Decomposing turns to enhance understanding by L2 speakers

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Abstract

This study shows how multi-unit turns may be designed to facilitate incremental establishment of intersubjectivity in cases where understanding is at risk. In addressing L2 speakers, L1 speakers decompose their multi-unit turns into smaller units and present them one at a time, in 'installments'. They leave a pause in between each installment, thereby inviting the recipient to provide acknowledgements along the way, or, alternatively, to initiate repair at an early stage. The practice may be used pre-emptively, to prevent potential problems of understanding from arising, or in response to an indication of an understanding problem by the recipient. The data are in Norwegian, with English translation.

Introduction

The establishment of intersubjectivity in conversation is based on a dynamic process of interaction in the form of exchanges of turns at talk. As noted by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974:728), "[it] is a systematic consequence of the turn-taking organization of conversation that it obliges its participants to display to each other, in a turn's talk, their understanding of other turns' talk." A potential challenge to this dynamic, incremental establishment of understanding is when one party produces an extended, multi-unit turn, for instance in order to explain something, thus restricting the interlocutor's access to the floor for a substantial period of time. Speakers may then be faced by the challenge of knowing if, and how, they are being understood by their interlocutor.

Especially in talk addressed to second language (L2) speakers, a recurrent problem reported by researchers is that information presented is not understood and that the speaker does not detect the understanding problem (Li 2006, Landmark et al.

2017). The current study analyzes one way that L1 speakers deal with this problem, namely by decomposing complex, multi-unit actions (of informing, explaining or instructing) into several constituent parts – 'installments' – and presenting them one at a time. Each constituent is produced with rising intonation, leaving a pause in between, which provides space for the interlocutor to provide evidence of understanding. Here is an example. A doctor and an intern are explaining to a L2 speaking patient the risks of having an HIV infection during pregnancy (more extensive excerpt and analysis in (8) below).

Excerpt (1) Doctor-patient consultation (738: 02:16–02:29)

```
 7 D:   .h fordi hivinfeksjonen den smitter ikke kun=
            cause the HIV infection it contaminates not just
 8      =under f- selve fødselen,
        during the labor itself,
 9      (.)
10 D:   [ d- ]
11 P:   [<jeg] forstår ikke hva du (sier)>
        I don't understand what you say
12 I:   hiv- hivinfeksjonen,
        the HIV infection,
13 P:   ja.
        yeah.
14 I:   den kan smitte <også i graviditeten.>
        it can contaminate also during the pregnancy.
15 P:   [ ja ]
        yeah
16 I:   [ikke] bare under fødsel.
        not just during the labor.
17 P:   ja.
        yeah.
```

When the original, rather compact formulation of the explanation is here aborted mid-course by a claim of non-understanding (line 11), the intern (I) rephrases the explanation by dividing it up into one part identifying the referent (line 12) and two parts stating the potential risk of contamination (lines 14 and 16). In between the parts (lines 13 and 15), the patient produces continuers, which claim understanding and project continuation of the turn-in-progress.

This way of decomposing a complex turn into several constituent components, presented one at a time for the other to acknowledge, is a practice that may be observed in some talk directed at L2 speakers, especially when understanding is at

risk, such as above, after the indication of an understanding problem. In this article, I will outline the sequential and multimodal characteristics of this practice of 'speaking in installments' and show how it contributes to the process of establishing understanding as an incremental interactional achievement.

Decomposition as a practice of turn design

The first in-depth empirical study of how multi-unit actions are divided up into smaller units is found in an early conversation analytic study by Goldberg (1975) on instruction-giving. The analysis deals mainly with the transmission of cooking recipes in a radio talk show, but also gives examples of speakers presenting telephone numbers or names for the addressee to write down. She notes that "the set of Instructions […] is commonly broken down into its smaller component parts each of which is delivered one-at-a-time over a series of sequentially placed turns." (p. 273). Each part forms an adjacency pair consisting of an instruction component and a receipt component. Receipts that signal acceptance (and thus constitute preferred responses) take the form of an acknowledgement token or a repeat. She gives the following example[1]:

Excerpt (2) (from Goldberg 1975:275)
```
M:   :hThhh A three ounce, that's a small package of
     strawberry jello.
     (3.)
C:   Okay
M:   Four eggs
     (2.)
C:   Okay
```

Goldberg also notes that the position after the instruction component offers an opportunity space for initiating repair of the preceding part, for instance by repeating the first part of the instruction.

A related activity that has many of the same characteristics is direction-giving, where speakers also chunk complex (travel) instructions into smaller parts and provide recipients with opportunities to produce indications of understanding or non-

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[1] The rather extended pauses occurring before the acknowledgements are related to the fact that the recipes are being written down.

understanding between the individual components of the directions (Psathas 1991, 1995). Also in studies of instructions for manual skills in pedagogical contexts, researchers have found that instructions may be delivered in partial constituents, leaving room for the learner or apprentice to perform the instructed action. Some examples are car driving (Broth, Cromdal & Levin 2017), needlework (Lindwall & Ekström 2012), and surgery (Zemel & Koschmann 2014). Finally, extended requests for service (in the context of customers ordering airline tickets) have also been analyzed as to how they are produced and specified incrementally over a number of sequences (Lee 2009).

This practice of dividing complex information up into smaller components has been labelled speaking in 'installments' by Clark (1996). Basing himself on Goldberg's work, he explains the phenomenon as a practice speakers use for adjusting the length of their conversational contributions to the cognitive demands of speech production and processing, and especially the limitations of short term memory. In his words: «When the going is easy, they [speakers] make their packets large, but when the going gets tough, they make them smaller, sometimes no more than a word long» (Clark, 1996: 235). He also expands the notion relative to Goldberg's original definition by describing a specific type, 'referential installments', in which interlocutors establish the identity of a discourse referent in a separate contribution before the speaker goes on saying something about it ('predication') (Clark & Brennan, 1991).

