

Topic Initiation in Conversation-for-Learning: Developmental and Pedagogical Perspectives

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The study examines interactional practices for initiating topic in naturally occurring conversation using Conversation Analysis (Button & Casey, 1984, 1985, 1988-1989 to name a few) as a methodological tool. The data of the current study is comprised of 14 hours of conversation-for-learning (Kasper & Kim, 2015) data between one American graduate student and two Korean adolescent ESL learners. It is longitudinal data where the participants have met every two weeks over the period of nine months. Between the two typical sequential environments where topic shift occurs, the current study focuses on bounded topical movement as opposed to stepwise topical movement. The study first presents a range of practices used to initiate topic at topic-bounding sequential environments as reported in L1 English speaker conversation, including topic initial elicitors, itemized news inquiry and news announcement. Then, the study shows how participants' relative knowledge and estimated right to the knowledge of the news/topic significantly figure in the design of topic initiation. Lastly, the study provides a developmental picture of the focal L2 learner's topic initiating practice along the timeline and concludes with some pedagogical implications.

Key words: topic initiation, topic organization, topic shift

1. INTRODUCTION

People often get to find themselves in a social situation where they have to talk, either in first-time encounters or with some acquaintances. Managing a conversation in English in real life presents a couple of unexpected challenges for English language learners, especially those who learned English in classroom settings. One of those challenges seems to involve finding and launching a mutually orientable topic (Xiao & Petraki, 2007). As Button and Casey (1984, 1985, 1988-1989) observe, beginning a topic is an interactional

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task that requires a mutual cooperation. It is possible that English language learners, though well equipped with vocabulary and grammar, may not be well versed in managing this interactional task in a skillful way. In this paper, I present a range of practices that are used to begin a topic in L1 English conversation, then, examine topic initiating practices in one L2 English learner's conversation collected over the period of nine months.

The database for the current study comes from a series of conversation-for-learning (Kasper & Kim, 2015) meetings that one L2 English learner, Chunggho had with an American tutor over the period of nine months. Chunggho, the focal participant in the current study was staying in the U.S. for one-year sojourn due to his father's visiting professorship. Chunggho's parents arranged a regular conversation meeting with an American tutor to help Chunggho and his brother, Jinho, practice their English.

Initially, the interactional task of beginning a new topic was mostly performed by the L1 speaker. However, the pattern showed a consistent change toward an equal distribution of the work between the conversation partner (Tom) and the L2 English learner (Chunggho). Furthermore, some type of change was discerned in the way the two participants initiated topic as time went by and their relationship has developed. This seemed to have to do with the increased amount of shared knowledge between the two participants since methods for initiating a topic is closely linked to an estimated amount of shared knowledge among participants. As participants develop their relationship, their shared knowledge accumulates, which allows a more variety of methods for topic initiation as well as more efficiency. The current paper presents not only a variety of procedures that were shown to be used for topic initiation, but also sketch a changing nature of the discourse through detailed examination of topic initiation practices. The paper concludes with pedagogical implications for English language learners on a better and more appropriate way of achieving topic initiation in conversation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite it being one of the most complex and thus most recalcitrant-to-analysis phenomena in conversation, research on the domain of topic organization has made some progress over the past three decades (Jefferson, 1978; Button & Casey, 1984; Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984). One of the challenges involved in examining topic organization in naturally occurring conversation is that a distinct beginning of a topic may be difficult to be identified as it is often the case that one topic shades into another without clear boundaries. Sacks (1992) has made a distinction between *stepwise topical movement* where one topic flows into another and *boundaried topical movement* where the closure of one topic is followed by the initiation of a new one. Analysis in this paper is mostly concerned

with the latter. In this section, I will elaborate on sequential organizations of topic beginning where *boundaried* topical movement happens based on Button and Casey (1984, 1985, 1988-1989).

Button and Casey (1988-1989) report three sequence types that may be used for boundaried topic movement: “topic initial elicitor sequences,” “itemized news inquiry,” and “news announcement” sequences. The examples of topic initial elicitors include “what’s new?,” “anything else to report?” Topic initial elicitors are used to elicit events that can be selected as possible topic initials. The use of them might sound like casting around for a topic to stay in conversation. Because of this, topic initials that are provided in response to topic initial elicitors are often presented with downgraded newsworthiness (Button & Casey 1984). As this sequence is designed to generate topic interactionally and mutually, it takes a second part which produces a newsworthy-event-report and the third part that topicalizes the proffered topic initial to launch a topic successfully. Sometimes, however, the interlocutor might produce a negative response that produces a no-news report. In such cases, a topic nomination may be used in a next turn.

Itemized news inquiries and news announcements are the two sequence types for topic nomination. While topic initial elicitors does not specify an item of news to be provided as a topic initial, itemized news inquiry specifies a particular item (Button & Casey, 1985). By doing that, it achieves two things. First, it marks the specified item as newsworthy and second, it displays that the selected event is known about by the recipient. Often, the object of the inquiry is recipient-related events about which the speaker has only partial knowledge. The fact that the enquirer’s knowledge is only partial relative to the recipient’s is often indexed by grammatical resources such as evidentials and question formats. Excerpt (1) provides a good example for this.

(1) April 17 [29-50]

- 29 Y: you wanna be part of the conver [sation?
 30 J: [xxxxx
 31 (2.7) ((sound of taking out foods from plastic bags))
 32 Y: ((sound of tongue clicks, which sounds to be directed to a cat))
 33 (0.6)
 34 T:→ **so did I hear that you guys’re going back to Korea for**
 35 **the summer?**
 36 C: yes
 37 (0.9)
 38 T: the whole family?
 39 C: yeah
 40 (2.6)

- 41 J: huh
 42 (.)
 43 T: an' will you come back (.) next year or is that it?
 44 (0.4)
 45 C: uh (0.7) we're going for good
 46 (0.6)
 47 T: really?
 48 (0.3)
 49 C: yeah I guess I'm just (1.0) uh: (2.4) I don't know (.)
 50 what will happen in the future.

The excerpt occurs at the beginning of the meeting. Tom is initiating a topic by asking an itemized news inquiry. Note that the object of the news inquiry is Chunggho's family's summer plan. By bringing this up using a question format and marking it with a hearsay verb (*hear*), the speaker indicates that he only has partial knowledge of it and the news belongs to the recipient's knowledge domain. One sequential characteristics of itemized news inquiry is that it does more than a request to fill in the gap of knowledge. It invites extended talk on the suggested news item and occasions relevance for telling more than would fill in the knowledge gap (Button & Casey, 1985). This is in contrast to the types of inquiry that is oriented to just filling in a knowledge gap, an example of which is provided as Excerpt (2).

