produce a second assessment to A's tease. The apparent self-deprecation *I know I am so a-* is aborted for some reason. Instead B starts to tell a story *(you know when...)* about how she was tired writing an essay that morning. This story contains many self-deprecations. From the point of view of teasing this follow-up seems to confirm the tease and explain why B has troubles getting up. In other words, the humorous tease is taken seriously.

Drew calls such responses to teases *po-faced* ('solemn-faced' or 'humourless') receipts. In his materials responses to teasing vary scalarly due to how seriously/humorously they interpret the teases (ibid. 221-230). Nevertheless, in the follow-up, they routinely treat the tease as something that needs a serious treatment, that is, "recipients still almost always put the record straight." (ibid. 230). Also in my example B depicts herself as a person who is tired because she has to work so much. In this manner B defends herself from the characterisation of being lazy.

Beyond the characteristics described by Drew, from my framework it is also notable how the tease is produced in "preferred" turn format. In fact, also in half of Drew's cases the teasing turns start in overlap with the − typically recipients − prior turns.[8] This suggests that a part of teases *formulaic character,* beyond having contrastive lexical components, is that they are launched at once. In other words, part of their humorous social control is that they ignore practice based preference constraints.

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[8] Drew (1987) presents 22 examples of teases in his article: 18 of them is produced at once and without dispreference tokens, 11 in overlap with the prior turn. Only 4 of them have a pre-element. Interestingly all of them begin with *well,* nevertheless it is not clear whether *well* can

To sum up, in some cases there is a contrast between *practice-based* and *structure-based* characterisations of preference. Such cases display something notable for the identities of the participants. In this case, Paul Drew's (1987) concept of *teases* and *po-faced* receipts to them provide a further illumination. Furthermore, this case demonstrates how participants at times produce contrastive activities as a part of social control, thus ignoring agreement or co-operation (cf. Tsui 1994:191). Participants cannot rely solely on the routine of getting a normative second to their self-deprecations or at least anything else produced in dispreferred turn formats. Finally, self-deprecations can be interpreted as overdoing or exaggerating and the self-depreciating party can receive a sceptical response to her self-deprecation.[9]

Finally, the analysis in this subchapter enables a discussion on some special and very complex pragmatic dimensions of preference. First, some complications are engendered by the cultural intuition, as described by Drew (1987:220), that *teasing* may be a display (or index) of intimacy or "close relations".[10] That is, conflict might potentially invoke the development and maintenance of intimacy. Secondly, in general it has been argued (Bilmes 1989; Kotthoff 1993; see also Tsui 1994) that preference organisation is unable to deal with disagreement sequences. Apparently, it is not preferred to agree in

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be considered a preface or a dispreference token here.

[9] In a similar manner, Tsui (1994:190) asserts that: "Because a disagreement is typically prospected by a self-denigration, a person who often self-denigrates may be accused of 'fishing for a compliment'.". Unfortunately she does not give any examples.

[10] Tsui (1994:188) claims that interlocutors that know each other very well may ignore preference organisation of self-deprecations. She gives the following example:

> Husband: I've put on a lot since you left.
> → Wife: I know.

Nevertheless, this example is based on "participant observation". That is, no prosodic information or sequential context is given. Furthermore, as Drew (1987) suggests, such cases are inferentially rich and also here *I know* most likely displays or develops either an 'intimate' or a 'lousy' relation. In any case, without access to a recording of such a case a proper (re)analysis is impossible.

disputes, since it might display submissiveness (Kotthoff 1993:213; cf. Drew 1987:250).

These findings and speculations do not counter the idea that preferred seconds to self-deprecations display solidarity and support. Nevertheless, they point to such rare cases where the seemingly most dispreferred, the most "unsupportive" second appears, namely, overt agreement. Furthermore, it seems unclear to which direction these special cases (e.g. *teasing*) develop social relations. As Tainio (2000:39), following Georg Simmel, has lately suggested, the opposite of solidarity and support is not *conflict* but *indifference*.[11] That is, conflict and affiliation are closely related. In the face of it, this promotes the importance of *involvement*. As a conclusion, the most "unsupportive" seconds might be simultaneously also the most "involved" seconds and thus ultimately promote the social relations of the participants. Finally, in my materials, such special cases are too few and only a larger collection of them could yield further results. Such a study could also further illuminate the relation of self-deprecations and other forms of criticisms (e.g. complaints, teasing and criticisms of a co-participant).

