

## Research Article

## Open Access

N. J. Enfield\*

# Other-initiated repair in Lao

**Abstract:** This article describes the interactional patterns and linguistic structures associated with other-initiated repair, as observed in a corpus of video-recorded conversation in the Lao language (a Southwestern Tai language spoken in Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia). The article reports findings specific to the Lao language from the comparative project that is the topic of this special issue. While the scope is general to the overall pattern of other-initiated repair as a set of practices and a system of semiotic resources, special attention is given to (1) the range of repair operations that are elicited by open other-initiators of repair in Lao, especially the subtle changes made when problem turns are repeated, and (2) the use of phrase-final particles—a characteristic feature of Lao grammar—in the marking of both other-initiations of repair and repair solution turns.

**Keywords:** other-initiated repair; final particles; repair operations

DOI 10.2478/opli-2014-0006

Received September 26, 2014; accepted November 6, 2014;

## 1 The Lao language

Dialects of Lao are spoken by approximately 20 million people in Laos, Northeast and Central Thailand, and Ratanakiri Province of northeast Cambodia. For a comprehensive description of the language, and an overview of past literature, see Enfield (2007). The basic word order is SVO, and the structure of the grammar is accordingly 'left-headed' in many respects (i.e., adjective follows noun, possessor follows possessed, etc.). There is no inflectional morphology, and derivational morphology is highly limited. Serial verb constructions are a productive resource for the expression of argument structure distinctions. Sentence-final and phrase-final particles play an important role in distinguishing between different kinds of speech act, marking subtle sub-distinctions within basic sentence types including interrogative, declarative, and imperative. Various reduced forms of demonstratives signal distinctions in information structure of arguments and other clausal constituents. Little research has been done previously on social interaction in Lao, apart from a line of work carried out by the author, much of it summarized in Enfield (2013); of special relevance to this paper, see the overview of questions and responses in Lao conversation in Enfield (2010).

## 2 Data collection and corpus

The corpus on which this work is based was constructed in accordance with a set of guidelines developed by and for the members of the comparative project being reported in this special issue (see introduction for further information). Here are the key properties of the data:

---

**Article note:** Part of a special issue on other-initiated repair across languages, edited by Mark Dingemanse and N. J. Enfield.

---

**\*Corresponding author: N. J. Enfield:** University of Sydney (and Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen), E-mail: nick.enfield@sydney.edu.au

**Table 1:** Key properties of the data collected for this study

- 
- Recordings were made on video.
  - Informed consent was obtained from those who participated.
  - Target behaviour was spontaneous conversation among people who know each other well (family, friends, neighbours, acquaintances), in highly familiar environments (homes, village spaces, work areas).
  - Participants were not responding to any instruction, nor were they given a task—they were simply aware that the researcher was collecting recordings of language usage in everyday life.
  - From multiple interactions that were collected in the larger corpus, the selection for analysis in this study was of a set of 10-minute segments, taken from as many different interactions as possible (allowing that some interactions are sampled more than once), to ensure against any bias from over-representation of particular interactions or speakers.
- 

The Lao data used in this study were sampled from a set of recordings made by the author in Laos between 2000 and 2011. The recordings were all made in rural or semi-rural villages of Vientiane Prefecture, within a radius of approximately 40 kilometres around the capital city Vientiane. 15 interactions were sampled for this study, with between 10 and 20 minutes sampled from each interaction, totalling 3 hours and 25 minutes of conversation.

### 3 Sequential structure and OIR

#### 3.1 Minimal OIR sequence

Example (1) shows the basic three-turn sequence of other-initiated repair, consisting of a *trouble source* turn by Speaker A ('T-1'), an *other initiation of repair* by Speaker B ('T0'), and a subsequent *repair solution* by Speaker A ('T+1'); see Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977), Hayashi, Raymond, and Sidnell (2013), and references therein. The example shows that this basic sequence type is attested in the Lao language (and see the numerous examples throughout the rest of this article):

**Extract 1:** INTCN\_111204q\_37505

- |     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| 1 A | qaaj4-muun2 juu1 han5 vaa3<br>eB-M be.at there QPLR.INFER<br>'So Moun was there?' | T-1 |
| 2 B | haa2<br>INTJ<br>'Huh?'  | T0  |
| 3 A | qaaj4-muun2 juu1 han5 vaa3<br>eB-M be.at there QPLR.INFER<br>'So Moun was there?' | T+1 |

#### 3.2 Non-minimal OIR sequence

Example (2) shows a *non-minimal OIR sequence*, in which a repair solution (in line 3) turns out to be inadequate for solving the problem that the other-initiator of repair in line 2 is oriented to, leading to a second 'round' of other-initiation of repair (in line 4), which elicits a second attempt at providing a repair solution (line 5).

## Extract 2: CONV\_050815g\_06.56

1 A	mòð3 nan4 daj4 pèèt5 sèèn3 bloke DEM.EXT get 8 100,000 'That guy won 800,000 ((in cards)).'	T-1
2 B	mèèn1 phaj3 COP INDEF.HUM 'Who was it?'	T0a
3 A	bakø-lèè5 hanø M.B-L TPC.DIST 'Lèè'	T+1a
4 B	bakø-lèè5 saj3 (baat5 niø) M.B-L where (now) 'Which Lèè? ((lit. Lèè where?))'	T0b
5 A	bakø-lèè5 pèq2 huan2 san4 lèq1 M.B-L adjacent house S FAC.PRF 'Lèè next to San's house.'	T+1b
6 B	bòð1 mèèn1 bak2-lèè5 luuk4 qanø- qanø-nan4 vaa3 NEG COP M.B-L child HES CLF-DEM.EXT QPLR.INFER 'Do you not mean the Lèè who is the child of whats-her-name?' ((Further clarification ensues as to 'Which Lèè' was intended.))	

Notice here that the two other-initiators of repair (lines 2 and then 4) show a relation of increasing specificity. The first one, in Line 2, asks 'Who?' thus leaving the set of possible solutions entirely open to any person reference, in any form—a fitted response could be a name, description, pronoun, pointing gesture, etc. In this case it elicits a name, in the default Lao format of title-plus-personal name (Enfield 2007:173-5 and passim; Enfield 2013:169ff). The second other-initiator of repair treats this solution as inadequate, repeating the name reference exactly, but then asking *which* person of that name, this time significantly narrowing the options for responding.

## 4 Formats for other-initiation of repair

In this section, we survey forms that speakers of Lao use for initiating repair in T0 position. Our interest is not only in the linguistic resources that are used by speakers of Lao for formulating other-initiation of repair, but also the contextual principles for selection of one type of form over another, and the kinds of functional outcomes that each type of form can have (that is, the repair operations that the forms elicit in T+1).

We distinguish the following main types of repair initiator (see introduction to this special issue):

**Table 2:** Some basic format types for other-initiation of repair

---

<b>Open.</b> Open type repair initiators are requests that indicate some problem with the prior talk while leaving open what or where the problem is exactly.
• <i>Interjection.</i> An interjection with questioning intonation.
• <i>Question-word.</i> An item from the larger paradigm of question words in the language. Usually a thing interrogative, sometimes a manner interrogative.
• <i>Formulaic.</i> Expressions not incorporating interjection or question-word, often managing social relations or enacting politeness.
<b>Restricted.</b> Restricted type repair initiators restrict the problem space in various ways by locating or characterising the problem in more detail.
• <i>Request type (asking for specification/clarification).</i> Typically done by content question-words, often in combination with partial repetition.
• <i>Offer type (asking for confirmation).</i> Typically done by a repetition or rephrasing of all or part of T-1.
• <i>Alternative question.</i> Repair initiator that invites a selection from among alternatives.
Within restricted, <i>external</i> repair initiators address problems about unexpressed elements of T-1; this 'external' function can be performed by all of the listed format types for 'restricted'.

---

The following Table shows the relative frequencies of these types in the Lao corpus analysed in this study:

**Table 3:** Types of repair initiators and their frequency in the Lao corpus

Type	Subtype	Frequency (n/207)	Proportion
Open	Interjection	40	19%
	Question-word	2	1%
	Formulaic	0	0%
Restricted	Request (seeking specification)	52	25%
	Offer (seeking confirmation)	113	55%
	Alternative question	0	0%

## 4.1 Open formats

An open form leaves both the scope and the nature of trouble unspecified—thus technically meaning that resulting repair operations in T+1 could be of any and all kinds. Despite this, it seems that the most common response by Speaker A to an open OIR by B in the Lao data is to treat B's OIR as a request for a full repeat. This implies that the problem in A's trouble source turn scoped across the whole turn, and that it was a problem of hearing. But as we shall see, it is usually the case that small adjustments are made when 're-doing' a trouble source turn—that is, the 'full repeat' is seldom an exact repeat, and the tweaks that are done will be seen to deal with quite subtle matters of appropriateness of the original trouble source turn.