(2) (JG(I)S: X16) (from Button & Casey, 1985)

- A: Hello Hillcrest High School
 B: yes. Is Hillcrest going to open today?
 A: we don't know yet uh Mrs Rodgers just came in an' she's
 goin t tell us (if) we're gonna have (a) school or not.
 B: well this [is
 A:→ [We are going to have a school, ma'am
 B: You are
 A: yes
 B: okay fine cause I'm waiting for the bus service and apparently
 she's a little late too
 A: okay.
 B: Thank you [bye bye.
 A: [(You're welcome).
 A: bye bye.

In Excerpt (2), once the information that satisfies B's inquiry is provided (*We're going to have a school, ma'am*), the sequence is concluded. Even though A provides some material that could be topicalized (*cause I'm waiting for the bus service and apparently she's a little late too*), it is not topicalized which shows that both parties orient to this sequences as a knowledge-gap inquiry initiated one.

The second type of sequence for topic nomination is news announcement. In contrast to itemized news *inquiry*, news announcement is an activity *report*, which is speaker-related. In news announcement, the current speaker reports an activity or event in which he/she is involved and thus has first-hand knowledge. The recipient is oriented to as having some knowledge of it and thus as a possible candidate for hearing the news. News announcement is presented in the way that it delivers only headline news and projects there is more to be told depending on the uptake of the recipient (Button & Casey, 1985). Like itemized news inquiry, news announcement also requires an appropriate response to be successfully launched into a topic. Next turns may or may not topicalize the proffered report. Topicalizing response provides a sequential opportunity for the news announcer to elaborate on the news, thus launching it into a topic.

So far, I have looked at three sequence types used at boundaried topical movement: topic initial elicitors, itemized news inquiry, and news announcement. When topic initial elicitors get no-news report, either itemized news inquiry or returned topic initial elicitors follow to pursue a topic. I have also briefly reviewed how orientation to the speaker's and the recipient's epistemic stance vis-a-vis the news (who has more authority in the knowledge of the news depending on whose news it is) figures in the design of itemized news inquiry and news announcement based on findings from L1 English conversations (Button & Casey, 1984, 1985).

Relevant to the current study is the research on topic management by L2 speakers as the study aims to examine L2 English learners' conversation from a longitudinal perspective. It is only recently that topic management behavior in L2 conversation started to be examined. Based on self-recorded interaction with L1 English speaking peers by L2 speakers of English, Morris-Adams (2014) reports on how non-native speakers of English achieve effective topic transition (what is referred to as stepwise topical movement in this study) as well as topic change (what is equivalent to boundaried topical movement in this study) (Morris-Adams, 2016). However, the data for Morris-Adams (2014, 2016) is neither cross-sectional nor longitudinal. It should be noted that the L2 speakers chose their own friends to complete the course assignment of recording conversation, which may well have influenced the way they managed topic shifts in conversation. Using longitudinal data, Lee and Hellermann (2014) reports on developmental changes seen in one EFL learner's performance in achieving topic shift. König (2013) reports on the developmental change in a German-speaking au-pair girl, Julie's topic management behavior in L2 French: an

abrupt to smooth topic introduction.

Recalcitrant as it may be, topic management skills constitute one of the core skills of communicative competence (Gan, Davidson, & Hamp-Lyons, 2008). As such, it will make a meaningful research endeavor to examine how L2 English learners achieve topic shift in naturally occurring conversations and if there is any developmental change observed along the timeline.

3. METHOD AND DATA

The current study is a longitudinal CA (Conversation Analysis) study that examines one Korean ESL learner's topic initiation practice in his conversation with an L1 English conversation partner over the period of nine months. The data comes from the author's dissertation project in which two Korean adolescent L2 English learners' conversation data was collected throughout their stay in the U.S. over a year. The two boys, Chunggho and Jinho, were fifteen and thirteen years old respectively when they moved to the U.S. due to their father's visiting scholarship. They had basic knowledge of English as they studied English at school in Korea. However, it was their first experience of living outside of Korea. Chunggho's English proficiency was better than Jinho and since Jinho was very shy and did not talk much, it was decided that the current analysis will focused on Chunggho's data. Yumi, who is Korean and thus shares the L1 with the boys, was helping to record the sessions and thus occasionally part of the conversation, particularly at the first four months as it was thought that she could help in case there is communication breakdown.

Data collection started within one month of their arrival to the United States. Chunggho and Jinho's parents hired an L1 English speaker (pseudonym, Tom) as their conversation partner and arranged them to meet every two weeks for an hour just to talk. They have met in various places such as an ice-cream shop, a fast-food restaurant, and someone's house. They did not receive any instructions other than 'just talk and spend time together'. The whole data amounted to fourteen hours of audio conversation, which included thirteen sessions that spans the period of nine months. For more detailed information on data collection, see Appendix. Verbatim transcription was made of the whole data set. Subsequently, relevant portions where bounded topic shift occurs were identified and transcribed according to Jefferson's notation system (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984).

The analysis section consists of two parts. First, I delineate the L1 speaker's topic initiation practices as found in the current data so that the readers can appreciate the variety of topic initiation procedures used in the interaction. Subsequent to that, I present the focal participant, Chunggho's practices for topic initiation, which draws out a developmental picture as well as pedagogical implication. Presenting the L1 speaker's topic initiation

practice allows the reader to have a glimpse of how the general pattern of the conversation changed over time, i.e., how it took more work to find a mutually orientable topic in the first encounter as opposed to the last encounter when parties have accumulated a substantial body of shared knowledge through the past interactional history. The first encounter data shows more interactional work devoted to checking each other's background knowledge than in subsequent sessions. Longitudinal data analysis also shows an overall tendency toward more equal distribution of interactional work of topic initiation among participants.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. L1 Speaker's Initiation

4.1.1. Topic generation work in the first meeting

In their first meeting, most of the topic initiation work was achieved by itemized inquiry issued by Tom. Excerpt (3) and (4) illustrate this case. Tom, Chungho, and Jinho are in an ice cream shop for their first meeting.

(3) Sept 19 [137-147]

| | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| 137 | | (4.0) |
| 138 | T:→ | let's see. (1.9) how do you like Honolulu? |
| 139 | | (0.9) |
| 140 | C: | good |
| 141 | T: | you like here? |
| 142 | | (0.9) |
| 143 | T: | [do you get homesick? |
| 144 | UI: | [xxxxx |
| 145 | | (1.0) |
| 146 | C: | uh [not yet |
| 147 | T: | [no? |

Following a sizable length of pause (line 137), Tom begins his search for a topic, which is indicated by the phrase "let's see" and followed by "how do you like Honolulu?" (line 138). The question is well occasioned for the meeting where Tom meets the two boys for the first time, who arrived in the city just one month ago. Note that Chungho's response provides only a minimal information (line 140), which prompts Tom to seek further

information by offering candidate answers (Pomerantz, 1988) (line 141 and 143).

