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Getting others to do things

A pragmatic typology of recruitments

Edited by

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Chapter 1

Recruiting assistance and collaboration in interaction: a West-African corpus study

Mark Dingemanse

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Doing things for and with others is one of the foundations of human social life. This chapter studies a systematic collection of 207 requests for assistance and collaboration from a video corpus of everyday conversations in Siwu, a Kwa language of Ghana. A range of social action formats and semiotic resources reveals how language is adapted to the interactional challenges posed by recruiting assistance. While many of the formats bear a language-specific signature, their sequential and interactional properties show important commonalities across languages. Two tentative findings are put forward for further cross-linguistic examination: a “rule of three” that may play a role in the organisation of successive response pursuits, and a striking commonality in animal-oriented recruitments across languages that may be explained by convergent cultural evolution. The Siwu recruitment system emerges as one instance of a sophisticated machinery for organising collaborative action that transcends language and culture.

1 Introduction

Doing things for and with others is one of the foundations of human social life. The question of how we recruit assistance and collaboration has venerable roots in ethnography (Malinowski 1923; Frake 1964) and in the philosophical study of speech acts (Austin 1962; Searle 1969), yet it has only recently become possible to address it more systematically using records of actual behaviour in conversation (Drew & Couper-Kuhlen 2014). Here I study one of the most concrete forms of prosociality in everyday social interaction: recruitments, when someone gets...
another to carry out a practical action for or with them. Examining the interactional practices by which people come to do things for and with each other contributes to our understanding of the role of language in human sociality.

Much prior work on requesting in social interaction has focused on how requests are shaped by participants’ claims of entitlement (Heinemann 2006; Curl & Drew 2008), or how formats are selected depending on the degree of imposition on a recipient (Brown & Levinson 1978; Fukushima 1996). To bring out differences clearly, such analyses often contrast a small number of formats under large social or situational asymmetries. Complementing such approaches, this study presents a survey of the recruitment system of one language based on a systematic collection of 207 recruitment moves and responses from a corpus of informal conversation. By focusing on requests for practical actions, we can observe a range of factors that shape and constrain recruitments and their responses in everyday interaction.

One way of understanding the organization of verbal and nonverbal resources in recruitment sequences is as addressed to a set of interactional challenges. People have to reach a joint understanding of who will carry out the practical action and why; what exactly needs to be done and when; how to coordinate bodily behaviour and manipulate the physical environment; how to relate the desired action to preceding, ongoing and projected activities; and other contingencies that require some degree of implicit or explicit calibration (Clark 2006; Goodwin & Cekaite 2013; Enfield 2014). Elements of recruitment sequences appear to be adapted to these challenges, which provides us with a roadmap to the interactional practices surveyed in this chapter (Table 1).

Not all resources make their appearance in every recruitment sequence. When people are already in a dyadic interaction, close to each other, and involved in an activity with a projectable structure, a recruitment and its response can be minimal, even nonverbal. In other situations, interactional contingencies may need to be negotiated more explicitly, bringing a wider range of practices in play. In this way, the recruitment system provides for a flexible organisation of verbal and nonverbal resources adapted to the task of organising assistance and collaboration.

1.1 The Siwu language

Siwu is a Kwa language spoken north of Hohoe in Ghana’s Volta Region. It has somewhere between 15,000 and 25,000 speakers depending on how the diaspora community is counted. This paper is based on Siwu as spoken in the village of Akpafu-Mempeasem. Siwu is a language in which grammatical relations are
Table 1: Interactional challenges to be negotiated in recruitment sequences, along with some of the interactional practices mobilised to address them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactional challenge</th>
<th>Resources for participant A include</th>
<th>Resources for participant B include</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) establishing addresseeship</td>
<td>gaze, address terms, summonses, interjections</td>
<td>self-selecting, attending or ignoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) impinging on freedom of action</td>
<td>invoking rights and duties by means of reasons and social roles; mitigating and strengthening; pursuing a response</td>
<td>assenting or resisting (if the latter, provide reasons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) specifying desired action</td>
<td>formulating a request or noticing; pointing and placing; providing reasons</td>
<td>fulfilling; initiating repair; proposing another action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) coordinating physical presence</td>
<td>producing preparatory movements like holding out or reaching to receive</td>
<td>fulfilling; accounting for delay or inability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v) managing activity structure</td>
<td>formulating relation of request to current involvement; specifying consecutive actions; sequence closing thirds</td>
<td>verbally committing while finishing current activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

established primarily by word order (which canonically is SVO) along with an extensive system of noun classification and agreement. The earliest lexical records for the language date back to the late 19th century, and there are recent sketches of phonology, morphosyntax, and the repair system (Kropp Dakubu & Ford 1988; Dingemanse 2015).

Studies of informal social interaction in West African languages are rare, as linguists have traditionally privileged phonetics, phonology and morphosyntax over semantics, pragmatics and language use (but see Ameka 1991; Obeng 1999; Meyer 2010 for prior work on interactional routines in some West African languages). By describing practices of asking for assistance in Siwu, this paper contributes not only to the documentation of this language, but also to a larger pro-
gram of understanding how language is shaped by and for social interaction. As we shall see, interactional practices in a basic domain such as getting assistance combine universal structural properties with language-specific resources. So the practices and principles described here are of broad relevance to the cross-linguistic study of recruitments and of talk-in-interaction.

1.2 Data collection and corpus

This work is based on a video corpus of naturally occurring conversations in Siwu, collected from consenting participants over the period 2007-2013. The target behaviour was maximally informal social interaction: the primary ecology of language in use and the most promising baseline for cross-cultural comparison (Dingemanse & Floyd 2014). All of the recordings were made outdoors, where most social interaction between family and friends happens. The recordings cover dyadic as well as multi-party conversations between family and friends. To achieve a diverse and representative collection of recruitment sequences, multiple 10-minute stretches from a total of 11 different interactions were exhaustively sampled, amounting to a total of almost 3 hours of conversation in everyday settings.