The most comprehensive study of how TCUs may be decomposed into separate sub-units is provided by Iwasaki (2009, 2011, 2013) for Japanese. She notes that certain morpho-syntactic features of Japanese facilitate segmentation of clausal TCUs into smaller components. The production of such free-standing sub-units may "constitute an invitation, or a request to the recipient to come in and to display an understanding of the actions that the components have accomplished" (Iwasaki 2013: 248). She calls such points in the production of a turn an *intervention-relevance place* and shows how speakers use embodied means such as gaze, gesture and facial expression to signal the relevance of a response by the recipient (Iwasaki 2011). The type of response (or 'intervention') produced by the interlocutor may be consequential for how the speaker continues the turn toward completion, and thus reveals the collaborative nature of TCU production.

Turn design and accommodation to L2 speakers

In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), many discourse analysts have investigated so-called *foreigner talk* (Ferguson, 1975), that is, talk by L1 speakers directed at second language speakers, especially low-proficient ones. A recurrent claim has been that one of the modifications L1 speakers make is to speak in shorter utterances and with simplified syntax (Long, 1996). For instance, in a book-length study on 'achieving understanding' in L2 interaction, Bremer *et al.* (2013) review strategies L1 speakers use in order to make their utterances more 'transparent' to L2 speakers, and they note that one overarching strategy consists in raising the *accessibility* of one's utterances (the other being raising *explicitness*). According to them, this can be done by segmenting complex information into shorter information units, combined with reducing the pace of delivery and providing pauses in between the parts (Bremer et al., 2013: 174). However, they do not specify in any detail the turn constructional methods for doing this and how it is realized in turn-taking procedures in actual conversations.

The CA approach to lingua franca and second language interaction has contributed more detailed studies of how L1 speakers work to preempt understanding problems by L2 addressees, especially by practices of self-repair. For instance, potential problems of reference may be preempted by inserting explanations or by checking the addressee's knowledge of the referring expression (Svennevig, 2010, Kaur, 2011, Greer & Leyland, 2018). Another example is potentially problematic questions, which may be reformulated in transition space repair, providing candidate answers to the original question, thereby giving the interlocutor models of relevant answers (Gardner, 2004, Kasper & Ross, 2007, Svennevig, 2013).

However, the only study that deals explicitly with the practice of decomposing complex turns into smaller units in an L2 context is Svennevig et al. (in press). They analyzed the use of installments in instructions to second language speakers (alongside other preemptive strategies such as reformulation and lexical simplification). The data were simulated emergency calls in which an L1 English speaker playing the role of the operator instructed an L2 speaking 'caller' how to put a patient (represented by a manikin) in the safe position. They noted that installments were used in 56 out of 85 instances of instructions in the corpus, thus constituting the most frequent pre-emptive strategy in the data. A typical format used by operators

was to first produce an installment that identified a body part of the doll (a referential installment) and then to proceed with a new installment instructing the caller what to do with it. For instance, one of the written instructions that the operators were to convey to the callers read as follows: "Position the arm closest to you so that the arm is above the doll's head." This was presented to the caller in the following way:

Excerpt (3) (Svennevig et al (in press) p. 16)

```
1 Op  Okay, so you're gonna take the arm that is closest to you,
2     (0.4)
3 Cal Uhuh,
4 Op  You're gonna put it above his head like he's raising his hand,
6     (0.3)
7 Cal Uhuh,
```

The study showed that the use of installments (and other pre-emptive practices) led to fewer understanding problems (manifested as repair initiations or incorrect manipulations of the doll), compared to instructions presented without the use of such practices. The authors conclude that installments are a resource speakers regularly use when understanding is at risk.

The current study pursues this line of work by examining in more qualitative detail the sequential and multimodal characteristics of speaking in installments and the process of establishing mutual understanding with the interlocutor. It is based on Goldberg's sequential description of instructions and Clark's notion of 'installments', but expands the account empirically by showing that speaking in installments is not just associated with instructions and other types of information presented for note-taking or recall, but that it is used as a pre-emptive practice in conveying complex information to L2 speakers in cases where understanding is at risk. The questions that will be addressed are:

1 What are the sequential and multimodal characteristics of speaking in installments?
2 How does speaking in installments contribute to enhancing understanding in a second language context?

Turn construction in multi-unit turns

The social actions under investigation here are mainly informing-giving and explanations taking the form of elaborate actions requiring several turn constructional units (TCUs) and, consequently, multi-unit turns. Multi-unit turns constitute a special case in the turn-taking system of conversation, as they suspend the general rule that TCU completion establishes a transition relevance place (TRP) (Selting, 2000, Clayman, 2013). Specialized practices may be used to introduce a multi-unit turn, creating an interactional 'license' for one party to speak beyond the completion of a single TCU. One such practice is the use of presequences of various sorts, such as story prefaces in storytelling (Sacks, 1992) and 'pre-pre's' in certain types of complex questioning turns (Schegloff, 1980). Also during the production of a multi-unit turn, special practices may be used to signal the continuation of the turn beyond the TCU in progress. An example is as leaning forward at the initiation of a multi-unit turn and maintaining this pose across TCU boundaries until the full turn is complete (Li 2013). In institutional activity types, the turn-taking system may be specialized to license multi-unit turns in the encounter as a whole or in certain phases of it. For instance, questions in news interviews generally invite answers in the form extended accounts rather than just a single TCU (Clayman & Heritage, 2002).