(4) Sept 19 [584-597]

584 T: u:n
 585 UI: ((coughs))
 586 (1.6)
 587 T:→ so (0.5) uh: 'ts see. **do you have some American foods**
 588 **thet you like to eat?**
 589 (1.3)
 590 T: **[favorite American food?**
 591 C: [u:h
 592 (4.1)
 593 C: not, (1.0) not especially
 594 (0.7)
 595 T: nothing special?=um
 596 C: ((coughing))
 597 T: hm

Excerpt (4) also shows the use of “let’s see” (line 587) before the speaker initiates a topic by asking an itemized inquiry. The phrase displays that speaker is engaged in a search for a topic to nominate. It also marks the talk subsequent to it segmented from the prior talk. Here, the question is repeated (note “favorite American food” in line 590 subsequent to “do you have some American food that you like to eat?”) (Kasper & Ross, 2007).

However, as in Excerpt (3), the answer remained short and does not embrace the proffered topic initial in the way that could develop it into a fully-blown one. As the response does not take up the topic in a way that develops it further, the original speaker repeats the response (line 595) and the local sequence draws to an end (line 597).

In the first meeting, even after a general topic of food has been established, the talk often required more specific inquiries to establish background for the main question as can be seen in Excerpt (5).

(5) Sept 19 [631-649]

631 (3.9)
 632 Y: mwe mwel [cohahay Chungho-? uh go ahead
 what what: ACC like: Q Chungho uh go ahead
what what do you like Chungho? uh go ahead
 633 T: [did you:
 634 T:→ **uh (0.4) d- (0.9) you guys have mcdonalds, in korea?**

- 635 (0.6)
 636 C: yeah
 637 T:→ **a:nd (0.3) have you eaten mcdonalds here?**
 638 (1.2)
 639 T:→ **is there difference? I’k do they se:rve different foods?**
 640 **between the (1.4) [(0.6) Korean Mcdonalds en=**
 641 C: [uh::
 642 T: **=united states Mcdonalds?**
 643 C: the biggest difference is pfrice.
 644 (0.4)
 645 Y: eh hh cheaper [(.) or?
 646 T: [oh yah?
 647 (1.0)
 648 C: American (0.3) m Mcdonald is much (0.5) expensive.
 649 T: much more expensive?

Note that the series of Tom’s questions are designed in a way that the first two are necessary to lead to the third one (line 634, 637 and 639-642). The first two questions in line 634 and 637 establish a ground for asking the third question (line 639-640) by ensuring interlocutor’s access to the assessables (Korean McDonalds vs. American McDonalds).

4.1.2. Topic initiation via checking interlocutor’s knowledge of it

One typical practice for initiating a new topic observed in the current dataset was to ascertain the interlocutor’s access to the topic-to-be-brought-up. The following two sequences present a case where a new topic is initiated by a question that checks interlocutor’s knowledge of the potential topic. (The first one shows a case where the topic is shifted to something else by the lack of interlocutor uptake and the second an instance where the suggested topic is gradually launched into a full-blown topic.)

(6) Nov 21 [1114-1136]

- 1114 J: pyel talun ke epsnuntey
 special different: ATTR thing not exist: CIRCUM
nothing special
 1115 Y: nothing speci: (h)al(h)
 1116 (4.0)

- 1117 T:→ **did you see the ne:w uh:m (0.7) hand held (0.8)**
 1118 **gaming**, (0.3) I think for Nintendo, (0.4) came out, has
 1119 two screens?
 1120 C: ((coughs))
 1121 J: °yah°
 1122 (0.4)
 1123 T: like one, one you can, write o:n, (0.7) 't has a piece
 1124 that you connect your thumb, (0.5) and you can play,
 1125 (1.0) on the b^ottom of it, you can touch it, (0.5) and
 1126 then, (0.4) shows the screen on top too.
 1127 (0.9)
 1128 T: [it's like almost two hundred dollar[s
 1129 C: [hha:=
 1130 Y: =heh=
 1131 T: =heh heh
 1132 C: I saw a commercial.
 1133 (1.0)
 1134 T: yeah my roommate (0.7) he uh [(1.2) my roommate (0.3) spends=
 1135 C: [hhe
 1136 T: = money like it's, (0.4) y' know nothing

Prior to the sequence in excerpt (6), Yumi has asked how Jinho's school was going and Jinho responded with no-news report in line 1114, thus curtailing a topic initiating move. After 4 seconds pause (line 1116), now Tom is making an attempt at initiating a topic by directing a question to Jinho about a newly released gaming device. Tom's topic initiation turn is formed up as a question that checks the interlocutor's knowledge of the target item. Jinho provides only a minimal response (line 1121). Given its sequential position as a topic initiating move, Jinho's response is minimal at best. However, Tom goes on to provide a more elaborate description of the gaming device (line 1123-1126). Finally, his comment on the price of the gadget elicits more substantial response, laughter, from Chungho and Yumi (line 1129 and 1130) followed by Chungho's comment, revelation of how much he knows about it (*I saw a commercial*) (line 1132). The lack of uptake from Jinho and the fact that the comment on its price elicited more substantial response, make the topical talk develop to a slightly different direction – how Tom's roommate spends money like nothing.

Excerpt (7) presents another case where a knowledge check question is used to initiate a topic.

(7) May 8 [978-992]

- 978 Y: so when is your father's birthday?
 979 (2.4)
 980 C: it's (.) October
 981 (20.2)
 982 T:→ **do you guys know about star wars?**
 983 (1.0)
 984 C: yeah
 985 T: did you see all the other ones?
 986 (0.5)
 987 J: no
 988 T: the old ones from the nineteen eighties?
 989 (1.5)
 990 C: no (0.6) actually, my first star wars mo: (0.3) movie
 991 wa:s (2.1) nineteen ninety: (.) of (.) the lak*e nineteen
 992 nineties

As the previous topic of Jinho's family having forgotten Jinho's birthday exhausted itself, 20 seconds of long lapse ensues (line 981). Tom brings up a new topic, the movie, *Star Wars* (line 982). Note that his turn is formed up as a question that checks the interlocutor's knowledge of the movie. Though minimal, Chungho's response claims his access to it, which allows the original speaker to ask a further inquiry that checks the recipient's knowledge of it at a more fine-grained level (line 985 and 988). These two questions serve to finally launch the topic as Chungho provides a substantially more than minimal response (line 990-992).

4.1.3. Topic initial elicitors

Another frequently found practice used to generate a topic is topic initial elicitors. By issuing topic initial elicitors, speaker provides an opportunity for the interlocutor to bring up any newsworthy report in his life. As Button and Casey (1984) observe, topic initial elicitor appears in the following three sequential environments: following closing components, following opening components, and following topic bounding turns. Excerpt (8) presents an example of the use of topic initial elicitor following topic-bounding turns.