A first sweep through this corpus identified a total of 389 candidate recruitments, which amounts to over 2 recruitments for every minute sampled. This includes 173 cases involving small children as recruiter or recruitee, reflecting the fact that children engage in interactive prosocial behaviour from a young age (Warneken & Tomasello 2013). Such recruitment sequences stand out from other cases in a number of ways, most striking among them a higher number of noticeably absent responses and concomitant response pursuits (see section §5).

To avoid skewing the sample and to maintain comparability with other languages, recruitment sequences involving small children were not included in the core collection for Siwu, leaving only sequences involving adults and children roughly from age eight onward (when they are clearly treated as having their own deontic authority, along with typical domestic rights and duties). This leaves a core collection of 207 recruitment moves, resolving into 146 independent recruitment sequences. Even this conservative count finds roughly one recruitment move for every minute of conversation sampled, showing the fundamental importance of these interactional practices to social life.

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1 Any boundary drawn in order to achieve comparability will be arbitrary and debatable. §5 provides a view of excluded cases as well as some observations on notable differences.
2 Basics of recruitment sequences

There are many ways of arranging assistance in interaction, giving rise to a variety of terms and definitions in prior work. To achieve cross-linguistic comparability, the focus of this study is on conversational sequences where one participant recruits another to do something practical. The phenomenon of recruitment is defined as a sequence consisting of two moves (Rossi, Floyd, and Enfield this volume):

- **Move A**: participant A does or says something to participant B, or that B can see or hear
- **Move B**: participant B does a practical action for or with participant A that is fitted to what A just did or said

This definition characterises the phenomenon as a conversational sequence, implying that a variety of semiotic resources may be used to implement it. The sequential nature of the definition means that we can use the natural or sequential control method (Dingemanse & Floyd 2014; cf. Zimmerman 1999) to locate comparable cases across settings and societies. The main focus is on practical actions in the here and now. Of course, people also recruit assistance or collaboration for matters not directly fulfillable (e.g., building a house or borrowing a car). These are beyond our horizon here, though they are likely to use substantially similar resources.

2.1 Minimal recruitment sequence

Many recruitment moves are minimally formatted and straightforwardly complied with. In (1), some women are checking some batches of rice (Figure 1). Eku asks Yawa to give her “the deep calabash one” (line 1), referring to some rice in a deep calabash resting at Yawa’s feet. She reaches out to receive it (line 2) in anticipation of Yawa handing it over (line 4). In this transcripts and most others below, the turns in focus are indicated with an arrow, with and distinguishing initiating and responsive moves where relevant.

(1) Maize1_6539207

1 EKU kà su kabubu ame ire [tã mɛ lɔnyɔ.

ING take deep.calabash inside one let me 1SG:look

take the deep calabash one and let me see
Figure 1: Recruitment by Eku (sitting right, line 1-2 in transcript); response by Yawa (line 4)

This recruitment is minimal in the sense that it consists of an initiating move (Eku’s “take the deep calabash one and let me see”, Figure 1L) and a single response (Yawa taking the calabash and handing it to Eku, Figure 1R). About two thirds of all independent recruitment sequences (102 out of 146) in the corpus have this kind of simple two-part structure of initiating move and response.

### 2.2 Non-minimal recruitment sequence

The complex interactional challenges at play in everyday recruitments are easy to overlook in minimal sequences, where a pre-existing shared focus of attention, physical co-presence, and activity structure conspire to enable a simple request that is immediately fulfilled. About one third of independent recruitment sequences (44 out of 146) take more than one attempt to reach completion. In such non-minimal sequences, the levels of coordination are pulled apart a bit, similar to the way in which an exploded-view diagram can show the elements and order of assembly of a complex piece of machinery.
Two common ways in which non-minimal sequences happen are (i) when a response to the recruitment is noticeably absent or delayed, which often results in the requester pursuing a response, and (ii) when a recruitee claims a problem of hearing or understanding and initiates repair. Extract (2) illustrates the first type (for the second type, see §4.2 below). Beatrice is cleaning some pots and pans while Afua, her mother, is holding Beatrice’s infant. When the infant becomes increasingly restless, Afua asks Beatrice to wash her hands and take him over (line 1). Beatrice immediately provides an affirmative verbal response (line 2), but in the next 10 seconds appears to continue her current involvement, even taking up another pot to clean. This leads to multiple response pursuits by Afua (lines 5, 7) until Beatrice carries out the requested action.

(2) Kitchen1_1052883

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Afua: Beatrice wash your hands, so you can come and take him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Beatrice: yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Afua: cause he’s done sitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Beatrice: I said ‘wash your hands so you can come and take him’, so he’ll stop crying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Afua: Beatrice I said ‘wash your hands so you can come and take him’, so he’ll stop crying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Beatrice: yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Afua: because he’s done sitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Beatrice: ((speeds up and finishes cleaning, starts washing her hands))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

((Afua finds a towel, dries her hands, and walks towards Afua))

- (Baby cries)
This case illustrates a range of practices commonly used to manage the interactional challenges posed by recruitment sequences. For Afua, this includes using a proper name to secure joint attention (line 1), providing a reason that orients to Beatrice’s current involvement (line 1), pursuing a response marked as a resaying (line 5), and invoking Beatrice’s responsibilities for the task at hand (lines 3, 5). For participant Beatrice, this includes using an affirmative response to signal willingness to comply (lines 2, 6), visibly speeding up and shifting tasks to signal imminent availability (line 6), and finally carrying out the requested action (line 9). All of the devices indicated here are discussed in more detail below.

That there are non-minimal sequences means that not all 207 recruitment moves in the core collection are independent events: some are pursuits of responses following problems in compliance or other-initiations of repair (in §5.1, I discuss an apparent limit to the number of pursuits observed). Where relevant, I make a distinction between *initial* (or *independent*) versus *subsequent* recruitment moves, and I reserve the term *recruitment sequence* for the full sequence, minimal or non-minimal, an initial recruitment move gives rise to.