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[11] Tainio (2000) has come to this conclusion after an analysis of disputes of an elderly couple. In her materials the disputes of a couple during an interview display alignment and partnership.

8 SEQUENTIAL PLACEMENT OF SELF-DEPRECATIONS

In this chapter, first the sequential locations of initial self-deprecations are analysed. In other words, here I will focus on the relation of initial self-deprecations to prior conduct. Finally, the closing of self-deprecation chains is briefly described.

The concept of topical work bordering self-deprecations from other activities will be used as an analytical tool. *Topic* as such is not a central category for CA analysis whereas the accountable work of topic transition, maintenance or misplacement of topics is (see Levinson 1983:312-325; Jefferson 1984, 1993; pp. 36-38).

In the following analysis, I will start (8.1) with analysing cases where self-deprecations are clearly connected to some previous activities, such as stories where they serve as termination devices. Then I will continue (8.2) with cases where self-deprecations appear at topical transition places. Finally, in 8.3 some examples of how self-deprecation chains are closed will be analysed.

8.1 Self-deprecations connected to the previous activity

A typical place for assessments in general is after stories or accounts (Pomerantz 1984:58; Jefferson 1984,1993; Goodwin & Goodwin 1992a:161-162,170-172; Tainio 1993:59-67). There they mark a closure of the turn and invite second assessments from the recipients. For instance (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992a:161):

(1)
```
Hyla:  A:n then they got t'this country club fer a party en the gu:y *hh u::m.
       (0.2) en they kick him out becuz they find out eez Jewi:sh,
→      *hh an it's j's r:ril[ly s:::sa::d,]
Clacia:             [Guy that sounds] so goo::d?
```

The assessment *an it's j's r:rilly s:::sa::d* marks a transition or a shift from a description to assessment of the same story (ibid. 162). Furthermore, it invites speaker transition, which is taken up by Clacia. (see pp. 36-38).

Next I will investigate a similar case from my data:

(2)   [Am:8]
       B describes how she has been writing an essay:

```
01    B) hm
02    A) =I think I'm goin to get up at fi:ve,
03    B) =what? (.)
04    A) becos I have a class at eighti:,
05    B) =hmm oh? .hh God yeah- if I go to bed now I would never make it up
         at fi(h)ve heh
06    A) =@you can't even make it out of bed at nine@ ((smiling voice))
07 →  B) =I know I am so a- you know when I
         [was sitting at that computer this morning I]
08 →  A) [@hhehheh I know you were heh@]
09 →  B) thought I was going to pass out.
10            (.)
11 →  B) and I was like @ohhh my God I am so tired.@ seems I'm never gonna
         make it.
12    (0.3)
13    B) >but (.) I just- it seems like I got a lot typed. but I mean it seems like- (.)
         like I don't get that much accomplished=and I don't know its like- like- (.) all
         it is- is like- like straight from the Internet (stuff)=its not like anything in my
         words yet so< hh. (.) ([--)
14    A)                    [but] that's what I usually have to do:. sometimes it's
         mo:re time [consuming-
15    B)          [↑yeah that-] that's what I'm talking. I think like I took the long
         way around because then I had to go through and change everything around
         ann,
16    A) =but I can't read my own handwriting. so I have to do it that way hhehhh
17    B) =yea I know, yeah right in class of course-...
```

(B starts describing what they did in class)

In the beginning of this excerpt B describes how she has been writing an essay that morning. This sequence in lines 07-11 can be seen as a story sequence, that is a multi-unit turn (see Levinson 1983:323-333; Mandelbaum 1987:116; Routarinne 1997; pp. 36-38).

Following Routarinne (1997:140ff), stories have the following basic structure:

i) Preface Sequence

ii) Telling Sequence
iii) Response Sequence

The first and the last component are typically achieved intersubjectively. In other words, the preface has to be accepted by a story recipient. Furthermore, the story has to be accountably brought to an end by the teller so that the recipient can deliver a response.

In my example story telling is started by a preface: *you know when I....* After the preface the recipient A delivers a "go ahead" *I know you were.* Then B tells how she was writing an essay that morning.

As mentioned above, stories are brought to close by assessments. Here there are many assessment units towards the end of the story:

i) I thought I was going to pass out.
ii) and I was like @ohhh my God I am so tired.@
iii) seems I'm never gonna make it.