### 4.1.1 Interjection strategy

By far the most common strategy for open other-initiation of repair in Lao is the interjection strategy. This involves the interjection *haa2* 'Huh?', or variants thereof. This interjection for open other-initiation of repair in Lao—equivalent to English *Huh?*—is a simple monosyllable consisting of a vowel whose quality varies from case to case, but remains within the non-high and non-back region of the vowel space, with specific instances ranging from [e] to [æ] to [a] to [ə], and also occasionally with a closed-mouth variant [mm] or [hm]. The interjection normally has no segmental onset (though occasionally an onset [h-] can be heard), nor does it have a segmental offset. The pitch contour of the interjection is always rising. See Dingemanse, Torreira, and Enfield (2013) for further details.

In this section, we will mostly concentrate on the *effects* of using *haa2* as an other-initiator of repair—i.e., what kinds of repair operations on the trouble source turn are done in the repair solution turn in T+1. But first a note about the kinds of situations that *lead to* the open form being used. When an addressee has their attention fixed on something other than the speaker when the trouble source turn is produced, it is more likely that they will use an open other-initiator of repair than a restricted one (see Dingemanse et al under review). The following example (3) illustrates this. Figure 1 illustrates the scene at the point at which line 1 of example (3) is uttered: Speaker A is at the right of the image, in a white T-shirt, while Speaker B, her addressee, is peering out into the kitchen of the house to see what is going on there. Figure 2 shows Speaker B directing her attention to Speaker A as she issues the open other-initiator of repair *haa2* 'Huh?', in line 2.

## Extract 3: CONV\_050815c\_03.03

- 1 A jaa1 nang1 don3 dêj2 dee4 T-1 FIGURE 1  
 don't sit long.time FAC.NEWS FAC.INFORM  
 '(Let's) not sit here for long, y'hear.'
- 2 B haa2 TO FIGURE 2  
 INTJ  
 'Huh?'
- 3 A jaa1 nang1 don3 dêj2 dee4 T+1  
 don't sit long.time FAC.NEWS FAC.INFORM  
 '(Let's) not sit here for long, y'hear.'
- 4 (0.2)
- 5 B qaw4 (0.7) khaw3 saw2 lèkaø saw2 nam2 khaw3  
 INTJ 3PL.B cease C.LNK cease with 3PL.B  
 'Well—when they stop ((we'll) stop too.'



Figure 1: (= line 1 of Extract 3).



Figure 2: (= line 2 of Extract 3).

In the remainder of this section, we will concentrate on what happens after *haa2* 'Huh?' is used—i.e., what kind of repair operation is done in response to *haa2* 'Huh?'. Examples (1) and (3), above, with *haa2* 'Huh?' used as the repair initiator in T0, showed the repair solution as a full and exact repeat of the problem turn. In the following case, the solution is a near-exact repeat, in which 'dispensable' elements of T-1 are omitted (Schegloff 2004; cf. the introduction to this special issue)—in this case, the dispensables are two vocatives, one at the beginning and one at the end of the turn:

## Extract 4: CONV\_050815a\_711136

- 1 A nòd̚j4 bòd̚l mii2 sùak4 vaa3 nòd̚j4 T-1  
 N NEG have rope QPLR.INFER N  
 'Noi, don't you have any rope, Noi?'
- 2 B haa2 TO  
 INTJ  
 'Huh?'
- 3 A bòd̚l mii2 sùak4 vaa3 T+1  
 NEG have rope QPLR.INFER  
 'Don't you have any rope?'

In the next example, the repair solution in T+1 omits an element from the trouble source T-1, but what is omitted is not really a dispensable in the sense meant by Schegloff (2004). In this case, the verb *lèn1* ‘run’ in T-1 seems to have been unnecessary for the action being done with this turn—a request for B to go and check on a baby who A thinks may have just woken up—and might conceivably have been a source of confusion (causing B to wonder why do I have to ‘run’?; an obvious reason is that there is some hurry, but it’s not apparent why that would be so in this case). This verb is left off from the otherwise full repeat in the repair solution turn (line 4):

**Extract 5:** INTCN\_111204t\_890215

- 1 A lèn1 paj3 beng1 paj3 T-1  
run go look go  
‘Run and see ((what’s going on)).’
- 2 (0.8)
- 3 B haa2 T0  
INTJ  
‘Huh?’
- 4 A paj3 beng1 paj3 T+1  
go look go  
‘Go and see ((what’s going on)).’
- 5 (0.9)
- 6 C paj3 beng1 duu2 qii1-thòj2 man2 tùn1 laø bòq2  
go look IMP F.B-T 3.B waken PRF QPLR  
‘Go and have a look and see if Thoi has woken up.’

In a similar way, the following example features a repeated expression in the trouble source turn which is reduced to a single form when re-done in T+1:

**Extract 6:**

- 1 A qaw3 vaj4 qaw3 vaj4 T-1  
take put.away take put.away  
‘Put ((them)) away, put ((them)) away.’ ((re bamboo shoots; to someone in kitchen))
- 2 B haa2 T0  
INTJ  
‘Huh?’
- 3 A qaw3 vaj4 T+1  
take put.away  
‘Put ((them)) away.’

Again, for the basic action being done with T-1, the repetition of the basic imperative formulation was not necessary. It may have even contributed to B’s problem of understanding in the first place. If so, this would account for why A omits the repetition in the repair solution turn.

The examples we have just considered have each shown the *omission* of some element that may have contributed to a problem in T-1. By contrast, in the following case, we see the *addition* of something in the repair solution turn, again with the apparent aim of clarifying what had been intended by the trouble source turn. In the following case, there has been discussion of whether B (and his immediate family) is working his own rice fields or not. The implication is that he has taken on hired help to assist with his farming tasks. The problem occurs in Line 1, where A asks *caw4 caang4 vaa3*. This is an unusual formulation for the context because Speaker A omits any surface reference to the object argument of *caang4* ‘to hire’. This is an instance of zero anaphora, suitable for situations in which the referent of the zero form is specific and already known in the discourse. It is equivalent to the use of a pronoun in English (cf. the translation *You’re*

hiring them?). She may have thought this to be appropriate because the people she means to refer to are present in the speech situation, but in fact they have not been referred to so far in the local discourse (i.e., they are already in the context but not yet in the cotext). Her presupposing format in T-1 elicits the open other-initiator of repair *haa2* ‘Huh?’, and is fixed in T+1 by repetition with insertion of the generic nominal *khon2* ‘person/people’ in the object position in line 3, thus evidently clearing up the confusion.

**Extract 7:** INTCN\_111202s\_1682353

- 1 A caw4 caang4 vaa3 T-1  
 2.POL hire QPLR.INFER  
 ‘So you’re hiring ((them to do it))?’
- 2 B haa2 TO  
 INTJ  
 ‘Huh?’
- 3 A caw4 caang4 khon2 vaa3 T+1  
 2.POL hire person QPLR.INFER  
 ‘So you’re hiring people ((to do it))?’
- 4 B caang4 phuak4 nii4 vaa3 (.) caang4 dam3  
 hire group DEM QPLR.INFER hire transplant  
 ‘Hiring these guys you mean? ((pointing)) (I’m) hiring people to transplant the rice (only).’

Another kind of near-repeat with addition of an element in the T+1 move is illustrated in the next case, which arguably shows attention to a possible problem of *preference* (Pomerantz 1984; Pomerantz and Heritage 2012). The repair solution features a small but significant adjustment, namely the polarity of the question is changed in T+1 by the addition of *bòd1* ‘not’:

**Extract 8:** INTCN\_111202s\_839290

- 1 A paj3 naa2-phòk4 vaa3 T-1  
 go N-P QPLR.INFER  
 ‘((You’re)) going to Na Phok ((Village))?’ (0.8)
- 2 (0.8)
- 3 B haa2 TO  
 INTJ  
 ‘Huh?’
- 4 (0.1)
- 5 A bòd1 paj3 naa2-phòk4 vaa3 T+1  
 NEG go N-P QPLR.INFER  
 ‘((You’re)) not going to Na Phok ((Village))?’
- 6 (0.2)
- 7 B bòd1 naa3  
 NEG FAC.EXPLIC  
 ‘No ((of course not)).’

This kind of pattern fits with a general observation that any resistance or delay to answering a question can be interpreted as an attempt to avoid giving a dispreferred or disaffiliative answer. Any such implicit resistance to answering the question (for example a complete lack of response) can result in the question being re-done in such a way as to anticipate the now-implied different stance (Levinson 1983). In (8), the question in the trouble source turn T-1 was first phrased positively. One way to take the other-initiation of

repair in line 3 is as a sign that the speaker has some difficulty responding due to the structurally dispreferred nature of the otherwise correct response. When the trouble source turn is re-done in T+1, Speaker A casts it now as a negative question, arguably in anticipation—inferred from the non-answer response in line 3—of a negative answer. Accordingly, once the question has been rephrased with the opposite polarity in T+1 (line 5) a negative response is quickly produced.