### 2.3 Subtypes of recruitment sequences

The actions that recruitment moves aim for can be classified into types. Three common ones are (i) the transfer of an object from B to A, (ii) the provision of a service by B for A, and (iii) the alteration of a trajectory of action. We have seen an object transfer in (1), where a calabash changes hands, and a provision of a service in (2), where a mother is recruited to take care of her child. The notion of “service” is the broadest of the three and it is no surprise that this turns out to be the most frequent category in the corpus (Table 2).

Extract (3) below illustrates the third type of recruitment, where one person asks another to alter an ongoing trajectory of behaviour. Yao and Afua are producing palm oil when Lucy stops by their compound to ask something (line 1, 4). She happens to position herself right before the camera. Yao draws attention to this and asks her to move aside.

(3) Palmoil1_1118517
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Table 2: Target actions and their frequency in Siwu (counting only independent sequences)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Examples in this chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transferring an object</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>(1), (9), (17), (18), (22), (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing a service</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>(2), (5), (6), (8), (15), (16), (19), (20), (21), (25), (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altering a trajectory of action</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>(3), (13), (14), (26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 lucǹdɔrɛ kasorekɔ misee? ((positions herself in front of the camera))
firewood LOC:gather:place 2PL:go:Q
are y’all going to the firewood place?

Yao’s recruitment to “move away with your uh tub there” (line 5) is not a response to Lucy’s question. Instead it launches a new course of action, with the turn preface “look” marking a departure from the current course of action (Sidnell 2007) and helping to redirect Lucy’s attention to the camera, which is behind her. She turns around and takes a look at the camera (line 6), producing two high-pitched exclamations of surprise (line 7) which also claim unawareness of the situation and therefore serve to account for her prior actions.

The sequential definition of recruitments used here relies on the recognition of Move B as something practical for or with participant A. This opens the door...
to a further possible distinction with regard to how Move B arises. Often, it is prompted by an explicit recruitment in Move A, as we have seen in the examples so far. But it can also arise in anticipation of a current or imminent need. This is illustrated in (4). Emma, a blind woman, is inside a room while some others are chatting and preparing food outside. One of them, Aku, is sitting in the doorway. When it becomes clear that Emma is going to go outside (line 1), Aku stands up from the doorway to make way for her (line 4).

(4) Compound4_2054269

1 EMM  (((audibly takes some shuffling footsteps toward doorway, Figure 2L))

2 KOF  [mmakosò
          kin.F.junior
          aunty

3 EMM  "mmakosò  [ɔbi°
          kin.F.junior  child
          'aunty's child'

4 Aku  (((looks over her shoulder and stands up, freeing doorway, Figure 2R))

5 KOF  yara so
          brace self
          be careful

6 EMM  ((takes further steps, stands still in doorway))

7 KOF  nɛ  go  ata  ɓaba  nɛ, ɔɔ ta ɔ  nɛ-
          so how 2SG:PROG 2SG:come TP, 3SG:PF stand 3SG TP
          so because you're coming, she stood up-

8 EMM  mm

9 KOF  ù ocre  Akuvi  ɔta  i  kayogɔ\ subsidi.
          my wife PSN:DIM she:stand LOC doorway
          my dear Aku stood up from the doorway

10 EMM  ((leans against portal and takes a careful step down))

Cases like this, in which someone responds to anticipated trouble, can be challenging to identify because the recruitment move itself is not on record: Emma does not ask Aku to get up. In this case, another participant happens to provide a running commentary that supports an analysis of this event as a recruitment. Kofi, a distant relative hanging around and engaging in occasional chats with the
others, first cautions Emma to be careful stepping out the door, then describes what happened in causal and sequential terms, stating how one behaviour occasioned another: “so because you’re coming, she stood up” (lines 7, 9). This comment glosses Aku’s assistance as relevant and potentially expected given the context.

Fully nonverbal recruitments like this are in the minority (15 sequences in the Siwu corpus), and straddle the boundary between offers of help and responses to requests (Couper-Kuhlen 2014). One reason they are interesting is that off record cues may, over time, develop into conventionalised signals, and may come to be seen as part of an ordered paradigm of interactional practices (Manrique & Enfield 2015). For instance, on urban sidewalks, an audible footstep is often sufficient to ‘ask’ others to make space, and appears to be preferred over an explicit request, a format that tends to be reserved for subsequent attempts. In the following sections we will explore a range of formats that are more directly on record as requests for assistance or collaboration.
3 Formats in Move A: the recruitment

3.1 Nonverbal behaviour in recruitments

Most recruitment moves are multimodal utterances composed of speech and bodily behaviour. The semiotic resources work in concert to convey the recruitment, with a division of labour appropriate to the affordances of each modality (Goodwin 2000; Clark 2012). Three common forms of nonverbal behaviour found in recruitments are (i) reaching to receive an object, illustrated in (1) above; (ii) holding out an object; and (iii) pointing, illustrated in the following case.

Eku is preparing food. Her teenage daughter Kpɛi has just come back from school and is standing next to the water tank. Eku starts with an imperative su ‘take’, then self-repairs to ask Kpɛi to check whether there is water in the tank. After receiving confirmation, she produces a complex recruitment that involves taking a container, filling it with water, pouring that water somewhere, then putting it on the fire (lines 3-6). The underspecification of the verbal content is made up for by a series of pointing gestures, three of which are illustrated in Figure 3.

(5) Maize3_276559a

1 Eku su e: ndu pia mmɔ: ((points in direction of water tank))
   take HES water be there:Q
   take uh: is there water there?