Taking a multi-unit turn is not, however, speaking in splendid isolation. It is an interactional achievement that implies co-construction, recipient design and moment-to-moment recalibration and reorganization (Schegloff, 1996). Many previous studies have shown how recipients contribute to the realization of multi-unit turns. They orient to their interlocutors' right to extend their turn partly by holding back substantial contributions to the conversation at the completion of each TCU, partly by producing continuers, which display an orientation to the turn-in-progress as incomplete (Schegloff, 1982). In addition, they may claim or provide evidence of hearing, understanding and acceptance (or affiliation) by acknowledgement tokens of various sorts (Jefferson, 1984, Gardner, 2001) and embodied responses, such as nods (Stivers, 2008). A recent study even shows that in certain extended tellings, minimal acknowledgements are accountably expected at every single TCU border (Zama & Robinson 2016). In case of problems of intersubjectivity, recipients may initiate repair at the junctures between each constituent TCU (Robinson, 2014).

While several studies have analyzed recipient actions during multi-unit turns, not so many have addressed how speakers construct and recalibrate the size of their multi-unit turns for their interlocutors in real time. The current study aims to

contribute to this by describing one practice for recipient designing a complex action to interlocutors with limited linguistic resources.

Turn design is a result of two opposing preferences, the preference for progressivity and the preference for intersubjectivity (Heritage 2007). In the case of multi-unit turns, the preference for progressivity will prioritize packaging a lot of information into complex and integrated syntactic structures (which thereby minimizes 'redundancy'), whereas the preference for intersubjectivity will prioritize presenting small units of information for the interlocutor to acknowledge before proceeding with the next piece of information. The claim here, then, is that speaking in installments is a practice used when issues of intersubjectivity are at stake and trump the preference for progressivity.

Recipient design involves tailoring the talk to the interlocutors' background knowledge, interests, preferences, and, of special relevance here, linguistic competence (Theodórsdóttir, 2011, Hellermann & Lee, 2014). One way this may be accomplished is by calibrating the length and grammatical complexity of each constituent TCU. Syntax and prosody are flexible resources that allow speakers to vary the size of constituent TCUs in a multi-unit turn. An example is compound sentences (causal, concessive, relative, etc.), which may be produced in either a prosodically integrated way to constitute one TCU, or in a prosodically independent way to constitute two TCUs (Selting, 2000). The analysis below will include an overview of various syntactic constructions that allow speakers to split complex informational turns up into installments.

The practice of speaking in installments thus contributes to enhancing the establishment of intersubjectivity in three ways; first, by allowing the speaker to simplify the syntactic composition of the turn; second, by reducing the length of each unit and thereby making it more salient (or raising the 'accessibility' of it); and third, by allowing the interlocutor to provide evidence (or claims) of understanding along the way (and thereby making it possible for the speaker to monitor for understanding).

Data and method

In order to show the relevance of speaking in installments for different activity types, I have used data from two different corpora of video recordings. One is a collection of social work encounters with immigrant users in Norway (12 consultations totaling 5h 6m recording time). One of these institutions is a job qualifying center for immigrants, offering career counseling and job qualifying courses (for more information on the data, see Svennevig, 2013).

The second set is a corpus of doctor-patient encounters in secondary care, recorded in a large hospital in Norway (Fossli Jensen et al. 2011). The selection of consultations was randomized, so all types of consultations and medical specializations are represented. The current study is based on a subcorpus of 18 encounters involving patients speaking Norwegian as a second language.[2]

The practice of 'speaking in installments' was identified by the following criteria:

1 a complex, multi-unit turn of informing, explaining or instructing,

2 delivered in several short, prosodically independent units (rather than in a single integrated unit),

3 each unit (but the final) being produced with rising intonation,

4 and being followed by a pause, during which the interlocutor provides some form or acknowledgement (or problem indication).

In order to answer the first research question (on the sequential and multimodal characteristics of speaking in installments) the collection of instances was analyzed with respect to how non-verbal resources such as gesture and gaze were used for projecting continuation and monitoring for understanding. For the purposes of analyzing its role for establishing intersubjectivity (the second research question), a distinction was made between pre-emptive and repair usages. In the former, there was no prior indication of trouble by the interlocutor, whereas in the second, the decomposition of the turn appeared in response to an indication of a problem with a previous, more complex or integrated formulation of the utterance. The practice of

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[2] The research project responsible for first corpus was reviewed and approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, whereas the second corpus was approved by the Regional Committees for Medical and Health Research Ethics. Written informed consent for the data to be published in this form was gathered from all participants.

speaking in installments was then analyzed for how it contributed to preemptively identifying trouble sources and how it could contribute to repairing manifest understanding problems.

The sequential organization of installments

Let us start with a simple example of how information is divided up into installments. The following example is from an encounter in a job qualifying center for immigrants. Prior to the encounter, the client (C) has passed a language test. On the basis of the results (which were rather poor) the counselor (S) has suggested that the client take a Norwegian course (known as an 'amo course'). In the excerpt, the client asks about how long the course lasts:[3]

Excerpt (4) Job qualifying center (3: 254–265)

```
                    ((hand outwards:)) [~~~~~~***-.-]
1  C: hvo- hvor lenge i: (.) kurs i: i- [(.) i amoen,]
      ho- how long in: (.) course in: in- (.) in the amo,
2     (.)

      [~********-.-]((hand outwards))
3  C: i norskkurs?]
      in Norwegian course

4  S: mhm, det bjyner sånn cirka tiende august,
      mhm, it starts around tenth of August,
5  C: ja.
      yeah.
6     (.)
7  S: så går det da (.) seks timer hver dag,
      then it goes (.) six hours every day,
8     fram til desember.
      until December.
9  C: til desember.
```

---

[3] Gestures are transcribed according to Kendon's (2004) transcription conventions. See appendix for transcription key.

```
          till December.
10 S: [ja.]
          yeah.
11 C: [seks] måner.
          six months.
12 S: .hja
          yeah
```

The question is formatted as a request for an indication of a time period ("how long").
The counselor´s answer is not type-conforming (Raymond, 2003), as he does not just
provide a simple time reference. Instead, he gives an extended account of when the
course starts, when it ends, and also how many hours it runs per day. This answer
displays the speaker's analysis of the question as ambiguous between two
interpretations of what is requested, either the length of the course in total, or the
number of hours per day. By producing an extended account which provides answers
to both questions, the counselor can avoid initiating repair, which would indicate that
the question is problematic (Kurhila 2006). The account itself is divided up into three
intonation units. The first two (lines 4 and 7) are produced with slightly rising
intonation, projecting a continuation of the turn, and the last one (line 8) has a falling
contour, signaling closure. The first intonation unit (line 4) is not just prosodically
marked as incomplete but also pragmatically recognizable as not constituting a
relevant answer to the question in itself. These components may be considered
installments, where the complex action of explaining the duration of the course is
divided up into several TCUs.