Mostly, the effect of producing an open other-initiator of repair is as we have just seen: Speaker A repeats the original trouble source turn, often with minor adjustments. But occasionally in response to *Huh?* the problem turn is completely reformulated. Here is an example, in which Speaker B has just been talking about her desire to visit a specific village market where she wants to buy the meat of ‘forest animals’ (referring to illegal trade of endangered species, though she doesn’t specify which species). This extract begins when Speaker A responds to this, in line 1:

**Extract 9:** CONV\_050815c\_2129129

- |     |  |     |
|-----|--|-----|
| 1 A | siø thùk5 cap2 naø<br>IRR strike capture TPC.PERIPH<br>'((You)) will get caught.'  | T-1 |
| 2 B | haa2<br>INTJ<br>'Huh?'   | T0  |
| 3 A | khaw3 bòd1 haj5 hêt1<br>3.PL NEG give do<br>'They don't let you do ((that)).'  | T+1 |
| 4   | khaw3 thùk5 cap2 loot4 lèw4, paj3 qaw3 maa2 naø<br>3.PL strike capture NO.ADO PRF go take come TPC.PERIPH<br>'They ((i.e., people)) get caught right away, ((if they)) go and get ((that illegal stuff)).' |     |
| 5 B | vaa3<br>QPLR.INFER<br>'Is that so?'  |     |
| 6 A | qee2<br>INTJ<br>'Yeah.'  |     |

The repaired version in T+1 is a completely new formulation of the problem turn, but in fact the general communicative import of the move has not changed. The re-done move in T+1 has basically the same function (i.e., performs the same action or speech act, here being something akin to a warning) as the first formulation in T-1, here being to give Speaker A a reason why she should not want to go and buy wildlife meat at that market.

To summarize this section, I have used the case of *haa2* ‘Huh?’, the interjection form of open other-initiation of repair in Lao, to illustrate some of the ways in which a ‘full repeat’ is seldom exactly that. When trouble source turns are repeated, it is typical for the repair to also include some changes, however minor.

#### 4.1.2 Question word strategy

The indefinite inanimate pronoun *ñang3* ‘what/something’ is seldom used for open other-initiation of repair, though a variant *qiñang3* ‘what/something’ may be used (note that *qiñang3* is not dedicated to the OIR function, and may be used in the same slots as *ñang3* ‘what/something’ more generally; e.g., in asking ‘You saw *what?*’). The use of either of these forms for open other-initiation of repair is much less frequent than the interjection strategy described in the last section. Here is an example in which *qiñang3* is used in an expanded sequence of open other-initiations of repair. By the way, this example illustrates

the common use of the interrogative particle *kòq2* in combination with ‘WH’ forms in other-initiation of repair; it conveys the sense of English ‘again’ in the translations in lines 2, 4, and 6 of (10)—see also example (11), below. In this case, speaker A has been teased by her aunt (Speaker B) who suggests that A is illiterate. This extract begins with Speaker A asserting that she is in fact literate. The full idiom for ‘knowing how to read’ is *daj4 nangsuù3* ‘to get writing’; here, she omits the object argument *nangsuù3* ‘books, writing’, as it has already been introduced in the discourse. After A asserts this in line 1, her aunt B, in lines 2, 4, and 6, uses forms of other-initiation of repair of increasing weight to push Speaker A to repeat and explicate her claim.

**Extract 10:** INTCN\_111202s\_1409597

1 A	haw2 kaø daj4 dee4 ... 1.FA T.LNK get FAC.ONRCD <i>‘I get it ((i.e., I am literate)), y’hear!’</i>	T-1
2 B	nan5 (.) qiñang3 kòq2 INTJ INDEF Q.PRESUP <i>‘There! What was that again?’</i>	T0
3	(1.2)	
4	qiñang3 kòq2 vaw4 maj1 duu2 INDEF Q.PRESUP say new IMP.PLEAD <i>‘What was that again? Say that again please.’</i>	T0 (re-done)
5	(2.0)	
6	qiñang3 kòq2 khanithaa3 vaw4 maj1 duu2 INDEF Q.PRESUP K say new IMP.PLEAD <i>‘What was that again Khanita? Say that again please.’</i>	T0 (re-done)
7	(0.6)	
8 A	haw2 kaø daj4 dee4 1.FA T.LNK get FAC.ONRCD <i>‘I get it ((i.e., I am literate)), y’hear!’</i>	T+1/T-1
9 B	daj4 ñang3 dèè1 dee4 get INDEF PCL FAC.ONRCD <i>‘Get what?’</i>	T0
10 A	daj4 nangsuù3 hanø get writing TPC.DIST <i>‘Get writing’ ((i.e., I am literate))</i>	T+1

Note here how the re-issuing of the other-initiator of repair—after receiving no response in lines 3 and 5, is each time more specific than the prior one, with extra material added at each step.

The only other ‘WH’ type expression that may be used for open other-initiation of repair in Lao is *qanø-daj3*, meaning ‘which one’. This appears to be a more ‘polite’ form than those we have considered here so far. It is apparently more appropriate in interaction between strangers, and thus it does not occur in the corpus of exclusively informal interaction among intimates that is drawn upon in this paper.<sup>1</sup> I can, however, provide an example from a recording of a commercial transaction in a market place, in which Speaker A, who is shopping for fresh meat, asks the woman at the stall whether this particular cut of meat may be eaten by a woman who has recently given birth (a relevant question, as there are many restrictions on the diet of nursing mothers, especially in the first weeks after birth):

<sup>1</sup> C. H. P. Zuckerman (in personal communication) describes an example of *qanø-daj3* being used in open other-initiation of repair in a near-violent argument on a pétanque court in Luang Prabang. This is not a context for ‘politeness’ but the usage would fit as long as the operative distinction was ‘distance’, a hallmark of both ‘polite’ and ‘impersonal’ (thus, sometimes, rude) talk.

**Extract 11:** MKT\_001118\_05.33

- 1 A qanø-nii4 khon2 qòòk5 luuk4 kin3 daj4 bòð3 T-1  
 thing-this person exit child eat can QPLR  
 ‘This one, can a person eat it who’s ((just)) had a baby?’
- 2 (0.3)
- 3 B qan3-daj3 kòq2 TO  
 thing-INDEF Q.PRESUP  
 ‘What’s that again?’
- 4 A qan3-nii4 khon2 qòòk5 luuk4 kin3 daj4 bòð3 (.) siin4 muu3 T+1  
 thing-this person exit child eat can QPLR meat pig  
 ‘This one, can a person eat it who’s (just) had a baby, (this) pork?’
- 5 B kin3 daj4  
 eat can  
 ‘(Yes, they) can eat (it).’

## 4.2 Restricted formats

As outlined at the beginning of this article, several distinct strategies fall here under the rubric of restricted. We begin with the request subtype (asking for specification/clarification).

### 4.2.1 Request subtype of restricted format

The request type of other-initiation of repair draws directly on the ‘WH’ question system of Lao (Enfield 2010). Repair initiation is clearly one of the important functions of questions (Enfield, Stivers, and Levinson 2010). Table 4 shows the distribution of ‘WH’-formatted restricted other-initiators of repair in terms of the ontological category being questioned, with PERSON being by far the most common, followed by PLACE, THING, and AMOUNT. Note that in ‘WH’ systems more generally, THING well outranks the rest, as shown for instance for Lao in Enfield (2010:2652; cf. Enfield, Stivers, and Levinson 2010; Cysouw 2004; Cysouw 2007). The present study shows that of 50 cases in which a ‘WH’ question was used in formulating a restricted other-initiator of repair, more than half were concerned with problems of person reference, a quarter with place reference, an eighth with things/entities and only 1 case with the problem of ‘how much’:<sup>2</sup>

**Table 4:** Frequencies of request-type restricted repair initiators that feature ‘WH’ words, distinguished by ontological category, in the sample from Lao discussed in this chapter

‘WH’ category	Frequency (n/50)	Proportion
Person	29	58%
Place	12	24%
Thing	8	16%
Amount	1	2%

The indefinite pronoun *ñang3* ‘what/something’ can be used in an other-initiation of repair to signal a problem with the identity of a nominal complement ‘thing’ in a preceding trouble source turn. In Extract 10, above, the final ‘round’ of other-initiation of repair is an instance of this, where the omitted object of ‘get’ is questioned (in this case, in teasing fashion). In another example, the problem source has to do with

<sup>2</sup> This is not a measure of which ‘WH’ word was selected, but of the ontological category being questioned: thus, for example, *bakø-lèè5 saj3* in Example (2) literally means ‘Lèè where?’, but it addresses a problem of person reference (translatable into English as ‘Which Lèè?’), and is thus counted here as having to do with person reference.

the ambiguity of the verb *khòòng2*, which either means ‘wait for’ (if a transitive verb) or ‘be in labour’ (if an intransitive verb). In this case, the verb is used in line 1 with the intended meaning ‘be in labour’, but in line 4—the repair initiation of interest here (thus, ignore lines 2-3 for present purposes)—repair is initiated using *ñang3* ‘what’ as direct object of the verb *khòòng2* repeated from the trouble source turn in line 1. Speaker B thus conveys an understanding that the intended meaning had been ‘wait for’. As it happens, no repair is forthcoming in any subsequent line, as the subject is abruptly changed.