2 Kpe mm.
   INTJ
   mm.

3 Eku su fore- si àsu eh galɔn gangbe ((points to gallon, Figure 3A))
   take pour LNK 2SG:take HES gallon AGR:this
   take and pour- then take this gallon

4 si àfore ndu ((points to water, Figure 3B))
   LNK 2SG:pour water
   then pour some water

5 (0.4)

6 si àsu àsɛ aàsia ɔtɔ. ((points to fireplace, Figure 3C))
   LNK 2SG:take 2SG:set 2SG:FUT:put fire
   then put it on the fire
Besides the three consecutive pointing gestures, the sequence in (5) reveals a range of verbal elements that enter into the design of recruitments. To these we now turn.

3.2 Verbal elements: constructions for formulating recruitments

Recruitments come in different formats, conventionalised linguistic practices that deliver social actions (Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen 2005; Fox & Heinemann 2016). For recruitment turns that include a predicate, it is possible to distinguish between a number of constructions and grammatical moods (Table 3). There is a small number of recruitments that do not feature a predicate (for instance, combining “hey” with a pointing gesture to draw someone’s attention to an actionable matter), and in 11 mixed cases, formats are combined. The basic construction types reviewed here can further be enriched with a range of final particles and other elements, described in the next section.

As Table 3 shows, all construction types occur in initial as well as subsequent position. However, there are some patterns that suggest an ordering of resources. For instance, 7 out of 8 interrogatives are found in initial position (the sole subsequent case is a response pursuit that repeats an initial interrogative). So an interrogative is never selected as an upgrade of another format; but the opposite does occur, as when an initial interrogative is reformulated as a proposal in (10) below. Conversely, some non-predicative formats like anɔ: “y’hear?” in (20) occur only in subsequent position, as a result of the fact that one can pursue a response to a recruitment by repeating only part of it — in this case, the final tag.

Linguistic labels such as those in Table 3 are employed here for ease of reference. However, the analysis of these formats below is focused more on under-
standing the interactional work done with these formats, each of which brings their own affordances for social action. To briefly preview the interactional work done with the main constructions: imperatives allow people to direct each other’s actions; *si*-prefaced recruitments present a requested action as a logical consequence; declaratives are noticing that present reasons for action; negative interrogatives mark deviations from expected courses of action; and jussives frame recruitments as suggestions for courses of action.

### 3.2.1 Imperative

The basic imperative in Siwu is simply the bare verb, usually morphologically unmarked for person and number, though occasionally, the plural prefix *mì- ‘2PL’* is encountered. Some imperatives feature just a verb phrase (*sa mà ‘chase them away’, (6)*), others add a beneficiary (*su tã mɛ ‘gimme back’, lit. ‘take give me’, *(22)*) or a more elaborate specification of the desired action (*ba fore mɛ ndu ‘come pour me water’, *(21)*). Serial verb constructions, as in the latter two examples, are common.

Although a plural form of the imperative does exist, most recruitments are unmarked for person or number, even when the requested action is taken up by multiple people. An example of this is in *(6)*, where one participant notices some goats getting too close to the food and issues a directive to “chase them away”. Her recruitment is unaddressed and unmarked for person or number, and is taken up by two people who are closer to the goats than she is (lines 5, 6).

*(6) Cooking1_1545188

1 ((goats approach food))
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2 AFU  så ma
        chase them
        chase them {away}

3 (0.5)

4 AFU  så [ma
        chase them
        chase them {away}

5 TAW  [kai (0.4) [↑kai ((waves arm))
        INTJ INTJ
        kai (0.4) kai

6 ADZ  [h h, ↑h, h↑ h ((waves arm))
        INTJ INTJ INTJ INTJ INTJ
        h h, ↑h, h↑ h

7 ((goats flee the scene))

Imperatives are by far the most common construction type in the Siwu data, accounting for 59% of all recruitment moves and over 70% of recruitments featuring speech. As we will see below, there are several ways of designing imperative recruitments to specify consecutive actions (si-prefacing, §3.3.2) or to mark fine differences in stance or illocutionary force (final particles, §3.3.3).

3.2.2 Declaratives and interrogatives

Some recruitments in the collection come in the form of declaratives. All of them are noticing of some actionable event or matter that requires attention. In (7), two women are chatting while preparing food. Vicky is in the process of telling a story when she sees a chicken coming up behind Tawiya. She interrupts her telling mid-turn to tell Tawiya of the chicken, marking it as a piece of advice with the final particle lō (line 3), which results in Tawiya shooing away the chicken using the animal-oriented interjection shue (line 4). Without missing a beat, Vicky resumes the story by recycling material from the turn she abandoned (line 6).

(7)  Compound4_1600030
Mark Dingemanse

1 VIC ma- masɛ maàmala 5 ara ideye, màamala 5 ara ideye, 3PL 3PL:go 3PL:PST:store her things it:seems, 3PL:PST:store her things it:seems they they went and stored her things, they stored her things

2 VIC si màanyɔ- LNK 3PL:PST:see then they saw-

3 VIC kɔkɔ to ɔki ɔlɔ[ɔ mmɔ ló ((bends forward)) chick PROG 3SG:circle 3SG:hover:2SG.O there FP a chicken is hovering around you there ló

4 TAW [↑shuɛ:↑ ((moves to chase away chicken)) INT]

shoo!

5 ((chicken walks away))

6 VIC si màanyɔ Mercy ɔɔkpese ɔkpa ànaà. LNK 3PL:PST:see PSN 3SG:PST:return 3SG:leave again then they saw Mercy had gone back and disappeared.

A similar case happens later in the same interaction, when Tawiya has put a pan on the fire next to her and Vicky sees it sliding from one of the firestones, at risk of toppling. Vicky notifies Tawiya by pointing out the trouble and Tawiya responds by righting the pan.