(8) Feb 13 [402-427]

- 402 T: yeah (0.5) they say that (.) they had to tell him to slow
 403 down, for the cameras (0.3) becuz he wz moving too fast.
 404 (1.1) **it's crazy**. hhe

- 405 (1.7)
 406 T: **so cool**
 407 (3.8)
 408 T: °um°
 409 (7.6)
 410 T: °u:m°
 411 (1.2)
 412 T:→ **what else is new?**
 413 (1.4)
 414 C: hm
 415 (2.4)
 416 T: **same old same old?**
 417 (3.1)
 418 T: **any stories?**
 419 (3.0)
 420 J: ei
 421 (0.5)
 422 C: mwe, malhaypwa °hal ke issum°
 what speak: try do thing exist: if
say it if you have something to say
 423 (5.1)
 424 T: [((throat clear))
 425 C: [I don't remember the exact day. (0.4) but (1.4) uh (1.6)
 426 we and my parents went to (0.6) Borders bookstore, (1.4)
 427 uh next to Ward theater, (2.5) and

As the previous talk on Jet Lee and Chinese martial arts draws to an end with Tom's second assessment in line 406 (*so cool*), Tom elicits a new topic from the interlocutors by employing a topic initial elicitor in line 412 (*what else is new?*). After two more elicitors, *same old same old?* *any stories?* in line 416 and 418, Jinho makes a vocalization, which is interpreted by Chungho as an attempt to hold a turn (note Chungho's turn in line 422). However, Jinho does not provide further talk and it is Chungho who responds to the topic initial elicitor by providing an update on what they did since the last time they had met (line 425-427).

When topic initial elicitors are responded with no news report, one way to pursue a topic is through itemized news inquiry (Button & Casey, 1984, 1985). The absence of the news report in response to topic initial elicitors occasion itemized news inquiry as can be seen in Excerpt (9).

(9) Dec 5 [49-71]

- 49 Y: break fast hh
 50 (12.9) ((sound of munching chips, and Hawaiian music))
 51 T: um
 52 (2.8)
 53 T:→ **so how are things?**
 54 (1.7)
 55 T: **life's good?**
 56 (3.8)
 57 J: °u:m°
 58 (2.0)
 59 T:→ **you guys're excited about (0.3) the holiday?**
 60 (1.9)
 61 C: hm? (0.9) excuse me
 62 (0.3)
 63 T: (this n-)¿ (1.4) .pt thi uh: (0.4) **Christmas holiday,**
 64 **(0.4) you made special pla:ns?**
 65 (1.0)
 66 C: I don't ha:ve, (.) but (0.4) m- maybe (1.0) my relatives
 67 will come to Hawaii
 68 T: **oh^ cool**
 69 C: so (2.0)
 70 T: whe:n the relatives come, do they all stay in your house
 71 or d'they stay in hotels?

As the previous topic winds down (lines 49-50), Tom provides a topic initial elicitor with a personal state inquiry (line 53). As the first question does not elicit any report of newsworthy event, Tom casts another topic initial elicitor (*life's good?*) in line 55. As the second elicitor does not elicit any substantial report either, an itemized news inquiry, “you guys're excited about the holidays?” (Note the seasonal relevance of the topic in terms of the time when the meeting is taking place) is employed (line 59). Responded with other initiation of repair (line 61), the speaker of the itemized news inquiry clarifies “the holiday” to “Christmas holiday” and specifies the inquiry even further (“you made special plans?”), which successfully launches a new topic by eliciting topic initial from Chungho (line 66-67). In response to this, Tom provides a change-of-state token (Heritage, 1984) plus an assessment and then aligns himself as a listener to the talk by asking a related question. The excerpt shows the sequential use of topic initial elicitor followed by an itemized news inquiry when the former does not elicit any news report.

Sometimes the boundary between topic initial elicitors and itemized news inquiry can be a bit blurry as in the form of “how’s school going?” Although this inquiry would fall on the category of itemized news inquiry according to Button and Casey (1984, 1985), it is also similar to topic initial elicitor in that “school” for students is too broad an area to be regarded as a specific topic. Thus, “how’s school?” shares some sequential functions with an open topic initial elicitor. Excerpt (10) shows the use of this broad itemized news inquiry to elicit topic from interlocutors.

(10) Oct 17 [371-389]

- 371 Y: maybe black sand has something to do with the volcano, I
 372 think
 373 C: yes
 374 (1.1)
 375 T: (°kind of rough°)
 376 (4.7)
 377 Y: m::
 378 (1.8)
 379 **T:→ so its been a couple of weeks. how’s, how’s school going?**
 380 (0.7)
 381 C: m (1.0) °m not° not bad
 382 (0.3)
 383 T: not bad? not great?
 384 (0.3)
 385 C: uh e- actually (0.8) its (0.3) very (1.8) um (0.9) uh its
 386 (1.9) not like Korea. (0.7) Korean is (0.8) too hard
 387 (0.7)
 388 Y: hhhe[:
 389 T: [so that’s a good thing eh heh heh heh heh

As the previous topic of black sand beach in Big Island comes to a close, Tom elicits a new topic from Chunggho and Jinho through the recipient-related-activity inquiry, “how’s school going?” Initially, it elicits a minimal response from Chunggho (line 381). However, Tom’s second question with a playful note (line 383) seems to serve effectively to elicit more elaborate answer from Chunggho (line 385-386), i.e., his summary assessment of school life in comparison to that of Korean school. The topic of comparison between Korean schools and schools in America continues for some time.

4.1.4. Offering what I know: Fishing device

Another way found to launch a topic is to offer the speaker's partial knowledge about the recipient's news. The speaker offers his partial knowledge about the recipient-related activity/event as a fishing device (Pomerantz, 1980) to invite more talk from the recipients. Excerpt (11) occurs in the beginning of the meeting. Tom, Chunggo, Jinho, and Yumi just sat down with their drinks and food at the table in a fast food restaurant.

(11) Nov 7 [10-37]

- 10 Y: uh:: [masisse?
uh:: tasty:POL
do you like it?
- 11 UI: [xxxx
- 12 C: a xxxx
- 13 Y: eh heh
- 14 (0.7)
- 15 T:→ **I saw you at walmart (0.5) this weekend (0.7) e:h**
16 last week
17 (1.7)
- 18 T: you: and two other boys
- 19 Y: he: goes aro(h)und a:ll(h) everywhe(h)re
20 (1.6)
- 21 J: encey yo?
when be: POL
when was it?
22 (0.7)
- 23 Y: last weekend? or [this weekend
- 24 T: [e:r THISWEEK [sometime
- 25 J: [e- (0.7)
26 eti[se?
where: LOC
where?
- 27 T: [one night [this week
- 28 Y: [walmart
29 (0.6)
- 30 T: [at walmart. yeah
- 31 J: [ah yey walmart ey camkkan
ah yeah walmart DIR briefly

- ah yeah (I was) at Walmart briefly*
- 32 T: yeah [I saw
 33 J: [ku ttay mawusu:, sako:
 that time mouse buy: and
 at that time, (I was) buying a mouse
- 34 Y: a:::
 35 (1.0)
 36 Y: he was buying a, like uh mouse? for computer?=
 37 T: =ah:: okay

Tom's announcement that he saw Jinho the past weekend at Walmart (line15) elicits from Jinho a question that asks when (line 21) and where it was (line 26). Although when and where was specified in Tom's original announcement (at Walmart last week), Jinho pursues that information. It is not clear whether it is because Jinho did not fully understand Tom's original announcement (considering that his English proficiency was still low at the time of recording and often relied on Yumi's translation in the meeting) or he wanted a more specific information, e.g. Friday night. Although Jinho's response was delivered in Korean, Tom's initial announcement of his partial knowledge about Jinho successfully elicits some talk from Jinho (*I was buying a mouse at that time*).