         We can also see that the client orients to the first two installments as parts of a
more complex turn. After the first intonation unit, she produces a continuer (line 5),
claiming understanding but simultaneously displaying her orientation to the turn-in-
progress as not yet complete. Only after the final component does she provide a more
substantial receipt of the answer. First, she repeats the last component of the turn ("till
December") and then she produces a *formulation* ("six months") in which she
displays her understanding of the answer. This receipt also displays her interpretation
of the relevance of the answer to her initial question, thus revealing that her concern
was about the length of the course in total (and not the length per day).

         The incompleteness of each constituent installment may furthermore be
signaled by means of gestures. The next excerpt follows shortly upon the previous

one, after a short repair sequence. The counselor proceeds by providing more information about what will happen after the course:

Excerpt (5) Job qualifying center (3: 272–277)

```
                        [~~~~~~~~~~~~~~***=((waves inward))
1  S: og da vil du [komme tilbake hit,
      and then you'll come back here,


      [=****= ((S: holds waving hand, see Figure 1))
2  C: [ja.=
      yeah.=


      =******************]
3  S: =til en ny norsktest,]
      =for a new Norwegian test,


      [*  * ((S: taps papers twice))
4  C: [  ja
      yeah


5     (.)
6  S: så skal vi se om du er blitt bedre.
      then we'll see whether you have gotten better.
7  C: ja.
      yeah.
```


Figure 1: S holds inward waving hand

Again, we can observe that he divides his informative turn up into installments, with the same intonation pattern. The client confirms with continuers after each installment. In addition, the counselor here uses gestures that bridge the boundaries between the installments. When he says "hit" (*here*) in line 1, he waves his hand

inward and holds the hand in a frozen position until the end of the next installment in line 3 (see Figure 1). At that point, he taps twice the papers lying in front him, which are the test papers from the test the client has just taken. This deictic gesture is somewhat delayed in relation to the verbal reference to the test ("new Norwegian test") and instead occurs while the client is producing the continuer in line 4. Thus, both these gestures extend beyond the completion point of the turn constructional unit to which they belong. Thereby, they too contribute to signaling that the turn in progress is not complete but will continue after the ensuing gap in the talk.

Holding gestures in a frozen position after the stroke (*post-stroke holds*) has previously been described as a practice for generating response to a question (Kendon 1995) or for displaying a temporary lack of intersubjectivity after a repair initiator (Sikveland & Ogden 2012). Common to these uses is that they mark some issue as 'not yet quite dealt with' (ibid. p. 194). This seems to be the case here as well. Holding the waving hand may be considered as both displaying the relevance of a response by the interlocutor and projecting a continuation of the turn-in-progress.

The two examples thus show that the installments are marked as just parts of a more complex turn both by prosodic and gestural means. Both rising intonation and the prolongation of hand gestures (as reiterated strokes or as post-stroke holds) project continuation and thereby signal that the current TCU is merely an installment in an ongoing, incrementally constructed, multi-unit turn. In addition, the installments will frequently appear as pragmatically incomplete, that is, as not potentially relevant actions in themselves. Syntax seems to play a lesser role in projecting continuation. In both examples above, the installments constitute complete clauses and thus are potentially complete syntactic units.[4] In this way, the speaker manages to present complex information in a series of short TCUs, yet projecting an extended turn at talk beyond the boundaries of each constituent part.

Monitoring for displays of understanding

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[4] Syntactic completion is always just provisional and potential, since new constituents may be added incrementally (Auer 1996). In fact, this happens twice in the cases above, namely in excerpt 1, line 7 ("then it goes six hours every day, until December") and excerpt 2, line 1 ("and then you'll come back here, for a new Norwegian test").

As noted above, the interlocutor is crucial in co-constructing a turn as an incrementally produced complex unit. And also the speaker will orient to how the interlocutor displays receipt of the turn-in-progress in order to monitor the online achievement of intersubjectivity. Here we will show how this moment-to-moment coordination is achieved. The next excerpt comes from a bit later in the same consultation. Once more the client asks a question about the course, this time whether she will be required to pass a new test when the course starts.

Excerpt (6) Job qualifying center (3: 427–441)
```
1  C: jeg prøve til i august?
     I another test in August?


                       [*     * ]((taps paper twice))
2  S: .h ne:i. .h ikke-[ikke den] testen.
     .h no:. .h not- not that test.
3  C: [nei]
      no
4  S: [da ] bjyner du på kurset.
     then you start the course.
5  C: m:hm,
     m:hm,
                      [~~~~~~~~~~~~~***** ((hand down, see Fig. 2))
6  S: >men du vet,< du [bjyner på et ku:rs,
     >but you know,< you start on a cou:rse,


     ***]
7  C: ja.]
     yeah.


     [~~~***-.-] ((hand beat))
8  S: [og de tar] (.) en test på deg.
     and they make (.) you take a test.


      [*****]((hand sideways))
9  S: >en [annen] test.<
     >a different test.<
10 S: for å se hva du kan.
     to see what you know.
11 C: åja. i: desember.
     oh I see. in: December.
```