(8) Compound4_1655650

1 ((pan slides off one of the firestones))

2 VIC kãrã te ìturu. ((points to trouble)) pan it:PROG it:tilt the pan is tilting

3 TAW ↑mm↑ ((turns to look, repositions the pan))

In both cases, the declarative formatting is well-suited to deliver a verbal “noticing” of some actionable trouble which the other may not have noticed yet and is in a good position to resolve.\(^2\)

\(^2\) A reviewer points out that the beneficiary of the target action here is not clearly the person producing the recruitment turn, making them akin to what Couper-Kuhlen (2014) has described as “suggestions”. However, such suggestions in Couper-Kuhlen’s English data are “likely to be resisted in everyday conversation” (2014: 635) and often have the other as the primary beneficiary; here, no such resistance is in evidence and the beneficiary is not self or other alone, but both.
Question-formatted recruitments are rare, and the most common type is a negative interrogative format. In (9), Dora spots somebody walking off and asks “hey, aren’t you bringing me water?” (line 1). The negative interrogative design lends the recruitment a complaining quality (Heinemann 2006) and appears to orient to a decreased likelihood of immediate fulfilment. Indeed, Efi indicates she will be going someplace else before coming back. Dora’s response provides further evidence of the complaint-like quality of the initial formulation: “it’s because of you this woman has not bathed yet”.

(9) Maize1_6136999

1 DOR (f) hàɛ: aità bɔ me ndu: (f)
      hàɛ a-i-tà bɔ me ndu-u
     INTJ 2SG-NEG-PROG bring me water-Q
     ‘hey, aren’t you bringing me water?’

2

3 EFI losɛ kàto ngbe loba.
   1SG:go top here 1SG:come
   ‘I’m going up, I’ll be back’

4

5 DOR (f) ɔɔnya fɔ ɔso ɔrɔ ̃go ūipie ndu (f)
     a -ɔ{}-nya 2SG ɔso ɔrɔ ̃go ū- i- pie ndu
     2SG-PFV-see 2SG reason woman REL:here 3SG-NEG-bathe water
     ‘you see it’s because of you this woman has not bathed yet’

In (10), it is approaching mealtime and Afua calls out to her fellow clan member Eku, asking “won’t you eat food?”, the plural *mi* signalling that Eku is accompanied by others. When no response follows, she upgrades the recruitment, shifting from an interrogative to a jussive format, discussed in the next section. The recruitment goes ignored and is abandoned as the conversation lapses.

(10) Cooking1_1266243

1 AFU Daa Eku (. ) miite mide ara:
      sister PSN 2PL-NEG-PROG 2PL-eat thing
      Sister Eku(.) won’t you eat food?

2 (0.4)
3.2.3 Jussives

Recruitments can be formulated as proposals using the verb forms ba ‘come’ and tā ‘give’, which structurally can be characterized as jussives. The first is often heard in a formulaic proposal “come let’s eat”, routinely addressed towards passers-by when people are sharing a meal. In (11), Ruben invites Kodzo to share a meal, though Kodzo declines. This first person plural formulation is the most commonly encountered version of the ba ‘let’s’ format; example (10) above provided a case of the second person plural version.

(11) Compound4_2048169

1 RUB kà ba bòde adera ló
   ING come 1PL:eat food FP
   come let’s eat ló

2 KOD oô, mila i mmɔ ló.
   INTJ 2PL-hold LOC there FP
   oh, you just keep at it ló

Another jussive format frames a recruitment as a proposal with a beneficiary, owing to the semantics of the tā auxiliary, derived from tā ‘give’. We’ve seen one example in (1), where the beneficiary is the recruiter herself (“let me look”). In (12), it is a third person (“let him sit by your side”). Evidence of the auxiliary status of tā comes from occurrence of negative forms like (13): “don’t let me get sore”. If tā were a bona fide verb here it would require the benefactive to follow immediately after it (tā me ‘give me’); instead, here it conveys a jussive sense “let {it}” and the main predicate is bébɛrɛ ‘burn, feel sore’.

(12) Maize3_673020 (see 20 for full sequence)

4 AKU tā ū ɔsɛ i fɔ kɔrɛ.
   let him NOM-sit LOC 2SG side
   let him sit by your side.

(13) Compound5_366774
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 AKU daa tã bɛbɛrɛ mɛ
 NEG let burn me
don’t let me get sore

Interrogatives and jussives are typically classified as more indirect than imperatives, and prior work in cross-cultural pragmatics has revealed “a strong preference for conventional indirectness” in languages like English and German (Ogiermann 2009). In Siwu, by contrast, imperative constructions are the main workhorse for recruitments. With imperatives, declaratives, interrogatives and jussives we have exhausted the basic grammatical distinctions made in recruitment predicates in Siwu.

3.3 Additional verbal elements

3.3.1 Vocatives

One prerequisite for fulfilling recruitments is that it has to be established who will do it. In multi-party interaction, vocatives —linguistic resources such as proper names and interjections used for addressing people— provide one way to address recruitments to specific participants and to get their attention. We saw this in earlier examples where recruitments are prefaced by proper names: “Beatrice wash your hands...” (2) and “Sister Eku, won’t you eat?” (10). In both cases, the recruitments happen in multi-party interaction, and the vocatives help cut across established participation frameworks and activities to address a specific recipient.

Proper names and other terms of address can also show up in summons-answer sequences preceding the recruitment. Though not an “additional element” in such cases, I discuss them here because of the topical link to vocatives. An example is in (14) below. Bella calls her mother with “mama”, and after the answer, asks her to get up and sit elsewhere while preparing the food. A summons-answer sequence serves the role of establishing an open channel for interaction (Schegloff 1968). Other examples are in (15), (31), and (33).

(14)  Cooking1_1188540

 BEL mama.

 MUM tm

 BEL ta si àbara ngbe ((walks with a bench in direction of table))
 get.up LNK 2SG:do this here
 get up and do it here
4 Mum ((finishes her task of peeling cassava, then gets up and repositions herself))

Vocative interjections like ‘hey’ can be used in the same two sequential environments: as a summons separate from the recruitment turn, or an element of the recruitment turn. We saw an example of the latter in (9), where Dora addresses someone in the distance with “hey, aren’t you bringing me water?”.