This practice of offering partial knowledge about the interlocutor's event or activity has been described as a fishing device (Pomerantz, 1980)¹. It taps into interactional dynamics of epistemic stance among participants. By reporting his partial knowledge on the recipient's event or activity, to which the recipient has more direct access and thus better knowledge (Type 1 knowable) (Pomerantz, 1980), the speaker indirectly seeks information and launches a new topic. A similar example is provided in Excerpt (12). The previous topic, a cartoon character *South Park* is about to be closed (line 301-201).

(12) Feb 27 [301-316]

- 301 T: yeap it's very violent (1.1) uhm (0.7) but yeah I've seen
 302 those (0.8) °those things are kind of funny°
 303 (0.8)
 304 C: hana te meke
 one more eat: IND
 you can have one more
 305 (3.4)
 306 T:→ **jinho you're- (.) got some sun recently.**

¹ This is different from news announcement as described by Button and Casey (1985).

- 307 (1.2)
 308 T: **your skin looks darker. heh heh (0.7) you're playing**
 309 **outside? (0.9) to- at the beach?**
 310 (0.5)
 311 J: no (1.9) uh I'm just playing basketball
 312 T: **o^kay (0.6) izat near by your house?**
 313 (1.5)
 314 T: um
 315 (0.5)
 316 T: **can you dunk?**

As the talk about a cartoon character, *South Park* winds down (line 301 and 302), Tom makes a comment on Jinho's appearance, more specifically, his skin (line 306). With no immediate uptake from Jinho, one more noticing comment on Jinho's skin color is provided by Tom (line 308), followed by a candidate answer (Pomerantz, 1988) ("you're playing outside? (0.9) to- at the beach?"). Pomerantz (1988) describes the practice of incorporating a candidate answer in a query as an information seeking strategy. Tom's question is designed in orientation to creating sequential conditions for receiving extended talk (Button & Casey, 1985). Although Jinho does not volunteer to offer an extended talk regarding that question, at least he provides a topic initial by reporting what he was doing recently, *basketball*, which is taken up as a topic by Tom in subsequent sequential development (line 316).

One of the key aspects of the practice of offering what I know to elicit information lies in its design feature. The information should be presented in such a way that shows that "speakers have some access to, and knowledge of, the proposed newsworthy item, but ... [the speaker's] knowledge is only partial relative to the recipient's" (Button & Casey, 1985, p. 7). As has been discussed in the literature review section, a few grammatical features including evidentiality markers and question forms are employed as useful resources for marking one's epistemic stance relatively downgraded.

So far, we have seen the case where topic is generated by Tom's eliciting efforts such as topic initial elicitors or itemized inquiries or offering partial knowledge about recipients. In the second half of the paper, I will examine cases where Chungho, the L2 English learner initiates topic. The examples present a bit of developmental picture, beginning from a rather abrupt topic initiation toward more diversity.

4.2. L2 English Learner

In this section, I will examine topic initiating practices employed by Chungho along the

timeline. Though not quite linear, tracking Chungho's contribution to topic initiation along the timeline enabled to highlight a few developmental features.

4.2.1. Abrupt topic shift

Chungho's early performance of topic initiation/shift shows some rough details. In Excerpt (13), Tom is talking about how the current look of modernized Forbidden City in China is completely different from what it was before. As an example of that, he mentions that there is a *Starbucks* in the middle of Forbidden City.

(13) Oct 17 [803-832]

- 803 T: thuh, but now you know (0.7) things er changing, (0.4)
 804 the world is uh becoming (1.5) uh modernized en (0.5) if
 805 you go to the middle of the forbidden city, there's
 806 Starbucks
 807 Y: oh[:
 808 T: [so you c'n get you(h)r coffee(h)][heh heh heh heh heh
 809 Y: [heh heh heh heh heh
 810 T: it's gotta funny
 811 Y: heh heh [hh heh heh
 812→ C: **[ah- I want to know (0.4) u:h how mu:ch money**
 813 **(1.3) um do: people have to spend (.) to: (0.8) open a**
 814 **star bur- star bucks (0.7) the booth, (0.6) u- star bucks**
 815 coffee shop.
 816 (1.2)
 817 T: I don't know. I think it's a franchi:se. (0.5) so I think,
 818 (0.9) uhm (1.2) I- I mean I really don't know too much
 819 about it, but I imagine (1.3) it's u:h you need some
 820 starting money, but then, (0.4) you just pay whoever
 821 helps you (0.6) for a while, eventually you can, (0.4)
 822 take it over. (0.5) is this what you wanna do?
 823 (0.7)
 824 C: n- no
 825 T: heh n(h)o? why you ask?
 826 (2.1)
 827 C: my mother asks [(0.3) to me.
 828 T: [u::↑m
 829 (1.3)

- 830 C: u- suthapeksu hanun tey elmana tununyako
 831 u- Starbucks do: ATTR NOMN how much cost:Q:QUQT
 832 C: *how much does it cost to open a Starbucks*

Tom's telling that there is a Starbucks in the middle of Forbidden City is received as a news by Yumi as indicated by her change-of-state token (Heritage, 1984) (line 807). After the laughter of Tom and Yumi, Tom provides a brief assessment of the situation, "it's gotta funny" (line 8). Yumi's laughter continues and in overlap with her laughter, Chunggho initiates a question (line 10), a related, but disjunctive topic, apparently touched off by Tom's mention of Starbucks. The way that this topic shift is initiated by Chunggho deserves more detailed examination. Although it is often found that parties in conversation initiate an abrupt topic shift, (particularly prompted by environmental contingencies), mostly, in such sequential environments, the turn that initiates such a shift is prefaced with a "disjunct marker" (Jefferson, 1978) or formatted in a way that shows other-attentive orientation (Jefferson, 1984) as can be seen in the following examples.

(14) Jefferson (1978, p. 220)

- Roger: the cops don't do that, don't gimme that shit I live in the valley.
 (0.5)
 Ken: the cops, over the hill. there's a place up in Mullholland where they've-
 where they're building those
 hous [ing projects]
 Roger:→ [oh have you ever taken them **Mullhollan**' time trials? .hh you go up
 there wid a girl. a buncha guys'r up there an' [story]

(15) Jefferson (1978, p.221)

- Ellen: tuh relax er during this last illness, on top a' the antibiotics,
 (1.0)
 Ben: w- well on top a'thee, cough medicine.
 Ellen:→ yeah, and the cough medici- **incidentally. did I tell you?**
 Ben: no.
 Ellen: that the d- he told us t'give uh Snookie a third of a teaspoon of uh:: cough
 medicine. Cheracol, is there a- is there a cou[gh me[dicine call' Cherac'l=
 Bill: [yeah
 Ben: [yeah,
 Ellen: =.hhh we happen'tuh have Vic's Forty Four . . .