These utterances contain two kinds of self citation. First, B quotes her thoughts, *I though... .* Secondly, she starts with *I was like,* and changes her voice, as if to quote herself saying: *ohhh my God I am so tired.*

Labov (1972:371-375, see also Routarinne 1997:149-151) identifies two kinds of story evaluations: *embedded* and *external* evaluation. According to him, citation is a typical way to build an *embedded* assessment into a story. Also here i) and ii) are interpreted as still part of the telling sequence, that is the recipient does not take the turn. Finally, iii) can be seen as an *external* self-deprecation, which is a clear story termination device. The differences between i-ii) and iii) can be seen also in the use of tenses: the first two self-criticisms are in past tense, whereas iii) is in present tense.

Before this sequence B has already delivered a self-deprecation: *if I go to bed now I would never make it up at fi(h)ve heh.* (see p.120). In this manner, the self-deprecation in line 11 is not a totally new perspective. In brief, here a self-deprecation is produced as a terminal part of a story.

In the following Hungarian example a given topic is elaborated to a self-

deprecation in the scope of a single turn:

(3) [Hun:3]
Z has been describing her preparations for exams, Terényi is the name of the teacher keeping an (oral) exam. Z is asked when will she go to that exam:

01   D).. te már egyetemesből vizsgáztál? (0.3) vagy még ebből fogsz?=
      ... you already world-history-exam-ELAT (take an exam)-SG2-PAST or still pron-
      ELAT AUX(FUT)-SG2
      ... you took the world history exam already? Or you'll take it now?
02 → Z) nyolcadikán megyek=@>nyolc napot hagytam Terényire.<@ jaj de hülye
      vagyok Istenem,.
      num(8)-SUPERESS go-SG1 eight day-ACC leave-SG1-PAST Terényi-SUBLAT part
      but fool be-sg1 God-GEN,SG1
      I'll go on the 8ᵗʰ I left 8 days for Terényi. I am a fool oh my God
03   (1.0)
04   Z) másfelet majd csak tanulok. (.) hhh
      (one and half)-ACC soon just learn-SG1
      I'll just study one and a half
05   (1.5)

In line 02 Z produces a self-deprecation ('I'm a fool'). Before the self-deprecation Z delivers an answer to D's question in line 01. After the actual answer ('I'll go on the 8ᵗʰ'), Z starts to speak faster and changes her voice. Her voice may be characterised pessimistic. That is, "I left 8 days for Terényi" can be seen as a negative conclusion or assessment of her answer.

Furthermore, "I'm a fool oh my God" is an evident self-deprecation. It starts with two discourse particles *jaj* ('oh') and *de* ('but'), semantically they can be seen as intensifiers. Keszler (1977:123-125; see also Kugler 1998) describes *jaj* and *de* as words that are used to introduce affective sentences. The self-deprecation has an intensifying element also as its final component: *Istenem* ('oh my God'). Following Sorjonen's (1989:133) brief analysis of swear words, also this expression can be seen as a discourse particle, which can occur freely in all places of the turn. One of the typical meanings she gives is that they evaluate narratives.

In this manner, the self-deprecation ('I'm a fool'), with intensifying and evaluative elements (discourse particles) in both sides, is an extreme formulation. Comparing this clear self-deprecation with the prior, more implicit negative assessment, an escalation of self-depreciative elements can be

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observed. In brief: Z first produces a 'neutral' answer ('I'll go on the 8th'), then a pessimistic conclusion ('I left 8 days for Terényi.'), and finally a clear self-deprecation ('I am a fool oh my God.'). As a conclusion, also here self-deprecation is produced as a final, explicit and extreme element, which clearly indicates turn transition.

The structure of the analysed sequence:

D) Question
Z) Answer + Self-deprecation

is rather similar to the story structure analysed before. A difference is that here the topic is taken up by a previous speaker. In other words, Z elaborates a self-deprecation on a topic introduced by D. As in the case of story, also here the self-deprecation clearly displays the speakers stance or position towards the prior talk. Structurally, this stance displaying is typically placed in the end of the turn.

Finally, also here the negative stance Z displays in line 02 is not a new one. Before this sequence Z has been describing what kind of difficulties she has had in studying for other exams. That is, in this point of the conversation she has already an identity as somebody, who has troubles with her studies.

A self-deprecation can be triggered also by an event or activity:

(4)   [Am:4]
        The participants are evaluating a food that A has prepared and that B is about to taste. First, B is rather reluctant to taste this food. Nevertheless, A successfully talks B into tasting the food (lines 01-16).