15

```
12     (.)
13 S: i: august.
      in: August.
14 C: i au[gust.]
      in August.
15 S:     [ ja. ]
            yeah.
```
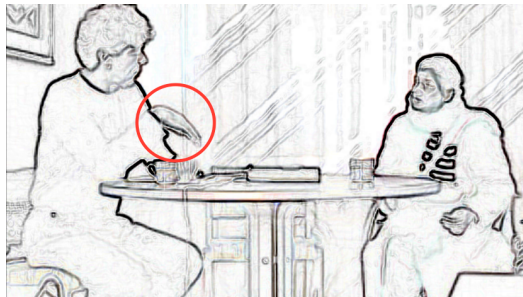

Figure 2: S moves hand down

The counselor treats the client's question as an inquiry as to whether she will have to redo the Norwegian test in August, which he denies. In line 6 he expands his answer by informing about a different test that will be administered in the course she will be attending. This information is presented in two installments, with the first part ending in rising intonation and leaving space for a response (line 6). As he produces the first installment, he moves his hand down in the space before him (see Figure 2) and this gesture is held in a post-stroke hold until the client produces a continuer in line 7 ("ja" – yeah). At this point the gesture is terminated (by the hand moving on to another gesture) and the counselor continues by adding a conjoined sentence. Only after this utterance is completed (and re-completed in lines 9 and 10 by a self-repair and an increment) does the client produce a more substantial response in the form of a change-of-state token ("åja" – oh I see).

The pattern we have observed in the excerpts analyzed here is that the recipient of the complex utterance produces only continuers after installments that project more to come, and waits until after the final installment before she produces typical third position moves, such as formulations (excerpt 1) and change-of-state tokens (excerpt 3). The client thus contributes to the production of the complex turn by displaying continued attention and recipiency during the preliminary components and withholding a more substantial response until the turn is complete.

We have seen that the addressee provides minimal responses between the installments. But the speaker may also provide space for such feedback and actively elicit it. This can be seen in the following excerpt, which follows directly after the previous one:

Excerpt (7) Job qualifying center (3: 442–452)

```
       [~~~~*************= ((points down at paper))
1  S: [ikke den testen der.
       not that test.


       =**]
2  C: ja.]
       yes.


       [~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~*=
3  S: men det er mange klasser,
       but there are many classes,


       =* * *]((4x points down, gaze at C, see Fig. 3))
4      (0.6)]


5  C:  ja.
       yeah.


       [~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~**********=((3x flat hand outwards,
                                             see Fig. 4))
6  S: [og for at du skal komme i riktig nivå,
       and in order for you to be placed on the right level,


       =**************=
7      riktig klasse,
       right class,


       =***=
8 C:  ja.
      yeah.


      =-.-.]
9      (0.4)]
```

```
        [~~~*********************] ((2x points down at papers))
10 S:   [så tar de en test på deg.]
        they make you take a test.


11 C:   mhm.
```


Figure 3: S points down *Figure 4: S moves flat hand outwards*

Here the counselor presents an extended explanation in three installments (lines 3, 6 and 10). After each of the two first installments he pauses and gazes towards his interlocutor. The first pause lasts for 0.6 seconds before she responds. During this pause he points down four times toward four different points on the table (see Figure 3), a metaphorical gesture indicating a quantity of objects placed besides each other. This gesture thus bridges the gap between the components (and simultaneously marks the turn as not yet complete). During the pause, he waits for a response before continuing with the next part of the explanation. He can thus be seen to invite a response before continuing. After the next installment and the self-repair following it (lines 6-7) the client is quicker to produce a continuer, but still the counselor lets the pause extend even further (line 9) before continuing with the projected completion of the utterance. Also here we can observe that there is a metaphorical hand gesture accompanying the verbal utterance. He repeatedly moves a flat hand outwards, one on top of the other, thus indicating a series of 'layers' (see Figure 4). This gesture is held in a frozen position until the recipient has produced the continuer.

　　　When speakers produce extended turns that are not decomposed into installments (for instance in storytelling) the recipients are less expected to provide 'feedback'. Certainly, recipients sometimes do produce continuers after some of the TCUs making up the extended turn. But the storyteller does not make room for such responses, so they tend to overlap with the final components of the TCU or the first part of the next TCU (Goodwin 1986). Thus, the initiative to produce minimal

responses is solely with the interlocutor, and the speaker does not occasion such forms of response. However, the case here is different. The speakers produce extended silences between the TCUs and gazes toward the recipient, thus inviting and eliciting some form of response from the interlocutor. They may thus be considered as signaling that the continuation of the turn is contingent upon acknowledgement of the previous installment. In this way, the interactional establishment of intersubjectivity as an incremental, step-by-step process is provided for by the design of the multi-unit turn as a series of installments.

Displaying varying degrees of understanding

Between the installments, recipients are offered the chance to display to what degree they have heard and understood the previous TCU. In the examples above, such displays have all taken the form of positive acknowledgement tokens, claiming hearing and understanding. However, these points are also places relevant for demonstrating various states of understanding, such as non-understanding, uncertain understanding or even enhanced understanding. We will consider these three cases in turn below.

One opportunity provided by this turn format is detecting understanding problems at an early stage. After each installment, there is the possibility of initiating repair, and the vicinity to the trouble source is a resource for locating and diagnosing the problem. Here is an example from a hospital consultation with a female patient (P) speaking Norwegian as L2. In this extract, also the doctor (D) speaks Norwegian as a second language with a Danish accent. Also present is an L1-speaking medical intern (I). The consultation concerns the possibilities for the woman, who is HIV positive, to become pregnant. In the excerpt, the doctor presents information to her about the risks of contamination of the fetus.