3.3.2 Marking consecutive actions and giving reasons

Many recruitments in the collection begin with an imperative and specify a consecutive action that is introduced using a morpheme si, as in (2) “wash your hands si you come take him”. For this item, I adopt the term “linker” from Ameka’s 2008 analysis of Ewe né, a form with a similar range of uses. In (15), Eku asks her daughter Afua to take a broom and sweep the compound, introducing the second element of the action with si (line 3).

(15) Neighbours_4593390

1 Eku Afua
   PSN Afua
2 (0.8)

3 Eku su ibubù si kà afifiɛ ngbe.
   take broom LNK IMM you:PLUR~sweep here
   Take a broom and sweep here.

4 Afu ((gets up to take broom))

In these and other examples, there is a complex recruitment turn specifying more than one action, where the first action (usually formatted as an imperative) appears to be a first step for later actions, and the later actions are introduced in a si-prefaced subordinate clause. In this context, it can often be translated as “then”, “so {that}” or “in order to” (Table 4). Sometimes the si clause is a component of the recruitment (as in “come take the child” or “sweep here”), while in other cases it need not be implemented by the recipient (“so that I can wash my hands”, “so that {he} be dressed”. What unites all cases is that si marks a consecutive relation in which one action follows another (with the first often addressing a precondition for the one introduced after si).

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Table 4: First steps and consecutive actions in multipart recruitments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>FIRST STEP (imperative)</th>
<th>CONSECUTIVE ACTION (si-prefaced)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>wash your hands</td>
<td>come take the child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>get up</td>
<td>{continue to} do it here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>take a broom</td>
<td>sweep here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>come pour me water</td>
<td>{so} I can wash my hands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A case discussed earlier (partly repeated as (16) below) provides a closer look at the relation between different stages of recruitments and the design of si-prefaced recruitment formats. In line 1, Eku first launches a bare imperative format, then self-repairs and turns it into a question about a necessary precondition: “take uh: is there water there?”. The self-repair reveals an orientation to the conditions necessary for granting the recruitment. Once it is clear that this condition is fulfilled, she goes on to formulate a recruitment turn combining an imperative and a si-prefaced target action (line 3). That turns out to be only the first in a series of actions requested of Kpei, all of them introduced with si-prefaced clauses: “si you take this gallon” … “si you pour some water” … “si you put it on the fire”. This supports the analysis of si as encoding consecutive actions. The consecutive recruitments all have irrealis mood and so can be described collectively as linked by a form of co-subordination, a situation similar to the linker né in Ewe (Ameka 2008).

(16) Maize3_276559a (excerpted from (5))

1 Eku su ɛ:. ndu pia mmɔ: ((points in direction of water tank))  
   take HES water be there:Q  
   take uh:. is there water there?

2 Kpei  
   mm.  
   INTJ  
   mm.

---

3 Homophonous with this marker of consecutive action si ‘so that’ is a form that introduces conditional antecedents si ‘if’. It is possible that the two are related, which would render si heterosemous and would make the si-prefaced format akin to independent if clauses (Ford & Thompson 1986), which have been found in many languages to develop into a dedicated request format (Evans 2007; Lindström et al. 2016). However, many of the si-prefaced recruitment turns do not lend themselves to a conditional reading; indeed, they tend to be closer to the consequent (‘then’) than to the antecedent of a conditional.
The consequential or consecutive reading of *si* opens up the possibility for *si*-prefaced clauses to be used in providing reasons for recruitments. An example is in (17). Mum calls on Sesi, her teenage son, to bring her a “knife and uh tub” (line 1). When after a while he arrives with only a knife, she repeats the request for a tub, now adding a *si*-prefaced reason: “so I {can} peel the cassava” (line 3). Peeling the cassava is an activity for which one needs a knife and a container. By mentioning this activity and marking it as a consecutive action, Mum renews the relevance of getting the tub and adds weight to her repeated request.

Because of their consecutive meaning, *si*-prefaces can be used to present “in order to”-motives (Schutz 1962) in interaction. In such cases, the *si*-prefaced clause is the motive for which the recruitment is a means, as here for Mum’s request to be brought a tub so she can peel the cassava.

Another type of reason that people may use in recruitment sequences refers to “because”-motives (Schutz 1962). These are not marked with *si* but presented
as declarative statements. We saw both types together in (2), where Beatrice was asked to “wash your hands si you come take him” (an in-order-to motive), “cause he’s done sitting” (a because-motive).

Reasons occur in 26 out of 207 initial and subsequent recruitment turns. Most commonly, they occur in response pursuits when there was a problem in uptake, as we saw in (2) and (17). In the relatively rarer cases when they occur in first position, they may be designed to help to disambiguate a request (21), or to anticipate a question about rights and duties that might otherwise come up. These functions of reasons, which can be summarised as rendering requests more intelligible and making fulfilment more likely, correspond closely to those found in a dedicated study of a collection of 56 recruitment sequences featuring reasons in Russian (Baranova & Dingemanse 2016).

3.3.3 Mitigating and strengthening recruitments

In their seminal work on the structure of therapeutic interaction, Labov & Fanshel (1977) noted that some linguistic devices appeared to soften requests (‘mitigators’) while others may serve to strengthen them (‘aggravators’). Conversation analytic work since then has showed that such devices can be understood with reference to the sequential structure of interaction (Heritage 1984; Schegloff 2007). We have already seen some of the resources for upgrading the strength of subsequent versions of requests, for instance adding a marker of resaying or providing a reason.

Like many West-African languages, Siwu has a system of final particles, two of which are of particular interest with regard to the question of how people can modulate the force of recruitments. The final particle ló conveys ‘I advise you’, entailing no claim about prior knowledge. The form ní conveys ‘you should have already understood’, entailing a claim about prior knowledge and a complaint that this has not been acted upon. The two forms are not attested together in the same utterance in the corpus, and seem to occur in complementary sequential positions.