01   A) you are scared of it everyone was.
02   B) =no aerr err::
03   A) =it's not- it doesn't taste that much different than that one that other one was fresher anything [hot]
04   B)   [yes]
05   A) =but it's not- you had it like that before though and you [can]
06   B)   [no] I couple (.) well it was like-
07   A) =heh heh
08   B) =you know it was like candy stuff at home that's [not-

09	A)	[it's] better for you than
	COOKIES	

((lines deleted))

10	B) yea [something-]
11	A) [JUST TRY] IT.
12	(.)
13	A) ehh=
14	B) =I know (.)
15	A) but it's gonna be really hot (.) of it if you ask about it or not (.)
16	B) right I do (.) I wanna give it one up.
17 →	((B tastes the food))
18 →	A) is it that bad=
19	B) =no.
20	A) it's [not that bad.]
21	B) [no no]

. Here the initial self-deprecation can be identified in line 18, where A delivers a negative assessment of a food (*it*) that she has made. B has just tasted this food and A elicits an assessment of it with her interrogative turn. According to Pomerantz (1984:57) "Participating in an event and assessing that event are related enterprises". She gives the following example:

(5)

J: Let's feel the water. Oh it...
R: It's wonderful. It's just right. It's like bathtub water.

In her example the participants are "feeling the water" which, at least in this case, is a neutral referent.

In my case B has just tasted a food that A has prepared. That is, A's competence is at stake. Accordingly, a positive assessment is expected in a such place in order to display sociability with A. As mentioned (see p.47), if no praise is delivered in a such context then it is relevantly absent (Bilmes 1988:16). In brief, on cultural basis A has reason to believe that B does not like the food. This is displayed also in the negative orientation of the question (*is it that bad*). In other words, A designs her assessment (*is it that bad*) so that if B does not like the food, she is not forced to strongly disagree with it. (see also pp.47-48.)

To sum up, three different cases of self-deprecation that build on previous talk

or activity were analysed. The first case was a story, where the self-deprecation served as a story termination device (Sd= self-deprecating interlocutor):

(i)
Sd) Story
Sd) Self-deprecation

In the second case a self-deprecation was elaborated as an extension of an answer to a question (R= recipient of the self-deprecation):

(ii)
R) Question
Sd) Answer + self-deprecation

In the third example the tasting of a food and a missing assessment triggered a self-deprecation:

(iii)
R) Activity/conduct + missing assessment
Sd) Self-deprecation

In all of these cases the self-deprecation can be seen as connected to the previous activity, not as contrastive (topically or sequentially) to it. Furthermore, in all three cases, the negative stance of the self-deprecating party has been present in the previous conversation. The actual origin of the negative stance is difficult to explicate. In the two analysed conversations one participant begins the conversation (as she arrives to the room) with some negative statement. In the Hungarian data a participant tells at once that she thinks that she "won't go to the exam tomorrow" (see 7.3.2), similarly in the American data a participant tells about troubles on writing an essay right from the beginning of the recording. In other words, some participants may have a more or less permanent identity as a participant that has trouble and displays her incompetence of solving it. In my data the mentioned identities are maintained and further developed through structures such as (i) and (ii). From this perspective (iii) is different, since it is clearly triggered by recipient conduct.

The analysed bits of talk display also autonomous, local organisation. That is, self-deprecations operate as turn or story termination devices, as

extensions to answers or as candidate evaluations after the interlocutors product has been tasted. In this manner, these locations can be seen as potential slots for self-deprecations. In the first two cases, (i) and (ii), self-deprecations are used as devices that clearly display the interlocutors stance towards her previous utterance or story. As evaluating elements of their turns they serve also as turn or story termination devices.

The third example illustrates a slot for self-deprecations after an activity. As described by Bilmes (1988:16), praise is awaited after ones products are shown or tasted. If no praise is delivered then its absence is routinely noticed. A potential way to notice such absence is to produce a self-deprecation.

8.2 Self-deprecations at topical transition places

Next, I will investigate self-deprecations that are topically different from, or contrastive to, the prior talk. In other words, they do not appear in such structural slots as the three examples discussed so far.