**Extract 12:** CONV\_050815c\_362664

- 1 A taaj3 qanø- qii1-nan4 siø khòòng2 hanø T-1  
INTJ HES F.NONRESP-DEM.EXT IRR wait TPC.EXT  
‘Wow - That girl is going to wait for it/go into labour.’
- 2 B qii1-daj3 T0a  
F.NONRESP-INDEF  
‘Which girl?’
- 3 A qii1-phòòn2 naø T+1a  
F.NONRESP-P TPC.PERIPH  
‘Phone.’
- 4 B khòòng2 ñang3 T0b  
wait INDEF.INAN  
‘Wait for what?’
- 5 ((No response is given; Speaker A abruptly changes topic, announcing that she was making sweets from steamed tuber (*Dioscorea* sp.), and intended to buy sugar; this opens up a new line of conversation.))

Often, the use of *ñang3* can point to a different kind of problem, not inviting clarification of the identity of an argument in the trouble source turn, but rather inviting explanation or expansion of a specific part of what was said in T-1. Here is a case following on immediately from example (4), above:

**Extract 13:** CONV\_050815a\_711136

- 1 A bòò1 mii2 sùak4 vaa3 T-1  
NEG have rope QPLR.INFER  
‘Don’t you have any rope?’
- 2 B sùak4 ñang3 T0  
rope INDEF  
‘Rope ((for)) what?’
- 3 A sùak4 mat1 ñuung2 T+1  
rope tie mosquito  
‘Rope for tying up mosquitoes.’

This example again shows *ñang3* presented not as a stand-alone element but together with an element repeated from the trouble source turn. Because that element—*sùak4* ‘rope’—is not a verb, then *ñang3* is not read as corresponding to a nominal argument, and is interpreted as having the oblique reading ‘for what’.

It is often possible to gloss this function of *ñang3* as ‘why?’. In the following case, Speaker A in line 1 announces that she is going to shift her sitting position by turning to the side. (This is occasioned by the immediately preceding interchange: B was reaching into her bra to find some paper money that she had put there earlier, and A says to her that she should stop doing it, as it is inappropriate in front of the camera; this presumably leads A to reflect on her own demeanor, though A herself is not sitting particularly inappropriately, it is just that her torso is facing the camera directly rather than side-on.) This elicits the

other-initiator of repair in line 2, in which *ñang3* is framed by the repetition of the verb-object phrase *pin1 khaang5* ‘turn (to the) side’ from the trouble source move (again with the result that *ñang3* cannot be understood as the object of the verb, thus perhaps the mechanism by which *ñang3* is taken here to mean ‘why’ rather than ‘what’). The other-initiation of repair here essentially asks *why* Speaker A is saying/doing that. In the repair solution, Speaker A explains that she wants to turn to the side out of embarrassment, meaning that she does not want to be sitting facing the camera, but rather wants her legs to be facing to the side:

**Extract 14:** INTCN\_111204t\_332390

- |     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| 1 A | pin1 khaang5 saø-kòðn1<br>turn side PCL<br><i>‘(I’ll) just turn to the side.’ ((shifts sitting position))</i> | T-1 |
| 2 B | pin1 khaang5 ñang3<br>turn side PCL<br><i>‘Turn to the side (for) what?’</i>                                  | T0  |
| 3 A | qaa3 phen1 nòq1<br>shy 3.POL QPLR.AGREE<br><i>‘I’m embarrassed of him right?’</i>                             | T+1 |

As the last few examples have illustrated, ‘WH’ words tend to be used not as stand-alone units in initiating repair, but they are usually embedded in constructional frames that help to locate and characterize the nature of the problem (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977, Dingemanse, Blythe & Dirksmeyer 2014). Consider the following examples involving problems of person reference, in which *phaj3* ‘who/someone’ serves as the other-initiator of repair. In a first example, the ‘WH’ word appears as a complement of the relevant verb (in line 5):

**Extract 15:** CONV\_050815g\_591304

- |     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| 1 A | phua3 paj3 thaj2 kaø lùà3 tèè1 ngen2 haa5-lòðj4 (.)<br>husband go Thai T.LNK left only money 5-100<br><i>‘((Her)) husband went to Thailand, and had only 500 ((Baht)) left of money.’</i> |     |
| 2   | tii3 kòðn1<br>beat first<br><i>‘Then ((he)) beat ((him)).’</i>  | T-1 |
| 3   | (0.5)   |     |
| 4   | jaan4 khaw3 cap2 dèj2 kaø nii3 maa2 niø<br>afraid 3.PL capture FAC.INFORM T.LNK flee come TPC<br><i>‘((He was)) afraid they’d capture him you know; ((so he)) fled to here.’</i>          |     |
| 5 B | tii3 phaj3<br>beat INDEF.HUM<br><i>‘Beat who?’ ((or; ‘Who was beaten?’))</i>  | T0  |
| 6 A | tii3 thaj2 (.) san4 laø bòð1<br>beat Thai so PRF PCL<br><i>‘((He)) beat a Thai person.’</i>   | T+1 |

If the ‘WH’ word is not given as a complement of a specific verb, then typically—with person reference at least—the ‘WH’ word occurs as the complement of a semantically generic copula *mèèn1* ‘be, be the case’, when asking ‘Who?’, ‘Who is it (that you refer to)?’. This is illustrated in the next two examples:

**Extract 16:** INTCN\_111204u\_417490

- 1 A laaw2 bòd1 khùn5 maa2 dòk5 qaaj4-tuj4 T-1  
 3.FA NEG ascend come FAC.RESIST eBr-T  
*'He won't come up ((here)), Tuy.'*
- 2 B mèèn1 phaj3 T0  
 COP INDEF.HUM  
*'Who is it ((that you mean by "Tuy"))?'*
- 3 A phua3 haw2 T+1  
 husband 1.FA  
*'My husband.'*

**Extract 17:** INTCN\_111204u\_3637150

- 1 A laaw2 siø qòk5 hùn2 paj3 saj3 daj4  
 3.FA IRR exit house go INDEF.PLACE can
- 2 khaw3 siø hêt1-viak4 laaw2 naø T-1  
 3.PL IRR do-work 3.FA TPC.PERIPH  
*'He's unable to leave his house to go anywhere, they're going to "work him" (=confront him, beat him up).'*
- 3 (0.4)
- 4 B mèèn1 phaj3 T0  
 COP INDEF.HUM  
*'Who is it ((that you mean))?'*
- 5 (0.2)
- 6 A phòd1-phaa2 T+1  
 Fa-P  
*'Daddy Phaa.'*
- 7 (0.5)
- 8 B laaw2 pên3 ñang3  
 3.FA be INDEF  
*'What's with him?' ((i.e., 'Why are they going to "work him"??'))*

The next example shows that these two alternative strategies for presenting the 'who' word in a generic syntactic frame as complement of the copula *mèèn1* 'be, be the case', or as complement of a relevant more specific verb, can be combined in a single repair-initiation construction (line 2):

**Extract 18:** INTCN\_111201k\_2573771

- 1 A sùu4 song5 kaø siø qaw3 juu1 dee4 phen1 vaa1 dêø T-1  
 buy pants T.LNK IRR take be.at FAC.ONRCD 3.POL say FAC  
*'"((If you)) buy trousers ((I'll)) take some y'hear!", he said.'*
- 2 B mèèn1 phaj3 vaa1 T0  
 COP INDEF.HUM say  
*'Who was it ((who)) said ((that))?'*
- 3 A khuu2-baa3 lòt5 T+1  
 monk L  
*'The monk Loht.'*
- 4 laaw2 bòd-dajø-sùu4 bò- bò- bòd1 paj3 qaw3 dêj2  
 3.FA NEG-ACHV-buy NEG- NEG- NEG go get FAC.INFORM
- 5 phen1 vaa1 dêê4  
 3.POL say FAC.FILLIN  
*'He won't buy any, he won't- won't- won't go and get them ((himself)) you know, he said.'*

While so far we've seen the 'WH' word being framed by various types of verbal construction in doing other-initiation of repair, it does occasionally appear in stand-alone form with the restricted other-initiation of repair function, as illustrated in the next example:

**Extract 19:** CONV\_010707\_453350

- |     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| 1 A | phuu5-nan4 khacaw4 paq2 kan3 don3 bòð3<br>CT.HUM-DEM.EXT 3.PL abandon COLL long.time QPLR<br>'((Regarding)) that person, did they split up long ago?' | T-1 |
| 2 B | phaj3<br>INDEF.HUM<br>'Who?'  | T0  |
| 3 A | phuu5 thii1 khòðj5 hêt1 viak4 nam2 laaw2 naø<br>CT.HUM REL 1.POL do work with 3.FA TPC.PERIPH<br>'The person who I used to work with.'                | T+1 |
| 4 B | cak2<br>INTJ<br>'No idea.'  |     |

A possible reason why the 'WH' word *phaj3* 'who' stands alone in this example is that it cannot be presented as a complement of the relevant verb: the verb that is being questioned in the trouble source turn—*don3* 'a long time'—does not take a person as its complement, but rather a clause that expresses a state of affairs.