Excerpt (8) Doctor-patient consultation (738: 02:16–02:29)

```
                          [((points to record))
 1 D:  og det er klart jo [la:vere virustall du har,
       and obviously the lower virus-figures you have,
 2       (.)
 3 P:  ja:,
```

```
             yeah
                       [((taps on record))
  4 D:  jo- (.) jo [lavere tror vi risikoen er der >ikke sant.<=
        the- (.) the lower we think the risk is right.
  5 D:  =men den vil alltid være der.
        but it will always be there.
  6      (.)
                                          [((waves finger))
  7 D:  .h fordi hivinfeksjonen den smitter [ikke kun=
           cause the HIV infection it contaminates not just
                 [((holding gesture with both hands))
  8     =under f- [selve fødselen,
        during the labor itself,
  9      (.)
 10 D:  [ d- ]
 11 P:  [<jeg] forstår ikke hva du (sier)>
        I don't understand what you say
 12 I:  hiv- hivinfeksjonen,
        the HIV infection,
 13 P:  ja.
        yeah.
 14 I:  den kan smitte <også i graviditeten.>
        it can contaminate also during the pregnancy.
 15 P:  [ ja ]
        yeah
 16 I:  [ikke] bare under fødsel.
        not just during the labor.
 17 P:  ja.
        yeah.
```

The doctor here divides the information up into installments, leaving short pauses in between (apart from the increment produced in rush-through in line 5). The utterance in line 7-8 is recognizably incomplete in that the syntactic construction 'not just X' projects the continuation 'but also Y', thus constituting a compound TCU (Lerner, 1996). The pause in line 9 thus clearly separates constituents that could otherwise have been produced continuously (cf. Selting, 2000, cited above), leaving room for the interlocutor to display her state of comprehension. In this case, just as the doctor is about to proceed with the next installment (line 10), the patient produces a next turn repair initiator in the form of an explicit display of non-understanding.[5] The repair proper is produced by the intern and not the doctor, perhaps as an orientation to the problem being caused by the doctor's status as an L2 speaker. Interestingly, the repair takes the form of an utterance divided up into even smaller installments. The subject

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[5] Such general claims of non-understanding are rather rare, especially as a first try, cf. Svennevig (2008).

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noun phrase 'the HIV infection' (line 12) is produced in a separate intonation unit with rising intonation. This makes it try-marked, that is, making relevant a response from the interlocutor in the form of a display of recognition (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979). The general point here is that the doctor's practice of dividing his complex information-giving turn into installments allows the patient to signal problems of understanding at an early stage, making it easier for the doctor (and his assistant) to locate the trouble source and analyze the nature of the problem.

When an installment is not responded to by the interlocutor, speakers will not have evidence for whether or not they are being understood. And in some such cases, they orient to a missing response as an indication of a potential understanding problem. This is the case in the following example from a consultation between the same doctor as above and a male patient from South-East Asia. The patient has a long-lasting liver infection and the doctor has repeatedly suggested to take a new biopsy (referred to as a 'liver test' below). After the patient has displayed a misunderstanding of the doctor's suggestion (not shown), the doctor here provides repair by formulating the whole recommendation once more from the start:

Excerpt (9) Doctor-patient consultation (196: 15:26–15:39)
```
1 D:   jeg sier (.) den her- den her [leverprøve du fikk tatt,
        I say        this    this     liver test you took
2 D:                                 [((points to right side))
3      (0.3)
4 P:   ja:, ((nod))
        yes
5 D:   e:: for tre år    siden,
                three years ago
6 P:   ja:, ((nod))
        yes
7 D:   jeg kunne tenke meg å  ta   den ↑en  gang til. nu.
        I   would like      to take it  one more time. now.
8      (0.7)
9 D:   altså   om en må:ned for eksempel.
        that is, in a  month  for instance
10     (0.8)
11 D:  [innen] du reiser.
        before you leave
```

```
12 P:   [ (m) ] ((nods))
13      (.)
14 P:   mm,
15      (0.3)
16 D:   syns du det er en dårlig ide?
        do you think that is a bad idea?
17 D:   eller vil du gerne være med på det,
        or would you like to go along with that
18      (1.2)
19 P:   mm, ((nods))
```

The repair is rather non-specific in that it does not single out a specific word or TCU as problematic, but presents the whole suggestion from the beginning. It is presented in installments, and the patient produces acknowledgements to the first two of them (lines 4 and 6). However, the next installment (line 7) does not generate a response, as we can witness by the 0.7 second pause in line 8. This silence is treated by the doctor as indicating that something is problematic. His self-repair in the following transition space (line 9) specifies what he means by 'now', thus treating the silence as a potential problem of understanding the time reference. This recompletion of the turn is also met by an extended silence, leading him to make yet another transition space repair (line 11) further specifying and contextualizing the time reference (they have previously talked about his forthcoming journey to his country of origin). However, simultaneously with his second increment, the patient does in fact provide a response token (line 12), and after it he provides another (line 14). Only at this point, having now received a claim of understanding, does the doctor proceed to the next step in the treatment recommendation sequence, namely asking whether or not the patient agrees with the suggestion.[6] We can thus observe an orientation by the doctor to getting 'positive evidence' of understanding (rather than just the 'negative evidence' of no repair initiation) before proceeding with the activity in course. This further underlines the function of speaking in installments as promoting displays of understanding (or non-understanding) for each step in a complex information-giving turn.

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[6] The non-standard negative formulation of the question – asking whether the patients disagrees rather than agrees with his suggestion – may display the doctor's interpretation of the patient's unresponsiveness in this and previous sequences as passive resistance (see in-depth analysis in Landmark et al. 2017).