(6)   [Am:1-3]
        Participants are evaluating a food that they have just tasted:

```
01      A) =that's not too bad.
02      B) =no yn: no
03           (.)
04      B) yn: yn: no no
05      A) I thought- I think I have a little chunk to handle it. (.) right I give the towel
06      B) it doesn't taste like too [bad
07      A)                           [ I ] think (it does but it doesn't) have very [much-
08      B)                                                                           [yea] (it
        definitely does) it's not so bad. (.)
09      A) it's not that bad.=
10      B) =sure it's something easier than (.) other things like-
11 →    C) = @<yeah and it's healthy. hh(.) but then I crave. hh (.) fattening things
        like the Twix hh>@ (--)= but I- but I have barely eaten.
12           (0.8)
13      A) well I ate- I have been eating bread all day (--)
14           (1.0)
```

```
15    B) I had (---). (.) and some cookies(h). AND A MUF(h)FIN. (.)
16    C) =ehh hh
17    B) =so I'm not doing that good today (either).
18          (1.5)
19    A) I think I'm going to get up at five.
```

(Participants move on to discussing their studies)

In line 11 C produces a multi-unit turn, starting with an agreement (upgraded assessment) with preceding talk. Then she uses a contrastive transition marker *but* (Pomerantz 1975:67), which starts a self-critical assessment. The assessable is changed from *it (it's healthy)* to *I (I crave)* in line 11. This evokes a different framework for the interaction, since the assessments are from here on connected to a participant, in other words they do not assess some "neutral" *it*, but the participants themselves.

To reiterate, in line 11 a new sequential unit begins, namely a self-deprecation chain. There is also a contrastive topical shift. Linguistic structures and a change of voice mark and achieve the transition from general assessment activity to self-depreciative assessments. Nevertheless, this contrast is not a sharp one. Before the self-deprecation chain, with the topic of eating habits, participants have been assessing a similar topic: a food that they are tasting. As Levinson (1983:313) has observed, topical transitions are routinely achieved through preserving a part of the old topic[1].

In the next example there is a slightly variant case:

(7)   [Am:5] A is talking B into tasting a food that she has prepared:

```
01    B) = you know it was like candy stuff at home that's [not-
02    A)                                          [it's] better for you than
      COOKIES=
03    A) =[heh]
04    B) [right]
05    B)=well look they have like Hob Nobs where they have chocolate on them,.
06    A) OOU those Hob Nobs were good.
```

---

[1] Jefferson (1984) uses the term *stepwise transition* here.

07   B) =yea but these were like Hob Nobs with- (.) >they didn't have any filling they just had chocolate on them but I never really get a piece of one of these things< (.) so so,.

08   A) I'm having more sweet things ((banging)) (.)

09 → B) I know I know I- @uuh >I had this Snickers bar but shouldn't have bought it <@ (.) ((smiling voice))

10   A) ↑AEHhehhehh=

In line 09 the topic and activity are changed for some turns. Structurally, new activity in the middle of B's turn in line 09 is signalled first with a change of tone and it continues with a change of tempo. The tone of the new sequence is humorous, and the tempo is faster from the preceding talk. The beginning of B's turn contains acknowledgement tokens (*I know I know*) self-editing (*I-*) and hesitancy which typically mark topical shifts (Levinson 1983:313; Jefferson 1984:216). In sum, by virtue of topical organisation and prosody suggesting a change in the activity the second half of B's turn in line 09 is clearly initiating a new sequence.

If we compare line 09 with the previous example, we can say that self-critical assessment can be produced both with smiling voice or unhappy voice. Thus, what seems to matter most is that the prosodic (and syntactic-semantic) features of the turn mark it different from the previous talk (see also Haakana 1996:150-151).

The new activity is a self-deprecation consisting of news or a report (*I had this Snickers bar)* and an assessment segment starting with a contrastive transition marker (*but)*. The following assessment (*shouldn't have bought it*) is negative to the assessable which is B herself.

Also here the analysed topical shift is not very strong and topics flows into each other. That is, the conversation remains in the "sweet things area". *candy stuff* (line 01), *cookies* (line 02),and *Hob Nobs* (line 07) are in the same area with *Snickers Bar*. The difference is only that other things are just compared to the food B is about to taste, whereas *Snickers Bar* is a "fattening thing" that B should not have eaten. In brief, again a part of the previous topic is preserved.

To sum up, initial self-deprecations in these two examples were both marked prosodically and by topical transition devices. As mentioned in the literature (e.g. Levinson 1983:313; Jefferson 1984:216), these topical transitions were achieved through discourse particles showing that the previous topic is ended, such as *I know I know* or markers of contrast, such as *but*. Furthermore, changes of voice have the potential to display topical transitions.