We saw ló in example (7), where Vicky noticed a chicken behind Ella and told her so she could take action. One affordance of ló is its ‘no fault’ quality (Heritage 1984: 271): it does not imply prior knowledge and so does not blame the other for failing to know or notice something. This is why it can also serve as a gentle nudge that makes a recruitment sound more affiliative. In terms of sequential position, it tends to turn up in initial but not in subsequent versions of recruitments, as seen in (18). Emilia is preparing porridge in the kitchen as Aku is sitting outside, a few meters away, back turned to Emilia. After a lapse in the conversation
(Hoey 2015), Emilia calls on Aku to bring her bowl, with the implication she can get some food. The recruitment comes with ló, marking it as advice and perhaps orienting to the possibility that Aku, sitting outside, may not be aware that food is ready to be served. When Aku does not respond immediately, Emilia pursues a response by first calling her, then repeating the recruitment, now without ló (line 6).

(18) Cooking1_521410

1 (7.0)

2 EMI Aku bɔ mɛ fɔ irɔi ló
   PSN bring me your bowl FP.advice
   Aku bring your bowl ló

3 (1.4)

4 EMI Aku
   PSN
   Aku

5 AKU mm.
   mm.

6 EMI bɔ mɛ fɔ irɔi
   bring me your bowl

7 Aku ((gets up))

The final particle ní is almost a mirror image of ló. It rarely occurs in the initiating turn of a recruitment sequence and instead appears in subsequent versions that pursue a response. In (19), Emma is shuffling across the compound heading towards an overturned bench which she cannot see (this is moments after (4), where Aku stood up for her). Aku instructs her to “pass here”. When Emma does not appear to be listening and instead places her cane on the overturned bench, Aku pursues a response by saying “pass here ní”, the ní particle marking it as something that should have been understood and acted on already. (Similar strengthening uses of ní are found in a sequence analysed in (28) and (29) below, where a mother attempts to get her teenage son to run an errand.)

(19) Compound4_2076833

1 EMM ((blind, walking with cane, is about to stumble over overturned bench))
In sum, the final particles ló and ní help to manage accountability by making claims about the recipient’s knowledge (or lack of knowledge) about what they should be doing. Ló can be seen as a general dispensation, conveying ‘I advise you’ without implying a complaint. Ní conveys the reverse —‘you should have known this and acted on it already’ — and thereby holds the other accountable for the failure to respond. These usages are in line with the use of the particles in non-recruitment contexts, where they have similar implications.

Another device that can be used to strengthen recruitments is anɔ: ‘you hear’, illustrated in the next case. A little boy is making tottering steps around three women: Aku, Charlotte and Emma. Aku produces a request: “let him sit by your side”. Charlotte adds, “his mother is winnowing rice”, accounting for the unavailability of the primary caregiver. Although neither request nor reason are clearly addressed, the fact that two of three parties present have together formulated a request plus reason makes a response by the third, Emma, relevant. When no response follows, Aku upgrades her request by specifying the action and adding a strengthening particle anɔ: ‘y’hear?’ (line 8). In (30), which continues this extract, it is repeated on its own in a further bid to pursue a response.

(20) Maize3_673020
   (a little boy is hanging around while two women are sitting down and a third Aku, is about to go on an errand)
Mark Dingemanse

7

8

9

- ((continued in (30) below))

Anɔ?: ‘y’hear?’ is a tag question with affirmation as the preferred response (another case is in line 1 of (17) above). Adding it to a recruitment has the effect of soliciting a commitment to fulfil the request: after all, admitting to hearing the request makes it harder to escape the normative requirement to fulfil it.

3.4 Fully nonverbal recruitments

So far we have reviewed a range of linguistic resources for making recruitments. Only 23 independent recruitment moves in the corpus are fully nonverbal. These can be arranged according to the degree to which they are presented and treated as on record. An off record nonverbal recruitment was illustrated in (4) above, where some imminent trouble on the part of one participant provides a reason for another participant to help out. In such cases the trouble does not make a response conditionally relevant (Schegloff 1968): A cannot be said to have asked anything, and B cannot be held accountable for inaction. Nonverbal recruitments that are on record are rare (3 independent sequences, 9 moves in total), and only seem to happen when recruitments occur as part of an already established activity sequence which can provide the context for their interpretation (Rossi 2014).

One situation where we find such nonverbal recruitments is when a prior request has made relevant the execution of a related subtask. In (21), an extended recruitment sequence is initiated when Atasi asks Eku to “get some water so I can wash my hands”. The si-prefaced reason here (see §3.3.2) helps disambiguate the request: one might need water for any of a number of purposes, with consequences for the quantity desired and the container to be used (in (5), a gallon of water is needed for cooking, and in (9) an even larger quantity is needed for taking a bath). With the request and its reason made clear, Eku’s standing up (line 2) marks a commitment to provide this service, and her return with a calabash with water, some 20 seconds later, marks the start of compliance. Now a series
of nonverbal actions ensues in which Atasi holds out her hands and Eku pours some water in response (lines 18-22), a process that is repeated six times until the sequence is completed.

(21) Compound5_846793

1 ATA ba fore me ndu sí lòfore kɔrɔ come pour me water LNK 1SG-pour hand come pour me water so I can wash my hands

2 EKU ((stands up to fetch water))

... ... ...

(26 seconds pass, during which an unrelated story is told by a third party, after which Eku returns with a calabash of water and Eku and Atasi stand together))

... ... ...

18ATA ((holds out hands and assumes ‘washing hands’ position))

19 EKU ((pours water over A’s hands))

20 (2.3)

21ATA ((opens hands palms up for more water))

22 EKU ((pours more water))

... ... ...