Finally, the response slot following an installment also provides for the opportunity not just to *claim* understanding, but to *demonstrate* the nature of this understanding (Sacks 1992). We find an example in a later part of the pregnancy consultation studied above (excerpt (8)). Here the doctor is repeating information he has been providing previously, and at one point (line 6), he switches to English:

Excerpt (10) Doctor-patient consultation (738: 14:04–14:22)

```
 1 L:   og jo l- (0.8) <la:vere> (0.4) virus er,
        and the l-      lower           the virus,
 2 P:   mja:?
        yeah
 3 L:   jo <la:vere er risikoen.>
        the lower the risk.
 4      (2.0)
 5 N:   mm,
 6 L:   >(so [see)< if virus] low, ((hand downward))
 7 P:        [det er (     )]
               it is
 8      (.)
 9 P:   ye:ah,
10      (.)
11 L:   [risk low.] ((hand beats))
12 P:   [ risk is ] also low. yeah.=
13 L:   ='key. and the lower the risk,
14      (.)
15 P:   the bett[er (  )]
16 L:           [ eh the] lower the virus, the lower the risk.
17 P:   ja[:.   ]
18 L:     [okey?]
```

As the patient does not provide any response within the two-second pause after the installment in line 3, the doctor switches to English and starts repeating the information once more (line 6). The first installment takes the form of a conditional clause, which constitutes the preliminary component of a compound TCU, projecting a specific continuation in the form of a clause expressing the consequence (Lerner 1996). This projection allows the patient not just to produce a continuer, but also to anticipate the continuation by means of a collaborative completion (line 12). The

same happens after the next installment in line 15, although here, the completion is interrupted mid-course by the doctor's self-correction (line 16). The patient thus does not just *claim* understanding and let the speaker proceed, but actively *demonstrates* her understanding of what the doctor has been saying previously by anticipating what he is about to say. In this way, the pauses between the installments also constitute an opportunity space for collaborative completions and thus for demonstrating enhanced states of understanding.

Speaking in installments as a practice for enhancing understanding

In many cases, the practice of speaking in installments occurs after a more compact formulation has failed. In (8) ('HIV infection') above, it is used in the repair proper, after the patient has indicated that she did not understand the previous formulation, which integrated more information in a single TCU. Also in several other examples, the practice occurs after some indication that the interlocutor did not understand a previous utterance. For instance, in (6), the user's question ('I another test in August?') reveals that she had misunderstood the explanation given by the counselor (in excerpt (5)). And the misunderstanding at the end of (6), concerning when the test will be taken, leads to another explanation (using installments) by the counselor (in (7)). And in (9) ('liver test'), there had been several failed attempts to get an answer from the client leading up to this step-by-step proposal.

Taken together, these examples provide strong evidence that when a problem of understanding is manifested in conversation, speaking in installments is used as a possible remedy. The act of dividing information up into smaller components does not change the content of the utterance in itself, so it contributes to understanding mainly by making the constituent parts more salient and accessible to the L2 speakers, thus enhancing their possibilities of identifying the linguistic structure and giving them more time to interpret it.

In several other examples, however, speaking in installments does not occur after manifestations of understanding problems. In (4) and (5), for instance, the counsellor's explanation of the duration of the course occurs after a topic-initial, information-seeking question. In these cases, the practice seems rather to be a pre-emptive strategy, preventing a potential problem from arising. It is more of a

challenge to show empirically that a conversational practice is oriented to preventing a problem that may not arise at all. However, there are some clear indices that make pre-emptive practices identifiable (Svennevig 2010). The first characteristic is that they involve some extra conversational effort that delays the progressivity of the talk. This may be additional verbal material or, as in this case, pausing. The second characteristic is that this additional effort is recognizable as an act of recipient design, that is, an attempt to tailor the utterance to the perceived epistemic status of the recipient. Speaking in installments may thus be considered a pre-emptive strategy in that it delays the progressivity of the talk by inserting intra-turn pauses into an ongoing complex turn. Second, it is recipient designed in that the pauses give additional time for processing the information presented and for displaying potential problems of understanding. Furthermore, it seems to be used more with low-proficiency speakers than with high-proficiency speakers, but this is just based on intuitive assessment and would need further investigations to be ascertained.

Linguistic resources and turn construction

Utterances in conversation are primarily vehicles for social actions and interaction, and grammar provides linguistic resources for constructing actions that are adapted to the real-time, interactional contingencies of the situation. In light of this, the practice of speaking in installments is about coordinating in a stepwise manner the constituent parts of meaningful social actions, not about reducing the 'mean length of utterance' or simplifying syntactic structure as a goal in itself. However, linguistic constructions provide resources for decomposing information into manageable 'packages' and for projecting the continuation of the turn-in-progress. Consequently, it is relevant to describe also what sorts of syntactic constructions are most typically implicated in the realization of installments as practices of turn construction. It is also relevant to discuss the status of installments in relation to the concept of TCUs as a unit in the organization of turn-taking. Thus, I will here present some of the most common constructions involved, starting from the largest units and proceeding to increasingly smaller units.

Some of the installments are full sentences and constitute TCUs in their own right. They may be conjoined sentences as in (6): *but you know you start on a course /*

and they make you take a test. Alternatively, they may be full sentences that are complemented by a prepositional phrase or a subordinate clause in the subsequent component, as in (9): *I would like to take it one more time. now. / that is, in a month for instance / before you leave.* Here the sentence in the first installment is complemented by a prepositional phrase in the second installment, and then a subordinate clause, which is added on as an increment in the third installment. In these examples, the syntactic structure of the first component does not project a continuation, so projection of additional units of the multi-unit turn is purely pragmatic and/or prosodic.

In other cases, the syntactic structure of the initial installment is incomplete and thus projects a continuation. This is the case with clause complexes starting with a subordinate clause, such as a conditional, concessive or temporal adverbial clause. Examples we have considered here are the causal construction found in (7): *in order for you to be placed on the right <u>level</u> / they make you take a test,* and the comparative construction found in (10): *and the lower the virus / the lower the risk.* Also certain lexical constructions project a continuation beyond the sentence boundary. As we have seen in ex. (8), the construction "not just" may in certain contexts project a second, conjoined sentence ("but also"). In these cases, the first part of the construction is not an independent TCU, but merely a preliminary component of a compound TCU. As noted, such constructions are especially apt for projecting not only *that* more is to come, but also *what sort* of terminal component is forthcoming (Lerner, 1996).