#### 4.2.2 Offer subtype of restricted format

A simple way of forming a polar question is to make an assertion about something that the recipient is in a clearly better position to know about. This assertion then has the pragmatic force of a polar question, seeking confirmation. An example: a person arrives very late to meet others at a restaurant and says to the others, who are sitting and waiting, *You guys have already ordered* (meaning 'I assume that you guys have already ordered, is this correct?'). This use of a so-called 'B-Event statement' (Labov and Fanshell 1977) as a repair initiator that offers something for confirmation (or disconfirmation) is illustrated in the following example:

**Extract 20:** INTCN\_111204t\_873365

- |     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| 1 A | tùùn1 laq1 ((whispered))<br>awaken PRF<br>'((She's)) woken up already.' | T-1 |
| 2 B | tùùn1 laq1<br>awaken PRF<br>'((She's)) woken up already?'               | T0  |
| 3 A | ((head toss))<br>((Yeah))   | T+1 |

Another type of case in which an offer of something for confirmation (or disconfirmation) occurs in the T0 slot is when Speaker B formulates a *candidate understanding* (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977) of the trouble source turn T-1, when T-1 seems to have been ambiguous or too vague (here, the problem source in line 1 is the reference of a pronoun).

## Extract 21: CONV\_050815c\_1818043

- 1 A bòð1 huu4.cak2 mong4 man2 T-1  
 NEG know place 3.B  
 ‘((We)) *didn’t know where it was.*’
- 2 B daan3 nguu2 T0  
 D N  
 ‘*Daan Ngou?*’ ((i.e., ‘*You mean you didn’t know where Daan Ngou was?*’))
- 3 A qee5 T+1  
 INTJ  
 ‘*Yeah.*’

In the next case, Speaker A is finishing a narrative about a young woman who was fired from her service job in an embassy residential compound. The punch line of the story, delivered in line 3, is that the embassy staff ‘gave her a white envelope’. This elliptical expression comes from the practice of handing over severance money upon termination of work, and such money will be given in an envelope. So, line 3 conveys three ideas: 1. They gave her a white envelope, 2. They fired her, 3. They gave her money. But only the first is made explicit in the trouble source turn. Accordingly, Speaker B offers two things for confirmation (or disconfirmation), the first to check that A had meant to convey that the girl was in fact fired (this is confirmed by a ‘head toss’ in the repair solution turn in line 6) and second to check that A had meant to convey that there was indeed money in the envelope (as confirmed by the interjection *qee5* ‘Yeah’ in the repair solution turn in line 8):

## Extract 22: CONV\_010707\_199560

- 1 A laø mù-qùn1 maa2 hòng4 paj3 sathan3-thuut4  
 PRF tomorrow come call go embassy  
 ‘*And the next day they called her to the embassy.*’
- 2 (0.5)
- 3 haj5 sòng1 khaaw3 leej2 T-1  
 give envelope white NO.ADO  
 ‘((They)) *gave ((her)) a white envelope without ado.*’
- 4 ((laughter 2s))
- 5 B laj1 qòðk5 phòðm4 T0a  
 chase exit too  
 ‘((They)) *sacked ((her))?*’
- 6 A ((head toss)) T+1a  
 ((Yeah))
- 7 B haj5 ngen2 mèn1 bòð3 T0b  
 give money COP QPLR  
 ‘*They gave her money ((in the envelope)) right?*’
- 8 A qee5 T+1b  
 INTJ  
 ‘*Yeah.*’

Note also that the two other-initiations of repair—line 5 and line 7—are formulated in two different ways, with line 5 phrased as a simple declarative inviting confirmation (i.e., a ‘B-Event statement’) and line 7 phrased as a question, using the copula *mèn1* in combination with the basic polar-question marker *bòð3*.

The declaratively-formatted polar interrogatives seen in the previous two examples are not the

most common ways of doing candidate understandings and other offers of things to be confirmed (or disconfirmed). More frequently, these are done in Lao using sentence-final particles (see section 5 below). The most common selection among these particles is the ‘inferential polar question marker’ *vaa3* (Enfield 2007:45ff), which explicitly marks the assertion as something that has just been gathered or inferred by the speaker, and that now requires confirmation. Here are two examples of *vaa3* being used as a sentence-final particle in the T0 position:

**Extract 23:** INTCN\_030731b\_430160

- 1 A kham2 bòð1 juu1 nii4 vaa3 T-1  
 K NEG be.at here QPLR.INFER  
 ‘So *Kham’s not here, I gather?*’
- 2 (0.3)
- 3 B kham2 (.) paa1-laj1 vaa3 T0  
 K P-L QPLR.INFER  
 ‘((*You mean*)) *Kham ((from)) Paa Lai ((Village))?*’
- 4 A qee5 T+1  
 INTJ  
 ‘*Yeah.*’
- 5 B kaø juu1 paa1-laj1 han5 lèq1  
 T.LNK be.at P-L DEM.DIST FAC.PRF  
 ‘*Well, he’s in Paa Lai.*’

**Extract 24:** INTCN\_111201k\_2681421

- 1 A paj3 thaang2 daj3 khuu2-baa3 qòðj4 T-1  
 go way INDEF monk Q  
 ‘*Where did he go, the monk Oi?*’
- 2 (1.8)
- 3 B mùù4-nii4 vaa3 T0  
 day-DEM.GEN QPLR.INFER  
 ‘((*You mean*)) *today?*’
- 4 A qee5 T+1  
 INTJ  
 ‘*Yeah.*’
- 5 (3s)
- 6 B mùù4-nii4 khuu2-baa3 qòðj4 tuaø bòð1 paj3 khòòn2van3  
 day-DEM.GEN monk Q QPLR NEG go K  
 ‘*Today, the Monk Oi didn’t go ((anywhere)), right Khonevan?*’
- 7 C bòð1, mii2 tèè1 cua3  
 NEG have only novice.monk  
 ‘*No, only novices ((went)).*’

Note that while the confirmation in the repair solution turn T+1 in the examples given so far in this section has been done by means of an interjection (see the cases just given), or equivalent such as a ‘head toss’, another possible way of confirming and thus supplying a repair solution in T+1 is *repetition* of the predicate questioned in T0. This option of repetition is a feature of the basic question-answer system of Lao (Enfield 2010, 2662). It is illustrated in the next example:

**Extract 25:** INTCN\_030801e\_300458

- 1 A phòq1 man2 hak2 lèèw4 naø phòq1 T-1  
daddy 3.B snap PRF TPC.PERIPH daddy  
'Daddy, ((she's)) snapped ((it)), Daddy.'
- 2 B hak2 ton4-sak2 vaa3 T0  
snap CT.tree-teak QPLR.INFER  
'((You mean she's)) snapped the teak sapling?'
- 3 A hak2 lèèw4 T+1  
snap PRF  
'(Yes, she's) snapped (it).'

A final example of the use of *vaa3* as a marker of candidate understanding in T0 comes from a fragment of conversation relating to sorcery techniques and the stringent requirements that practitioners must adhere to, unless they want to risk illness, spirit possession or death. The extract begins with Speaker A issuing a warning about the possible consequences of failing to abide by the requirements of a particular technique, but she does not specify what those consequences would be. Speaker C interjects in line 3 by saying 'Vampire' during A's turn, but this is overlooked by Speaker B, who initiates repair in line 5 by offering a candidate understanding of what A had meant in line 1 ('You mean dead?'). Speaker B's proposal turns out to be wrong (and C's interjection in line 3 was correct), as is shown by A's repair solution in line 7:

**Extract 26:** INTCN\_111204u\_3868476

- 1 A hian2 mon2 hii3 ñaj1 kaø kam3 bòð1 daj4 khùù2  
study technique vagina big T.LNK grasp NEG can like
- 2 mèø-tuu4 khùap4 qanø-  
grandma K HES  
'((If you)) study the Big Vagina Technique and you can't abide by its requirements, ((you'll end up)) like Old Lady Kheup um-'
- 3 C pòðp5  
vampire  
'A vampire.'
- 4 A juu1 naa2-taan3 T-1 (=lines 1, 2, and 4 together)  
be.at N-T  
'in Na Taan Village.'
- 5 B taaj3 vaa3 T0  
die QPLR.INFER  
'((You mean)) dead?'
- 6 (0.5)
- 7 A pên3 pòðp5 T+1  
become vampire  
'((She)) became a vampire.'
- 8 (0.3)
- 9 C pên3 pòðp5 haa3 [kin3 khon2  
become vampire seek eat person  
'((She)) became a people-eating vampire.'
- 10 A [bòð1 taaj3  
NEG die  
'((She)) didn't die.'