In Excerpt (14), the topic shift is marked by the disjunct marker, “oh”²(Jefferson, 1978) and the next Turn Construction Unit (henceforth TCU) is formatted in a question form that asks interlocutor’s experience of it. Similarly, in Excerpt (15), the abrupt change is marked with the disjunct marker, ‘incidentally’ and the following question is formatted in such a way that serves to negotiate a story entry via checking recipient’s knowledge of it.

In Excerpt (13), the way that Chunggho’s turn was formatted comes across as quite an abrupt shift without marking it as such, (e.g. with such a phrase like “by the way” or “speaking of Starbucks,” or “I have a question about that”). Furthermore, it is formatted in a self-attentive way (*I want to know how much ..*). Tom answers the question, which is followed by his pursuit of the relevance of Chunggho’s question. He pursues the relevance first by offering a candidate reason that he came up with (line 822), and in the face of a negative answer, pursues it further by a wh-question (line 825), which finally elicited an account from Chunggho that his mom wanted to know.

4.2.2. Comparison for pedagogical suggestion

For a pedagogical benefit, this sequence can be compared to Excerpt (16), where Tom is initiating a potentially topic shading question. Prior to Excerpt (16), Tom asked Chunggho whether he saw a movie, “Fast and Furious,” to which Chunggho responded that he could not see it because of the exam despite his desire to do so. The transcript begins where Chunggho provides an account for why he could not see the movie in Korean.

(16) Sept 19 [232-250]

- 232 C: sihem kikan iesseyo.
exam period be:ANT:POL
(it was on during) my final exam.
- 233 Y: ah::
- 234 (1.6)
- 235 Y: cuz w’en it was on, you know, (0.5) while he was having a,
236 like uh final exa:m, [so he couldn’t really see it.
- 237 T: [ah::
- 238 (3.0)
- 239 Y: yeah Korean students are really (0.3) under a heavy

² “Oh” is most frequently referred to as a change-of-state token (Heritage, 1984), but precisely by this function of marking change-of-state, it displays a change-of-state in speaker’s mind and an orientation to it. Thus, it indicates that what follows “oh” shows an orientation to that change-of-state rather than the preceding sequential environment. It is in this sense that “oh” is disjunct marker.

- 240 pressure xxxx like uh school gra:des=
 241 T: =yeah **ah ha-** >**that's, I have a question**< **about that.** now
 242 do you guys think school: here is a lot easier, than it
 243 was in Korea?
 244 (2.2)
 245 C: m
 246 (6.0)
 247 C: I canno:t (1.8) make a (0.3) definition (0.3) about it,
 248 but (1.8) I'm in (0.4) ee es el course
 249 T: um
 250 C: so (0.9) it is not very hard to me (1.0) but I heard that

In lines 235 and 236, Yumi is translating Chungho's account for not being able to see that movie. Following three seconds pause, Yumi provides a post-completion comment on Korean education system in general (line 239-240). This seems to trigger a question from Tom, which is delivered in latch with Yumi's preceding turn (line 241). The way that Tom's question is initiated is of interest. The first TCU, "yeah," which is delivered with an emphatic tone, displays that Yumi's turn touched off something that he wanted to bring up. Then, "ah ha-" which seems to be the first two syllable of "I have," gets cut off and self-repaired into a different form "that's." This is again dropped and finally, the full sentence of "I have a question about that" is delivered. Note that this is a pre before he delivers the main question, "now do you guys think school here is a lot easier than it was in Korea?" Tom's potentially topic shading question is marked with a pre, "I have a question about that," which makes a topical movement more smooth especially when the question was only tangentially relevant to the preceding talk. This is in contrast to the way Chungho raised his question in Excerpt (13).

4.2.3. Chungho's orientation to Tom's topic search: Volunteering topic at sequentially comparable environments

Among the instances where Chungho provides a topic initial, some of them provide evidence in favor of Chungho's developing interactional competence (Young, 2011). Consider the following excerpt in comparison to excerpt (3) and (4) where Tom's search for a topic is displayed by the phrase, "let's see," which in turn is followed by topic-nominating question. Note that the two sequences presented above come from the first meeting that took place in September and the following one comes from the meeting two months later than that, in November.

(17) Nov 7 [426-456]

- 426 T: [not usually. I mean sometimes they do: (0.3) an', >I
 427 mean< I know my sister en brother and I did. (0.5) but
 428 (2.0) 't just seems almost like, (0.3) °uh-° an
 429 interaction between the kids that I'm (0.7) thet's almost
 430 like a way they talk to each other. they just (.) see
 431 each other, wack. en the- (0.6) °um° (0.9) I didn't know
 432 if that was just those ki:ds or [that was a common thing=
 433 Y: [u::m
 434 T: =[for
 435 Y: [u::m
 436 (5.0) ((Jinho comes back from the restroom))
 437 T: did you find it okay?
 438 (4.5)
 439 T: °okay°
 440 (1.9)
 441 T: hm (.) **let's see:**
 442 C:→ **actually** (3.8)
 443 Y: busy with eating an' talk(h)ing
 444 T: m hmh
 445 (0.6)
 446 C: **there was u stairways in ma- in my house in Korea, (0.8)**
 447 **so (1.7) we fought every d(hh)ay**
 448 (1.2)
 449 T: waz[at?
 450 Y: [ther- the[re was what? (.) stairway?
 451 C: [we fought
 452 (1.0)
 453 T: there's uh stair way? (.) [in your house? and=
 454 C: [yes
 455 T: =(0.3) so why did you fight?
 456 C: we chased everywhe(h)re

Tom's story of the three kids that he was tutoring who hit each other so much so that he finds a bit strange, trails off with Jinho coming back from the restroom. (line 431, 432, 434). Apart from Yumi's acknowledgement token in line 433 and 435, as no substantial uptake ensues (line 436), it seems that the sequence has been brought to closure. Tom directs a brief question to Jinho, who just came back from the restroom (line 437) and with

his “okay” in line 439, this brief sequence is also wrapped up. In line 441, as is demonstrated by “hm (.) let’s see:,” Tom seems to be in search for a new topic. In response to this, Chungho launches his turn with “actually,” thereby holding the floor, but his following TCU does not come forth immediately. This is oriented to by Yumi who provides an account for Chungho’s delayed subsequent TCU (line 443). Finally, Chungho restarts his turn (line 446 and 447) that turns out to be an extension of the prior talk (*hitting among siblings*). Although Chungho’s initiation of the story about the fight between him and his brother is not a new topic, but a sort of a second story to what Tom was talking about, Chungho’s volunteering of that story at this sequential point (where Tom is demonstrably oriented to topic search) shows that Chungho starts to share the interactional work of generating a topic, or “things to talk about,” which in turn evidences his increased sequential understanding and contribution to interaction. On the other hand, the topical link to the prior talk of fighting siblings is not made very clear initially, as indicated by repeated repair initiation from Tom (449) and Yumi (450) and again by Tom’s question (line 453 and 455) that shows an attempt to make connections between separate components of the talk (*stairway, fight*).