Finally, single sentences or clauses may themselves be divided up into smaller parts. Norwegian (and the typologically similar English) do not seem to be as flexible in this respect as Japanese (Iwasaki, 2009, 2011, 2013), but some recurring patterns may be discerned. The most common type is referential installments, which split up the actions of reference and predication into two separate information and intonation units (cf. Clark & Brennan, 1991, cited above). In the data, the most typical syntactic format for accomplishing this is left-dislocation (Geluykens, 1992), whereby a lexical noun phrase is placed in a syntactically autonomous ('detached') position outside of the sentence frame (in the 'pre-front field', Auer, 1996), and then repeated by a pronoun inside the sentence itself. An example is found in ex. (8) above: *the HIV infection, / it can contaminate also during the pregnancy.* When the reference is established as identifiable, the predication is performed in the following sentence, in

which the referent is repeated by a pronoun ('den'- 'it') inside the sentence frame. The noun phrases in these cases cannot represent a possible social action in themselves, and thus do not constitute a (phrasal) TCU, but merely a preliminary component of a more complex TCU in progress. In contrast to compound TCUs, where the preliminary component projects the type of the terminal component, here the preliminary component does not determine unambiguously what sort of TCU is in progress (Auer, 1996).

Research on left-dislocation in English conversation has shown that the construction seems to be specialized for foregrounding known or inferable referents that are not the topical focus at the moment (Keenan & Schieffelin, 1976).[7] It has also been shown that it frequently takes the form of a separate installment. Geluykens (1992) showed that in the London-Lund corpus of spoken English, 52% of the left-dislocated noun phrases were followed by a pause, and 29% were responded to by an acknowledgement of some sort.[8] Thus, he concluded that this syntactic structure seems to be a grammaticalized construction formed by the 'discourse process' of establishing reference as an independent, preliminary action. The current study contributes to understanding the grammaticalization of this construction type by describing one conversational practice (or communicative 'function') that may have motivated its formation.

Conclusion

This study has described a practice for presenting multi-unit turns in installments, facilitating incremental and moment-to-moment coordination of understanding. Complex actions of instructing, informing or explaining are divided up into smaller constituent parts, presented one at a time. What makes this practice different from other multi-unit turns, is that the speaker does not proceed directly from one TCU to another, but leaves a pause after each unit, and thereby creates an opportunity space

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[7] There is very little research on the functional aspects of Norwegian left-dislocation, but the account given in the Norwegian 'reference grammar' (Faarlund, Vannebo & Lie 1997) is in line with what is found about English.
[8] The corpus is audiorecorded only, so the study does not say anything about the occurrence of non-verbal acknowledgements such as nods during the pauses.

for the recipient to produce a response. But since a pause may potentially signal turn completion, other practices are needed to project continuation of the turn. This may be signaled prosodically by slightly rising, 'continuing' intonation, or gesturally by holding or continuing a gesture beyond the completion of each installment. Also pragmatically, the action performed may display incompleteness in that it does not fulfill the sequential projection of a prior turn.

Relative to the previous accounts by Goldberg (1975) and Clark (1996), this study has specified the multi-modal aspects of interaction, especially how gestures contribute to signaling incompleteness of the turn-in-progress, how pauses are used to invite response by the interlocutor, and how gaze is used during such pauses to monitor for displays of understanding. Here, the findings are in line with Iwasaki's (2011) account of collaborative TCU production in Japanese. Furthermore, the study has shown the relevance of this practice for other types of action than instruction-giving, namely informing and explaining.

The primary contribution of the study is, however, to show that speaking in installments in the context of L1/L2 interaction may constitute a pre-emptive practice for preventing problems of understanding. In the cases presented by Goldberg, the challenge addressed by the practice was to retain the content of the turn (the recipe) for simultaneous transcription (or memorization). In the cases presented here, however, the challenge seems rather to be establishing intersubjectivity in face of the threat represented by limited common semiotic resources. This is evidenced by the fact that it is used primarily when threats to intersubjectivity are large, for instance because the addressee has low proficiency in the language spoken. Furthermore, there is evidence in patterns of repair, namely when complex turn constructional units are met by other-initiation of repair. Frequently, such repairs are performed by dividing the TCU up into installments.

In the current study this has been investigated in the context of L1/L2 interaction. It remains to be seen whether the same practice is used in L1 interaction in situations where understanding is at risk, but there are no grounds to suspect that it is not.

In addition to describing a practice of turn design of relevance to the body of research on turn construction and recipient design, the study also makes a contribution to the field of second language acquisition by specifying one way of 'raising accessibility' of talk addressed to L2 speakers. Until now researchers in this field

have been content to note that L1 speakers 'modify their input' to language learners
by speaking in 'shorter utterances' or with 'simpler syntax'. This in itself does not
explain how utterances are made more accessible. The current study shows in detail
how complex actions are split up into more elementary actions, such as reference and
predication, and shorter grammatical units, such as left-dislocated noun phrases,
subordinate clauses and conjoined sentences. Furthermore, it shows the role of
prosody and embodied action in splitting complex utterances up into smaller units,
and thereby making them more accessible to the recipient. In this way, the description
of the practice of speaking in installments may contribute to a better understanding of
how utterances are 'simplified' in L1/L2 interaction. A question for future studies is if
speaking in installments also contributes to facilitating the interlocutor's acquisition
of a second language.

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Appendix: Transcription key for gestures (based on Kendon 2004)

~~~   preparation

***   stroke

-.-   retraction