Note that this example is the first case in this section of an offer of something for confirmation that does not get positively confirmed in the repair solution turn T+1. While a correct response could have been *bòd1* ‘No’ in T+1, this would not have solved the problem of understanding. Instead of a disconfirmation in T+1, what we see is an *assertion* of what *was* intended, thus effectively making the disconfirmation, but only indirectly.

#### 4.2.3 External subtype of restricted format

Lastly, in this section on restricted forms of other-initiation of repair, we note the possibility of an *external* strategy for locating/characterizing a problem in a prior turn. Both types of restricted strategy—request type and offer type—can feature in the external type strategy. External other-initiators of repair point to a problem with a non-core element of the clause or proposition in the trouble source turn. Typically this means that there is a problem concerning place or time (i.e., when these were not mentioned in the trouble source turn). In the next example, in order to answer Speaker A’s question as to what a certain flower is called (line 1), Speaker B uses a ‘where’ question as a way of establishing reference to the flower being referred to (cf. also the use of ‘where’ questions in dealing with problems of person reference; see line 4 of example (2), above):

**Extract 27:** CONV\_050815a\_548766

- |     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| 1 A | qeen4 dòk5-sêethii2 qiik5 vaa3<br>call flower-millionaire more QPLR.INFER<br><i>‘Do they ((really)) also call it a “millionaire flower”?’</i> | T-1 |
| 2   | (0.6)   |     |
| 3 B | juu1 saǰ3<br>be.at INDEF.PLACE<br><i>‘Where?’</i>   | T0  |
| 4   | (0.3)   |     |
| 5 A | juu1 baan4 qùaj-san4 naø<br>be.at house eZ-S TPC.DIST<br><i>‘At Sun’s house.’</i>   | T+1 |
| 6   | (1.0)   |     |
| 7 A | caw4 naa5-caø thaaj1-huup4 qaw3 vaj4<br>2.POL OBLIG.CF take-photo take keep<br><i>‘You should take a photo ((of it)).’</i>                    |     |
| 8   | (0.4)   |     |

Similarly, an offer (polar question) type of other-initiator of repair can be used for the external strategy. In the following case, Speaker B asks for clarification of what Speaker A meant by referring to ‘tires’ on a large portable water pump, specifically asking to confirm whether he had meant that the tires were attached ‘on the side’ of the pump:

**Extract 28:** CONV\_050815a\_523296

- |     |  |     |
|-----|--|-----|
| 1 A | tiin3 kaø tiin3 tan3<br>tire T.LNK tire blocked<br><i>‘(As for) the tires, they’re solid tires.’</i> | T-1 |
| 2   | (0.6)  |     |
| 3 B | tiin3 tan3 qanø sòng3 tiin3<br>tire blocked HES two tire<br><i>‘Solid tires, um two of them?’</i>    | T0  |

4 A	qee5 INTJ 'Yeah.'	T+1
5 B	thaang2 khaang5 hanø tuaø direction side TPC.EXT PCL 'On the sides, presumably?'	T0
6 A	qee5 INTJ 'Yeah.'	T+1

Another example of the external strategy of other-initiation of repair involving a polar question requiring confirmation is the time expression in line 3 of example (24), above ('today you mean?') as a way of asking for clarification of the scope of a question that has just been asked (i.e., 'Where did he go, the monk Oi?'—in which no time specification is given).

## 5 Morphosyntactic devices in OIR: the case of sentence-final particles

In the grammar of Lao, an important role is played by the large set of particles that allow speakers to express a range of pragmatic and information structural distinctions (Enfield 2007: Chapter 4 and section 6.2.3). Here, I discuss some of the particles and topic markers that Lao speakers use for specific functions in other-initiated repair sequences, grouped into those that mark a T0 element and those that mark a T+1 element.

### 5.1 Particles that mark T0

In most cases in which a particle is used to mark T0, the T0 move is a polar interrogative construction, which seeks confirmation in T+1. Polar interrogatives are formed in Lao mostly by the addition of a sentence-final particle from a paradigm of interrogative particles. Here, we consider three of the more common particles used in the corpus.

*vaa3* (43 cases): marks newly-inferred proposition requiring confirmation

A ubiquitous particle used in T0 moves that offer something for confirmation is *vaa3*, already discussed at some length in section 4.2.2, above. *Vaa3* is by far the most common of all particles with this function. As described in Enfield (2007:43-6), the particle *vaa3* (glossed QPLR.INFER) marks polar questions that encode a proposition which is 'newly inferred' by the one who asks the question. The *vaa3*-marked T0 element offers an interpretation or more specific gloss of what was said in T-1 as an offer of something for confirmation in T+1. Utterances like this with *vaa3* can often be idiomatically translated into English using the expression *you mean*. For examples in which T0 is marked by *vaa3*, see (23-26), above.

*phun4 naø* (8 cases): marks (mock) surprise at the extreme nature of a prior assertion

As a kind of complex sentence-final particle, *phun4 naø* is a combination of the far distal demonstrative *phun4* 'yonder' and the 'external' topic marker *naø*. The pattern of usage of this form is as follows: Speaker A makes an extreme assertion—e.g., that something cost a hundred million, that a new water pump has a five horsepower engine, or that a woman got so drunk she had to be carried upstairs—and then Speaker B repeats this (often with adjustments), as if asking for confirmation that it really is the case, and adds *phun4 naø*, invoking the extreme (literally, 'far away') nature of the assertion being questioned. The overall effect is not unlike the use of English *What!?* or German *Was!?*, with a sharply rising intonation (Selting 1996), not so much to initiate repair as to express surprise (albeit by means of a repair-initiating device). See the next two examples:

**Extract 29:** CONV\_050815a\_1140956

- |     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| 1 A | lòj4 laan4<br>100-million<br>'((They paid)) a hundred million.'                 | T-1 |
| 2 B | lòj4 laan4 phun4 naø<br>100-million DEM.FAR TPC.PERIPH<br>'A HUNDRED MILLION?!' | T0  |
| 3 A | qee5<br>INTJ<br>'Yeah.'   | T+1 |

**Extract 30:** CONV\_050815a\_524246

- |     |  |     |
|-----|--|-----|
| 1 A | saj1 cak2 hondaa4 haa5 hènq2 hanø naø<br>put motor Honda five horsepower TPC.EXT TPC.PERIPH<br>'((One)) puts a 5-horsepower Honda motor on it.' ((a pump)) | T-1 |
| 2 B | cak2 haa5 hènq2 phun4 naø<br>motor five horsepower DEM.FAR TPC.PERIPH<br>'A 5-HORSEPOWER MOTOR?!'  | T0  |
| 3 A | qee5<br>INTJ<br>'Yeah.'  | T+1 |

The form *phun4 naø* may, however, also be used when the turn in T0 offers a candidate understanding of what was said in T-1, for confirmation (also note that the 'OIR' in this example is preceded by an interjection that is a fitted uptake to T-1, thus showing clearly that T0 is not doing repair initiation in a simple sense):

**Extract 31:** CONV\_010707\_523790

- |     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| 1 A | qiø-taa3 sofee4 kaø daj4 quum4 khùn5 paj3 theng2 hùan2<br>fellow chauffeur T.LNK ACHV carry ascend go above house<br>'The chauffeur fellow had to carry ((her)) up into the house.' | T-1 |
| 2 B | qee5 (.) taaj3 maw2 paan3-nan4 phun4 naø<br>INTJ die drunk extent-DEM.NONPROX DEM.FAR TPC.PERIPH<br>'Right – Oh my God, ((she)) was THAT drunk?'                                    | T0  |
| 3 A | qee5<br>INTJ<br>'Yeah.'   | T+1 |

Note that in these examples, while ostensibly offering something for confirmation (or disconfirmation) in T0 seems primarily to be used for expressing surprise, it nevertheless elicits the response in T+1 that would be expected in the offer subtype of other-initiation of repair, namely, confirmation. This is why we can still regard it as an other-initiation of repair, in part at least.