In these examples self-deprecations make the speakers self as the new focus of the talk. In this manner, they topically raise the self simultaneously humbling it. That is, self-deprecations are modest, avoid self-praise, but put forward a personal perspective. Finally, the 'new' topics are in both cases connected to the 'old' topic. That is, participants orientate to delivering self-deprecations that are, at least to some degree, connected to the ongoing talk.

8.3 Closing self-deprecation chains

In this subchapter I will briefly investigate how self-deprecation chains are closed. Before this I will summarise the bits of analyses on self-deprecation chains that have been presented so far.

In this chapter so far, the sequential placement of initial self-deprecations have been analysed. Two basic types have been described: First, self-deprecations may be clearly connected to or triggered by the previous talk or activity. Secondly, cases where self-deprecations introduce a partially new topic were investigated.

In the previous chapter seconds to self-deprecations were discussed. There it was noticed, that self-deprecations in many cases are followed by further self-deprecations. These further self-criticisms may be produced by the recipients of self-deprecations as similar accounts (see 7.2.1). Also the self-deprecating party may resume or reformulate her self-criticism (see 7.2.3). These cases are clear examples of a chain of self-deprecating activity. That is,

similar accounts and resumptions are clearly built on the initial self-deprecations.

Here I will briefly complete these analyses with exploring the endings of self-deprecation chains. One possible way to close a self-deprecation chain, or a topic in general (see Jefferson 1993:18), is to produce a summary assessment:

(8)   [Am:1-3]
        participants are talking about what they have eaten that day:

01   C) = @<yeah and it's healthy. hh(.) but then I crave. hh (.) fattening things
        like the Twix hh>@ (--)= but I- but I have barely eaten.
02   (0.8)
03   A) well I ate- I have been eating bread all day (--)
04   (1.0)
05   B) I had (---). (.) and some cookies(h). AND A MUF(h)FIN. (.)
06   C) =ehh hh=
07 →   B) =so I'm not doing that good today (either).
08 →   (1.5)
09   B) hmm
10   A) =I think I'm goin to get up at fi:ve,
11   B) =what? (.)
12   A) becos I have a class at eighti:,

(talk on waking up early follows)

Here many participants have been producing negative assessments of their eating habits. This chain of self-deprecations is closed by B, who delivers a summary, conclusive assessment: *so I'm not doing that good today (either)*. In Jefferson's words (1993:18) such summaries "show that the topic is completed, resolved, perhaps 'exhausted'."

This summary evaluation in line 07 is followed by a lapse (see Levinson 1983:299) of 1.5 seconds. That is, this silence is not attributable to any of the speakers, there is a pause in the conversation. After the lapse A puts forward a totally new topic. That is, how she has to wake up early next morning.

Also in the case of terminating self-deprecation chains such topical work that

was described in 8.2 can be used. Consider the following example:

(9)   [Am:8]

01   B) and I was like ohh my God I am so tired. seems I'm never gonna make it.
02   (0.3)
03   B) >but (.) I just- it seems like I got a lot typed. but I mean it seems like- (.)
        like I don't get that much accomplished=and I don't know its like- like- (.) all
        it is- is like- like straight from the Internet (stuff)=its not like anything in my
        words yet so< hh. (.) ([--)
04   A)   [but] that's what I usually have to do:. sometimes it's
        mo:re time [consuming-
05   B)   [↑yeah that-] that's what I'm talking. I think like I took the long
        way around because then I had to go through and change everything around
        ann,
06   A) =but I can't read my own handwriting. so I have to do it that way hhehhh
07 →   B) =yea I know, yeah right in [class of course-]
08   A)   [look at] it.
09   B) ah Ahh ((clears throat))
10   (.)
11   A) well ah it really gets worse. (.) I'll have to find a really good one (--)
12   (0.7)
13   A) you in class what?
14   B) =hmm we had a course where we had to read three articles I didn't read
        any of them::
15   (0.4)
16   A) did you get asked any questions?
17   B) =it was little boring, she said @okay we are going to go over this one
        article...

In this example B closes the self-deprecation chain with *yea I know,*
yeah right which display that she has understood the co-participants accounts
and agrees with them. That is, she has no more to say on this topic (cf.
Levinson 1983:317-318). In this manner, B then moves on to telling what
happened in a class.