4.2.4. Chungho’s volunteering of topic: Offering one’s observation about an immediate surrounding

In the next meeting (the fourth one), Chungho shows a more casual offering of his observation about the immediate surroundings, which is taken up by Tom as a potential topic initial. In Excerpt (18), a cat named Simba is present in addition to four participants (Chungho, Jinho, Yumi and Tom).

(18) Nov 21 [233-256]

- 233 Y: did you live in the suburb area? or:
 234 T: uh:m >not- I mean,< we lived, (1.2) °uh° (0.5) I guess
 235 right outsi:de of Washington dee cee, so, (.) you would
 236 still (0.3) be in the city if you wanted to be, but (1.5)
 237 Y: mh hmh heh
 238 T: not necessa(h)ri(hh)[ly °hh heh hh heh heh heh°
 239 Y: [hm hh heh
 240 C:→ hm (0.4) **when I see him here, it, it looks like uh**
 241 **sumarine.**
 242 (0.4)
 243 T: eh heh .hh really?
 244 (0.6)

- 245 Y: looks like what?
 246 C: s:ubmarine (.) um camswuham
 247 (2.2)
 248 Y: simba?
 249 C: yeah
 250 (0.7)
 251 Y: submari:ne? heh
 252 T: eh heh heh
 253 Y: you've [got another nickname
 254 T: [be[cuz of the heh heh the scope heh=
 255 C: [becos of the tail
 256 Y: =hah hah hah submari:ne hmh

Prior to the talk presented in excerpt (18), Tom was talking about the pets he had had when he was growing up. Yumi asks a tangential question (line 233) and Tom's response ensues (line 234-236). With accompanying laughter, the sequence comes to closure (lines 238 and 239). It is at this point that Chunggho offers his observation that the cat looks like a submarine, to which Tom aligns himself as a listener by saying "eh heh .hh really?" (line 243). Chunggho's turn is topicalized again with Yumi's repair initiation (line 245).

4.2.5. Chunggho's topic initiation using itemized news inquiry

With topic initial elicitors, the speaker invites the recipient to propose a topic whereas with itemized news inquiries or news announcement, the speaker himself proposes a topic, which may or may not be embraced by the recipient. Between itemized news inquiry and news announcement, itemized news inquiry often inquires into a recipient-related activity or circumstances whereas news announcement often provides a report of the speaker-related activity (Button & Casey, 1985). Chunggho's contribution to topic beginning does not show any use of topic initial elicitors, which probably has to do with the discourse roles that Chunggho and Tom are respectively assuming for themselves. Itemized news inquiry issued by Chunggho that concerns Tom's business and activity was also rarely found.

The first instance where Chunggho provided an itemized news inquiry directed to Tom is found in the February 27 (ninth) session. Although from time to time, Chunggho volunteered to provide a topic either in response to Tom's topic initial eliciting move or by offering his observations about immediate surroundings as shown above, it never happened that he directed an itemized news inquiry to Tom before this.

(19) Feb 27 [444-469]

- 444 C: m about one mini one minute, (0.8) one minute (0.5) ('ll
 445 sweat) .hhh
- 446 T: m
 447 (1.2)
- 448 C:→ **um- (0.6) how's your (.) motorcycle?**
 449 (0.3)
- 450 T: finished. (0.3) I'd yesterday was my last day a class. a:nd,
 451 I got uh ninety fi:ve percent (0.3) on like, on the driving
 452 part, (0.7) uh they had us go through a cou:rse, so we had
 453 t' do: (0.5) u:h a tu:rn, we accelerate in the, turn, (.)
 454 t' like come out, (0.5) kind of more quickly, (0.3) they'd
 455 to do fast stop, (0.3) so we're practicing, it was raining
 456 yesterday morning, (0.7) an' (0.5) so they want us to see
 457 what it's like to stop quickly in the rain. an' you sto:p
 458 (.) en the bike was ps::: en slides, so we were (.)
 459 doing'at sliding few times='et was kind of fun. (0.7) uhm
 460 (0.6) ((tongue clicks)) and then, dodging, a car, like if
 461 it was a car, here you have to go fast and then (0.6) get
 462 out of the way real quick, (0.6) so passed all those,
 463 an'then the written test. (1.0) >°so I should get° my
 464 license next week,
 465 (1.0)
- 466 C: **that's good**
 467 (1.0)
- 468 T: I went shopping for bikes today this morning, (0.6) and
 469 went to the military base. (0.7) and I saw: five or six ..

Prior to the talk in the excerpt, Chungho and Tom were talking about Chungho's still-not-fully-thawed-out cheesecake. After Chungho's comment that it will be ready to eat in one minute³, Chungho addresses a news inquiry to Tom concerning his motorcycle lesson (line 448). The question provides Tom an opportunity to tell his latest news about his ongoing activity. For Chungho, the itemized news inquiry not only achieves a transition from the self-attentive talk about his cheesecake to other-attentive topic (Tom's motorcycle lesson), but also puts him in a sequential position where he had not been placed before. As Sacks (Sacks, 1992) pointed out, the question seems to reserve a slot following a due answer. In

³ Due to the low volume, what Chungho is saying in line 444-445 is not clear. It sounded like "it'll sweat." But from the context, it seems that he meant to say something like "it will melt."

line with this, Chungho provides an assessment to Tom's elaborated answer (line 450-464) in line 466. This excerpt provides a critical point in the development of Chungho's interactional competence as it shows the first instance where Chungho elicited a recipient-oriented topic and provided an assessment to the recipient's reporting.

4.2.6. Chungho's topic announcement that reflects the history of interaction among participants

Another development in terms of Chungho's contribution to topic initiation is closely related to the changing relationship among the participants. As their meetings take place over and over again, the way that each of them initiates a new topic shows a substantial change. As they build a relationship to each other, some topic seems to have gained an omni-relevant status that it can be broached at any topic-bounding sequential environments. One of them is cars. The following excerpt presents a case in point.