*san4 bòq2* (7 cases): challenge, sceptical offer for confirmation

The third final-particle marker of T0 that we will look at here is another complex form, a combination of *san4* 'so, like that' and *bòq2* a shortened form of the general polar question marker *bòð3*. As the following example illustrates, the usage of this form in a T0 that repeats or partially repeats the trouble source turn and asks for confirmation also expresses some scepticism as to the truth of what has just been said—hence, the defensive and expanded/non-minimal nature of the confirmation that is given in T+1 here (line 4):

## Extract 32: INTCN\_111204u\_3512630

- 1 A bak2-kùm1 naø T-1  
M.B-K TPC.PERIPH  
'It was Keum.'
- 2 (0.9)
- 3 B bak2-kùm1 san4-bòq1 T0  
M.B-K INTJ  
'It was Keum, really?' ((sceptical))
- 4 A qee5 kaø bakø-kùm1 [han5 lèq1 T+1  
INTJ T.LNK M.B-K DEM.DIST FAC.PRF  
'Yeah, it was Keum.'
- 5 C [bak2-qèè3  
M.B-Q  
'(It was) Èè.'
- 6 (0.8)
- 7 qooj4 juu1 paak5-saap4 khaw3 hòng4 bakø-kùm1 bet2 leej2  
INTJ be.at PS 3PL.B call M.B-K all no.ado  
'Oy, in Pak Sap they all just call him Keum.'
- 8 man2 kaø pian1 sùu1 paj3 nòq1  
3.B LNK change name go QPLR.AGREE
- 9 baan4 man2 haang1-kaj3 nòq1  
village 3.B isolated-far QPLR.AGREE  
'He changed his name right? His village is far away right?'

The next example is from a gossip session about local sorceresses. It begins when Speaker A asserts that when a local sorceress was cremated, huge nails were found in the ashes. This was taken as evidence that the woman lived with nails in her heart. Speaker B in line 7 uses the *san4 bòq1* construction to express her skepticism that the nails would have survived the intense heat of a funeral pyre (though, note, no scepticism of the claim that the woman had nails in her heart while alive). This is quickly dismissed by Speaker A in T+1, again showing some resistance to the scepticism conveyed by the T0 move.

## Extract 33: INTCN\_111204u\_3728681

- 1 A baat5 paj3 cuut5 dêè2 san5  
time go burn PCL PCL  
'And what about when they went to burn ((her corpse))?'
- 2 (1.0)
- 3 A juu1 vaang1 hua3-caj3 hok2 dòk5  
at area heart 6 CLF  
'Around ((her)) heart, there were 6 of them.'
- 4 (0.3)
- 5 A lèk2-tapuu3 pèè5 naø T-1  
metal-nail 8 TPC.PERIPH  
'((They were)) size 8 nails.'
- 6 (1.8)
- 7 B (hêt1 cang1 daj3 hên3) faj2 bòd1 maj5 san4-bòq2 T0  
do way INDEF see fire NEG burn INTJ  
'((How come you saw them)), the fire didn't burn them, really?'
- 8 A qooj4 lèk2-tapuu3 man2 siø faj2 maj5 cak2 thua1 lèk2 T+1  
INTJ metal-nail 3.B IRR fire burn how.many time metal  
'Oy, nails would never burn up, they're metal.'

To end this section, let me note that each of the three particles profiled here—*vaa3*, *phun4 naø* and *san4 bòq2*—can occur on its own, constituting the entire turn in T0. (Note, though, that these are borderline cases of ‘OIR’, if cases at all.) First, here is an example of stand-alone *vaa3*, where its function seems closer to a response marker than an other-initiator of repair proper (cf. also line 5 of example (9), above). In this example, Speaker A is using water to clean off some reeds that are being prepared for weaving floor mats. Speaker B, in the first line of this fragment, remarks that A is using a lot of water, and is making the reeds surprisingly wet. This is a sort of light tease, to which Speaker A retorts somewhat defensively (lines 3-4). The response to this is *vaa3* on its own, and this in turn elicits a confirmation by indirect means.

**Extract 34:** 030806k\_04.25

- 1 B quj4 cang1 mèn1 laang4 saj1  
INTJ such be wash put
- 2 qaw3-thèè4-qaw3-vaa1 piak5 met2 laq1  
over\_the\_top wet all PRF  
*‘Wow, you’re really washing them, they’re completely wet.’*
- 3 A man2 kaø piak5 kaø jaa1 tha-mèè4  
3sg T.LNK wet T.LNK leave.it PCL  
*‘They’re wet, so let it be.’*
- 4 kaø dajø hot1 juu1 nòq1 T-1  
T.LNK ACHV water PCL QPLR.AGREE  
*‘We have to water them, right?’*
- 5 B vaa3 T0  
QPLR.INFER  
*‘Is that so.’*
- 6 A bòø qaw3 nam4 hot1 man2 siø hêt1 cang1 daj3 niø T+1  
NEG take water water 3.B IRR do like INDEF TPC  
*‘((If we)) didn’t water them, what else would we do?’*

Following are examples of stand-alone *phun4 naø* and *san4 bòq2* with comparable functions in T0 as those described already in this section.

**Extract 35:** INTCN\_111202s\_1179320

- 1 B mii2 tèè1 maj4 mèn1 bòø3 qaaj4-tuj4  
have only wood COP QPLR eB-T  
*‘((That house is made)) solely from wood right Tui?’*
- 2 A maj4-loong1.lêêng1 lòq2 khaang5-naj2  
CT.wood-LL around side-in
- 3 maj4- (.) duu1.laaj2 kap2 maj4-khañuung2 T-1  
CT.wood- DL with CT.wood-K  
*‘Long Leng wood around the interior, Dou Lai wood and Rosewood.’*
- 4 B phun4 naø T0  
DEM.FAR TPC.PERIPH  
*‘Wow really?’*
- 5 A saam3-sèèn3 lian3 kaø bòø than2 daj4 baan3  
3-100,000 dollar T.LNK NEG yet get frame
- 6 bòø than2 daj4 patuu3 hanø dèj2 T+1  
NEG yet get door TPC.DIST FAC.INFORM  
*‘((They’ve spent)) three hundred thousand dollars and they haven’t yet got frames, ((they)) haven’t yet got doors you know.’*

**Extract 36:**

- 1 A qùaj4-lèè5 hanø man2 siø qaw3 phua3 laø dêê4 T-1  
eZ-L TPC.DIST IRR take husband PRF FAC.FILLIN  
'Lèè is going to get married, you know.'
- 2 B san4 bòq2 T0  
INTJ  
'Is that right.' ((skeptical sounding, disbelieving))
- 3 A qee5 T+1  
INTJ  
'Yeah.'

**5.2 Particles that mark T+1**

Several sentence-final particles from a *factive* paradigm (Enfield 2007:52ff) are used for marking T+1 in OIR sequences. This makes sense, because T+1 is often an assertion. It is, after all, always an answer to a question. The specific choice of particle can help to distinguish between various nuances. Three factive particles share most of the load in the data discussed here, as illustrated in the following examples.

*dêê4* FAC.FILLIN (9 cases): this form conveys 'P is the case, I think you don't know it' (factive, filling in addressee with information which is presupposed in current discourse but unknown to addressee; Enfield 2007:54). In this example, it marks the T+1 move:

**Extract 37:** CONV\_050815g\_2074708

- 1 A khacaw4 paj3 lak1 fùun2 mèèw4 T-1  
3.PL go steal firewood Hmong(derog.)  
'They went and stole firewood from Hmong people.'
- 2 B fùun2 mèèw2 juu1 saj3 T0  
firewood Hmong(derog.) be.at INDEF.PLACE  
'((Which)) Hmong firewood where?'
- 3 A fùun2 mèèw2 juu1 khang5 ha- hùan2 laaw2 niø dêê4 T+1  
firewood Hmong(derog.) be.at side house 3.FA TPC FAC.FILLIN  
'The Hmong firewood at the side of h- his house there.'

*lèq1* FAC.PRF (9 cases); this form conveys 'That's it, P is indeed the case' (factive, confirming that something is the case, as has already been alluded to; Enfield 2007:62). Here is an example of it marking the T+1 move (and see also (2) and (32), above):

**Extract 38:** INTCN\_111204t\_284465

- 1 A naa5 juu1 lum1 dee4 T-1  
N be.at below FAC.ONRCD  
'Naa is down below, y'hear.'
- 2 B laaw2 bòd1 juu1 nii4 vaa3 T0  
3.FA NEG be.at here QPLR.INFER  
'So she's not here?'
- 3 A juu1 hanø lèq1 T+1  
be.at DEM.DIST FAC.PRF  
'Oh ((she's)) down there ((all right)).'