In the Hungarian examples (see 7.3) there are cases, where the self-deprecating
participant – after not receiving any second assessment – moves on to some
other activity. For instance:

(10)   [Hun:3]
        Z has been describing her preparations for exams, Terényi is the name of the
        teacher keeping an (oral) exam. Z is asked when will she go to that exam:

01   D).. te már egyetemesből vizsgáztál? (0.3) vagy még ebből fogsz?=
        ... you already world-history-ELAT (take an exam)-SG2-PAST or still pron-ELAT
        AUX(FUT)-SG2
        ... you took the world history exam already? Or you'll take it now?

02 →   Z) nyolcadikán megyek. >nyolc napot hagytam Terényire. <jaj de hülye
        vagyok Istenem,.
        num(8)-SUPERESS go-SG1 eight day-ACC leave-SG1-PAST Terényi-SUBLAT part
        but fool be-sg1 God-GEN,SG1
        I'll go on the 8th I left 8 days for Terényi. I am a fool oh my God

03   (1.0)

04 →   Z) másfelet majd csak tanulok. (.) hhh
        (one and half)-ACC soon just learn-SG1
        I'll just study one and a half

05   (1.5)

06   Z) csak az a baj hogy könnyen megüti a guta és akkor más (0.3) vizsgáztat.
        hh (.)
        only that ART trouble that easily (get a fit)- SG3 and then else (keep an exam)-SG3
        The problem is just that he may easily get a fit and then somebody else will be
        the examiner.

07   D) gondolod?
        think-SG2-DEF
        Do you think so?
        (participants continue with talk on how often the professor is ill)

In this example Z first produces a self-deprecation in line 04. She gets no reaction from the recipient(s), thus she reformulates her stance (line 04). Similarly, in other Hungarian examples the self-deprecating interlocutor alternates with complaining and self-deprecating (see e.g. pp.110-113).

To sum up, self-deprecation chains are accountably brought to an end. Three cases were analysed. First, an interlocutor might produce a summary self-critical assessment. Secondly, and similarly, a participant might indicate through discourse markers (e.g. *yeah, I know*) that the topic has been 'exhausted'. Thirdly, the self-deprecating party might close the self-deprecatory sequence by reformulating her stance towards a less self-critical direction.

9 CONCLUSIONS

I have explored self-deprecations which present a central social activity and resource in everyday interaction. The method of this study has been the sequential and structural analysis of naturally occurring self-deprecations. That is, instead of presuming or imagining the investigated phenomenon I have described it in the way it empirically occurs. The aim of this exercise has been to extend the previous research on self-deprecations in American data towards a somewhat more comprehensive and integrated account. At the same time, new perspectives have been opened by investigating Hungarian materials.

Next, I will compare my findings with prior studies and suggest some areas for further study. I will also point to some problems and restrictions of my study. A basic restriction of this study is that only two conversations were investigated. Nevertheless, following Peräkylä's terms (1997:215), *possibilities of language use* were discovered. That is, the findings are valid as single cases of possible resources of the participants. In this manner, they are very likely also general possibilities in every conversation for the members of these cultures (see Peräkylä ibid.).

My findings support and extend previous studies on self-deprecations which use American data. To begin with, the linguistic structures in the American data of self-deprecations are basically same as those for assessments (e.g. Goodwin & Goodwin 1992a). As a new dimension the semantic negativity of self-deprecations was investigated. Especially the role of negation as a relatively frequent way to build self-deprecations presents a potential area for further research. The use of negation instead of negatively loaded adjectives (or verbs) could present a general linguistic pattern of indirect criticism. In any case, a much larger database is required to explicate this initial observation.

The analysis of Hungarian syntactic patterns shows that they should be characterised with a different explanatory framework. In the case of self-deprecations the linear structure of an English sentence is rigid, whereas Hungarian sentences are built up differently. Nevertheless, this perspective

brought up some problems. For instance, how is it possible to compare the structures, if they are not presented with the same explanatory framework? This question has to be left for further studies. Furthermore, due to the number and character of self-deprecations no attempt was made to analyse what interactional differences these different patterns in different languages create. For a such analysis, following discussions on grammar and interaction (see e.g. Levinson 1983:365; Schegloff, Ochs and Thompson 1996:28-32), more preferred seconds to self-deprecations should be involved, since they include overlap and instantly produced next turns. That is, cases which make the precise turn transition places and syntactic completion transparent. In this manner, it would be possible to say whether Hungarian self-deprecations are syntactically more "vulnerable", or "protected" than their American counterparts. In this study, only the first step was taken towards the empirical and interactional analysis of linguistic structures of self-deprecations. That is, the structures were initially recognised.