(20) Mar 13 [265-286]

- 265 C: is it sweet?
 266 (0.9)
 267 T: no (0.3) >there's almost no flavor.<
 268 (5.9) ((sound of chewing rice cake))
 269 C: (clears the throat)
 270 (2.5)
 271 C:→ **so I finally (0.4) heard (1.9) Italian vui twelve sounds**
 272 (2.6)
 273 T: o↑h when you're walking, you- when you're by?
 274 (1.9)
 275 C: m no. (0.7) I mean I went to the (0.4) dealership, but
 276 (4.8) showroom (0.6) was (0.5) just five, but (1.8)
 277 behind the showroom, (0.7) there was a (1.8) place like
 278 parking lot, (1.7) in (1.9) the building, (0.5) back of
 279 the showroom, .hh en [(0.4) there=
 280 T: [°um°
 281 C: =were (0.6) all (0.5) expensive exotic cars, (3.5)
 282 ((sounds of smacking)) audi Hawaii also sells (2.8)
 283 lotus; (0.4) Ferrari, en maseratis
 284 T: hm
 285 (3.1)
 286 T: do they start'em up?

Prior to the sequence presented in excerpt (20), Tom was trying a rice cake and now giving an assessment of it (line 267). Another lengthy lapse ensues as Tom tries a new piece of rice cake (line 268-270). At this point, Chungho initiates a new topic that reports his experience of having heard a particular car engine sound. The way that Chungho launches the news announcement here (line 271) is of interest. First, it is not prefaced with any pre-sequence such as checking interlocutor's knowledge of the target item (e.g., *do you know what Italian V12 is*). Not only it assumes the interlocutor's knowledge of the specific car engine, *Italian V12*, and its value in the world of car buffs, and thus its reportable status, but also displays an orientation to the topic as something that can always be brought up. As the history of their interaction accumulated, the topic of high-end cars established itself as something that can always be relevantly oriented to (Sacks, 1992). Reporting of having heard a particular car engine sound does not make an appropriate topic for everybody. Chungho would not have done it to Yumi neither to Jinho, who is not very much interested in cars. Neither is this kind of practice found in any of the earlier data corpus. The way that Chungho offers the news that he had heard a particular car engine as a new topic indexes their evolving relationship where car talk can be broached without much preface work.

In this section, I have tried to show how Chungho contributed to topic initiation at topic-bounding turns with special focus on developmental tendencies found in Chungho's topic initiation practice.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on Conversation Analysis literature and 14 hours of conversation-for-learning data between L1 and L2 English speakers, I have examined interactional procedures for beginning a new topic in one L2 English learner's conversation. Finding and launching a mutually orientable topic takes collaborative work. One can search for a potential topic initial and also nominate a topic. However, it always takes the other party who would proffer a topic initial or topicalize the proffered topic to launch it successfully. Participants' relative knowledge and estimated right to the knowledge of the news/event significantly figure in the design of topic initiation. One can deliver news announcement, which often belongs to the speaker. One might also initiate a topic by directing an itemized news inquiry, which often addresses the recipient's activity. Indexing his/her epistemic stance appropriately according to his or her relative knowledge of the news/event is an important part of topic initiating strategy. However, mapping this use of grammatical resources onto appropriate marking of one's epistemic stance according to interactional dynamics in topic initiation has not been part of the existing English curriculum. This can be incorporated as part of explicit teaching points in curriculum for English conversation.

The study also presented a developmental picture of one L2 English speaker's topic initiating practice. In the first session, almost no attempt at topic generation was observed from the focal participant. In the second session, Chungho's attempt at initiating a topic shift came across a bit abrupt. In comparison to how L1 speaker performed at a similar sequential environment (initiating a topic shift at a point where the intended question was only tangentially relevant), two features were pointed out: absence of pre (such as "I have a question about that," "speaking of") and formatting the inquiry in self-attentive manner ("*I want to know* uh how much money do people have to spend ..." instead of "*do you know* how much money ..."). This might make some pedagogical implications.

In examining topic initiating practice in interactions with the same participants over time, it was observed that as the interactional history among the participants gets accumulated, participants could deploy a wider range of topic initiating practices. Typically, checking the interlocutor's knowledge of it was found to be a frequent strategy to bring up a new topic. However, as their interactional history got built up, there was less need to establish common background knowledge, and thus, a more casual reporting (or news announcement) was found to be used under less sequential constraint. As participants got to know each other better and build a relationship, some topics gained an omni-relevant status in the relationship (Sacks, 1992). For example, as we have seen in Excerpt (19), the use of "So, finally, I have heard Italian V12 sound" as a very first topic initiating comment reveals that the speaker and the recipients have mutual understanding that both know what *Italian V12* is and the value of it, and thus hearing the (engine) sounds of *Italian V12* is a newsworthy event.

Another strategy for topic initiation that appeared only in the later part of Chungho's data is the use of itemized news inquiry. By bringing up a topic that concerns the recipient's activity using a question form, the speaker provides an opportunity for the recipient to talk and thus achieves other-attentiveness. The use of itemized news inquiry to initiate a topic also indexes increased participation in the conversation.

By providing a close and detailed examination of topic initiating practice in conversation-for-learning arranged between L1 and L2 speakers, the current study illustrates what is involved in launching a mutually orientable topic and presents a range of specific practices for topic initiation. It also suggests a few pedagogical implications by illustrating the usage of grammatical resources to mark appropriate epistemic stance according to the judgement of whose news it is and the interactional function of the current turn (e.g. eliciting information). Finally, the study has presented a developmental picture of one L2 English learner's topic initiation practice along with suggestions on how some of them could have been made more refined.

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APPENDIX

Data Collection Log

| | Date | Place | Participants | Time |
|----|----------|---------------|----------------------------|--------|
| 1 | 09/19/04 | Bubby's | Tom, Chunggho, Jinho, Yumi | 32:57 |
| 2 | 10/17/04 | Volcano Joe | Tom, Chunggho, Jinho, Yumi | 60:19 |
| 3 | 11/07/04 | Zippy's | Tom, Chunggho, Jinho, Yumi | 56:50 |
| 4 | 11/21/04 | G's place | Tom, Chunggho, Jinho, Yumi | 62:30 |
| 5 | 12/05/04 | Zippy's | Tom, Chunggho, Jinho, Yumi | 14:44 |
| 6 | 01/16/05 | Volcano Joe | Tom, Chunggho, Jinho, Yumi | 64:55 |
| 7 | 01/30/05 | Y's place | Tom, Chunggho, Jinho | 54:03 |
| 8 | 02/13/05 | Y's place | Tom, Chunggho, Jinho | 67:48 |
| 9 | 02/27/05 | Y's place | Tom, Chunggho, Jinho | 57:30 |
| 10 | 03/13/05 | Y's place | Tom, Chunggho, Jinho | 64:52 |
| 11 | 04/03/05 | Auto Show | Tom, Chunggho, Yumi | 167:13 |
| 12 | 04/17/05 | G's place | Tom, Chunggho, Jinho, | 59:19 |
| 13 | 05/08/05 | T.G.I. Friday | Tom, Chunggho, Jinho, Yumi | 80:55 |

836 min + 475 sec.= 844 min. (minus 5 sec.)

844/60=14 hr. 3 min 36 sec.

Applicable levels: Tertiary

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