*naa3* FAC.EXPLIC (8 cases); this form conveys ‘P is the case, as you should have already understood’ (factive, makes explicit something which the addressee should already have known; Enfield 2007:59). The next two examples illustrate:

**Extract 39:** CONV\_050815c\_693430

- 1 A tɛ̀ɛ̀1 caw4 kaø ñang2 daa1 d- laan3 caw4 dề2-san4 naø  
but 2.POL T.LNK still scold nibbling 2.POL PCL TPC
- 2 (0.4) khò̀j5 kaø daa1 daj4 khù̀2-kan3 hanø lèq1 T-1  
1.POL T.LNK scold can like-COLL TPC.DIST FAC.PRF  
*‘But you still scold your nieces and nephews - I can scold ((mine)) too.’*
- 3 B phuu5- daa1 phaj3 laan3 kuu3- laan3 kuu3 ( ) T0  
person scold INDEF.HUM nibbling 1.B nibbling 1.B  
*‘Who’s the one- scolds who- my nieces and nephews- my nieces and nephews.’*
- 4 A qùaj4-nò̀j4 niø naa3 T+1  
eZ-N TPC FAC.EXPLIC  
*‘No, I mean Noi.’*

**Extract 40:** CONV\_050815c\_2172785

- 1 A khò̀j5 jaak5 paj3 hên3 nam4 thii1 vaa1 man2 lip1 hua3 naø T-1  
1.POL want go see water REL COMP 3.B over head TPC  
*‘I want to go and see that river/pool where it is ((so deep that)) it goes above your head.’*
- 2 B juu1 saj3 nam4 lip1 hua3 T0  
be.at INDEF.PLACE water over head  
*‘Where is it where the water goes above your head?’*
- 3 A thii1 vaa1 khacaw4 doot5 long2 hanø naa3 T+1  
REL COMP 3.PL jump descend TPC.DIST FAC.EXPLIC  
*‘I mean where they jump down ((into the water)).’*

Finally, I also note that there is a paradigm of topic markers of nominal phrases (Enfield 2007:100) which are used in OIR sequences. These topic markers are reduced forms of demonstrative pronouns (*niø/nii4*, *nanø/nan4*, *hanø/han4*, etc.). The three that are used often in marking T+1 are the ‘general topic marker’ *niø* TPC (4 cases in my sample; see examples (34) and (37), above), ‘distal topic marker’ *hanø* TPC.DIST (12 cases; see examples (2), (10), (38), above), and the ‘peripheral topic marker’ *naø* TPC.PERIPH (12 cases; see example (12), (19), (27), above).

## 6 Actions

I now briefly address the issue of the social actions that other-initiation of repair can be used for, beyond its basic function. Sometimes, when Speaker B uses an OIR format, this implies nothing more than B’s need for A to repair a problem of speaking, hearing, or understanding. But the metalinguistic action type of other-initiation of repair can be used as a vehicle for other kinds of actions. Several are discussed in the introduction to this volume. I will not give any examples in this section, as a good number of cases have already been illustrated in examples supplied in the above sections. For instance, in a number of cases, other-initiation of repair is used to express *surprise* or *astonishment*. This extended function of other-initiated repair appears to be common across languages (see introduction to this special issue for discussion). Examples of this in Lao involving the sentence-final particle *phun4 naø* can be seen above in examples 29, 30, 31, and 35. Note that I have not observed cases in which the open other-initiators of repair *haa2* ‘Huh?’ and *(qi)ñang3* ‘What?’ serve this function, although it appears common in other languages

(see Selting 1996 for the case of German). Another type of extended action of other-initiated repair in the Lao corpus is their use for issuing a *preliminary to a challenge or disagreement* (Schegloff 1997). Again, this seems to be a common extended function across languages. For cases already shown in this paper, see example (8) which appears to be concerned with avoiding doing a dispreferred ‘no’ (see discussion above), and the examples that use the particle *san4 bòq2* in T0, described above as signalling scepticism of the truth of what seems to have been said in the trouble source move (see examples 32, 33, and 36). A third type of extended action function we have seen here concerns cases in which other-initiation is used for making a ‘non-serious’ or *joking* action. See example (10), in which Speaker A is being teased and being made to explicate and re-animate what she had said in T-1.

Here I have only mentioned a few of the known extensions of the basic action of other-initiation of repair in Lao. There are surely many more, whose functions may be subtler than simple labels such as ‘surprise’, ‘disagreement’, and ‘joking’ could capture. Consider, for instance, the effect of Speaker B’s other-initiations of repair in lines 5 and 7 of example (22), above (‘They sacked her?’ and ‘They gave her money right?’). This turn not only ostensibly deals with the need for clarification of what Speaker A had said, but it appears that the repair initiations by Speaker B are also assisting Speaker A in successfully rounding off the story she’s telling. These repair initiations not only work locally, but also help to explicate the central content of the story’s punchline, a ‘fix’ that is needed at a more global level in the sequence.

## 7 Conclusion

This article has presented a descriptive sketch of the resources used by Lao speakers for what is perhaps the most important tool for the maintenance of intersubjectivity in the flow of social interaction: other-initiation of repair. The evidence presented here, from a video-recorded corpus of informal social interaction in Lao, demonstrates that Lao has a rich system of semiotic resources for signalling problems in hearing or understanding what has just been said, and, in turn, for repairing that problem in a subsequent move. As the facts reported above demonstrate, Lao has a rich system for other-initiation of repair. My description of this system in this article has been necessarily cursory, due to space constraints. But I have been able to concentrate on two points of special interest that arise from the data. The first was an examination of the ‘repetition’ in T+1 moves that is elicited by open other-initiation of repair in T0: this ‘repetition’ in fact turns out typically to involve subtle adjustments, and thus seldom is the repetition exact. This is presumably a phenomenon we can expect to find in all languages. The second was an examination of a somewhat more language-specific aspect of the Lao system, namely the central role played in Lao by the set of grammatical particles that carry a strong functional load in the Lao language more generally (see Enfield 2007: Chapter 4). Here, we see that one of the hallmarks of the genius of this language is deeply implicated in the moment-by-moment management of intersubjectivity in social interaction.

**Acknowledgements:** I am very grateful to Mark Dingemans, C. H. P. Zuckerman, and two anonymous reviewers for constructive and helpful criticism on a draft submission of this chapter, and to all my colleagues in this comparative project for their helpful input during data sessions and discussions of the Lao materials and results discussed here. This research was supported by the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics and a European Research Council grant ‘Human Sociality and Systems of Language Use’ (grant nr. 240853).

## References

- Cysouw, Michael. 2004. “Interrogative Words: An Exercise in Lexical Typology”. Presentation presented at the Bantu grammar: description and theory workshop, February 13.
- . 2007. “Content Interrogatives in Pichis Ashéninka: Corpus Study and Typological Comparison.” *International Journal of American Linguistics* 73 (2) (April): 133–163.
- Dingemans, Mark, Francisco Torreira, and N.J. Enfield. 2013. “Is ‘Huh?’ a universal word? Conversational infrastructure and the convergent evolution of linguistic items.” *PLOS ONE*. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0078273.
- Dingemans, Mark et al. under review. “Universal Principles in the Repair of Communication Problems.”

- Enfield, N. J. 2007. *A Grammar of Lao*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- . 2010. “Questions and Responses in Lao.” *Journal of Pragmatics* 42 (10): 2649–2665.
- . 2013. *Relationship Thinking: Agency, Enchrony, and Human Sociality*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Enfield, N.J., Tanya Stivers, and Stephen C. Levinson. 2010. “Question–response Sequences in Conversation Across Ten Languages: An Introduction.” *Journal of Pragmatics* 42 (10) (October): 2615–2619.
- Hayashi, Makoto, Geoffrey Raymond, and Jack Sidnell, ed. 2013. *Conversational Repair and Human Understanding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Labov, William and David Fanshel. 1977. *Therapeutic Discourse: Psychotherapy as Conversation*. New York: Academic.
- Levinson, Stephen C. 1983. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pomerantz, Anita. 1984. “Agreeing and Disagreeing with Assessments: Some Features of Preferred/dispreferred Turn Shapes.” In *Structures of Social Action*, edited by J. Maxwell Atkinson and John Heritage, 57–101.
- Pomerantz, Anita, and John Heritage. 2012. “Preference.” In *The Handbook of Conversation Analysis*, edited by Jack Sidnell and Tanya Stivers, 210–228. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Schegloff, Emanuel A. 1997. “Practices and Actions: Boundary Cases of Other-Initiated Repair.” *Discourse Processes* 23 (3): 499–545.
- . 2004. “On Dispensability.” *Research on Language & Social Interaction* 37 (2): 95–149.
- Schegloff, Emanuel A., Gail Jefferson, and Harvey Sacks. 1977. “The Preference for Self-correction in the Organization of Repair in Conversation.” *Language* 53 (2): 361–382.
- Selting, Margaret. 1996. “Prosody as an Activity-type Distinctive Cue in Conversation: The Case of So-called ‘Astonished’ Questions in Repair Initiation.” In *Prosody in Conversation: Interactional Studies*, edited by Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen and Margaret Selting, 231–270. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.