My findings on preference support the view of preference as a continuum (see Pomerantz 1984; Tainio 1997). That is, also many dispreferred seconds have preferred elements. Furthermore, I extended the study of preference of self-deprecations towards the study of teasing (see Drew 1987). In the Hungarian data a strategically important combination of complaining and self-deprecations appeared. Both of these new perspectives could be taken further with a larger database and with focus on such cases. To start with, the further analysis of teasing as seconds to self-deprecations could reveal key locations of intensive development of social relations. Furthermore, the analysis of such situations could also bring more light into the question, posed by Kotthoff (1993) and Tainio (2000): what is the opposite of solidarity? That is, apparently also conflict may display involvement and sociability. Finally, further analysis of the combinations of self-deprecations and complaints, criticism or teasing could illuminate how people alternate in criticism of others and themselves.

The analysis of the sequential placement of initial self-deprecations is a new perspective. It connects some findings on self-deprecations with findings on topical work. These findings are relevant, since they show

some of the contexts where self-deprecations may be delivered. These slots are of course only examples of potential sequential locations for initial self-deprecations. More variation from this perspective is undoubtedly discoverable. Such a further study could reveal some strategic uses of self-deprecations as turn terminating devices of some typical turns or activities, as well as devices that elicit positive assessments.

Finally, the perspective of comparing American and Hungarian materials was rather explorative, to say the most. From a linguistic point of view, some differences were described. From a cultural perspective, no actual differences emerged from the data. Such a finding suggests that some intuitive ideas on cultural distribution of self-deprecations (see e.g. Suszczyńska 1999) are questionable. Finally, this study set an example of the study of Hungarian interaction. Among others preference organisation and topical work as analytical tools were first applied to Hungarian data. These analyses invite improvement and critique from native and non-native readers alike.

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APPENDIX 1: TRANSCRIPT NOTATION

Simultaneous utterances, overlap

> [begin - end]

Contiguous utterances

> =

Intervals

> (.)   micropause (less than 0.2 sec.)
>
> (0.0)   measured pause

Punctuation

> . fall in tone
>
> , slight fall in tone
>
> ,. continuing intonation
>
> ? question intonation
>
> ↑ rising intonation shift
>
> ↓ falling intonation shift
>
> CAPITAL LETTERS spoken louder
>
> > pace quicker <
>
> < pace slower >
>
> (*h*), *heh* laughter
>
> *hh* audible breathing
>
> @ change of voice
>
> (--) unaudible
>
> (*its awful*) transcriptionist doubt
>
> *its a-* repair
>
> ((remark))

APPENDIX 2: GLOSSARY

CASE SUFFIXES

Grammatical:	Endings	Examplified	Abbreviation
Nominative	-	nap (= day)	unmarked
Genitive	(-nak/-nek)	napnak	GEN
Accusative	-t/-at/-ot/-et/-öt	napot	ACC
Local:			
Insessive	-ban/ben	napban	INESS
Elative	-ból/-ből	napból	ELAT
Illative	-ba/-be	napba	ILLAT
Superessive	-n/-on/-en/-ön	napon	SUPERESS
Delative	-ról/-ről	napról	DELAT
Sublative	-ra/-re	napra	SUBL
Adessive	-nál/nél	napnál	ADESS
Ablative	-tól/től	naptól	ABLAT
Allative	-hoz/-hez/-höz	naphoz	ALLAT
Other:			
Dative	-nak/-nek	napnak	DAT
Terminative	-ig	napig	TERMIN
Instrumental-comitative	-val/-vel	nappal	INSTR
Causal-final	-ért	napért	CAUS
Of restricted use:			
Temporal	-kor	(ötkor) (= five)	TEMP
Essive-modal	-ul/ül	napul	ESSM

Other abbreviations:

SG	Singular
PL	Plural
PFX	Prefix
SFX	Suffix
PAST	Past tense
FUT	Future tense
AUX	Auxiliary
INF	Infinitive
ART	Article
DEF	Definitive
INDEF	Indefinite
POS	Possessive
part	Particle
pron	Pronoun
num	Numeral