(actions in 21-22 repeated five times))

23ATA ((shakes water off her hands, walks back to seat))

Cases like this show that recruitments can assume a fractal nature, where an initiation and its response can set up a context for a number of subsidiary sequences. To the extent that such subsidiary sequences occur in the context provided by the base sequence and are part of a default script associated with the base activity, they are often implemented nonverbally.

A recruitment with subsidiary sequences like this raises the question of how we can distinguish between a series of recruitments versus a sequence of behaviours done in the service of one recruitment. The most reductive approach would be to stipulate that only base sequences count as recruitments. There
would be one Move A (“come pour me water so I can wash my hands”, line 1), and its fulfilment would be the full sequence of moves implementing that complex action, starting when Eku stands up to get the water (line 2) and ending when Atasi shakes the water off her hands (line 33). However, this analysis would fail to capture the contingent nature of Atasi’s repeated nonverbal requests for more water (lines 21-22ff.). The number of times water has to be poured is not pre-set and is under Atasi’s control, while for the pouring of the water, she fully depends on Eku. Therefore, Atasi’s opening up her hands palm up is analysed here as a Move A and Eku’s pouring of more water as a Move B, and a series of such moves in quick succession expands the base adjacency pair.

Another example of a fully nonverbal recruitment is in (22). Bella is holding Aku’s phone and taking a call. Aku asked her to pick up. Speaking into the phone, she notes she is “not sister Aku”. When it becomes clear the caller wants Aku, Aku asks Bella to give back the phone (line 3). After a place in which a response would have been relevant, she asks again, now with an added gesture of reaching out to receive the phone (line 5). When Bella continues to speak on the phone, Aku produces one more response pursuit, this time fully nonverbal (line 7), after which she is handed back the phone.

(22) Neighbours_818304

```
1 BEL  me nye sistà Aku oo lò.
       NEG COP sister PSN NEG FP
I’m not sister Aku lò.

3 AKU  su tã mɛ.
       give me back

4    (0.8)

5 AKU  su tã mɛ ((reaches out for phone))
       give me back

6 BEL  èvìà ye. ((turns towards A))
       child:DEF FOC
       her child

7 AKU  ((extends hand further and makes grasping gesture, Figure 4))

8 BEL  ((hands over phone))

9 AKU  hɛlo mɛka ye?
       hello person:CQ FOC
       hello, who is this?
```
Like the subsidiary recruitments in (21), the response pursuit in (22) occurs in an environment where it is already abundantly clear what needs to be done and by whom. So both cases fit the generalisation that fully nonverbal requests tend to occur only when the activity structure, participation framework and prior context render verbal specification unnecessary.

3.5 Animal-oriented recruitments

Recruitments are defined in this study as conversational sequences with human participants, in line with a focus of the larger research project on human sociability. However, people also have interactional practices oriented towards animals (Bynon 1976; Spottiswoode et al. 2016). Indeed humans are hardly alone in producing communicative signals aimed at other species (Krebs & Dawkins 1984). Animal-oriented recruitments provide an interesting limiting case of how semiotic resources adapt to situations in which there are radical asymmetries in agency and linguistic capability.

In Siwu, as in many other languages, animal-oriented recruitments often involve a set of dedicated interjections (Ameka 1992). Two examples occurred in excerpts discussed before; the relevant portions are reproduced below. In (23), Tawiya’s interjection *kai* can be said to effectively recruit the goats to go away, and in (24), the interjection *shue* has a similar effect on the chicken.4

---

4 Conversation analysis shies away from attributing intentions to participants in interaction, instead attempting to base analyses on publicly observable sequences of behaviour (Heritage 1990). This methodological stance renders CA suitable for analysing at least some forms of non-human animal communication (Rossano 2013).
The shape of at least some of these animal-oriented interjections appears not to be arbitrary, but motivated. Take \textit{shue} ’shoo’, the interjection for chasing away domestic fowls. A look at functional equivalents from around the world shows that shooing words seem to converge on sibilant sounds (variously transcribed \textit{s}, \textit{ʃ}, \textit{š}, \textit{ç}, Table 5).\footnote{Most of the sources cited do not give phonetic renditions, so forms are presented here without adjustments. The table presents a sample of typologically diverse languages selected by searching grammars and dictionaries for forms translated as ”{shooing/chasing} away {chicken/fowl}”.}

Sibilant sounds show up in shooing words in a diverse sample of languages, many of which are not historically related. Some of the commonalities may be due to language contact. After all, the domestic fowl (\textit{Gallus g. domesticus}) has itself been culturally dispersed (Liu et al. 2006), and some words may have travelled along. However, it is unlikely that the global similarities can be explained solely by cultural diffusion, as this would predict words for ‘chicken’ to show similar global commonalities, which they don’t (Table 5). Nor can the global similarities be explained solely by inheritance from a common ancestor, as this would require a temporal stability that even basic vocabulary is not known for, and again, words for ‘chicken’ do not show such global similarities. A parsimonious explanation is that some sounds are more effective than others for the goal of shooing birds, and come to function as cultural attractors biasing the transmission of shooing words — a form of convergent cultural evolution.

Convergent cultural evolution has been put forward as an explanation for a range of cross-linguistic similarities (Caldwell 2008; Dingemanse et al. 2013; Blythe 2018). Animal-oriented interjections present a particularly stark view of
Table 5: ‘Shoo’ and ‘chicken’ in 17 languages from 11 phyla around the world, showing strong convergence towards sibilant sounds in shooing words, but not chicken words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Phylum</th>
<th>'shoo'</th>
<th>'chicken'</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chaha Gurage</td>
<td>Afro-Asiatic:</td>
<td>(ə)ʃʃ</td>
<td>kutara</td>
<td>(Leslau 1979)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethiopic</td>
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<td>Tamazight</td>
<td>Afro-Asiatic:</td>
<td>hušš</td>
<td>afulus</td>
<td>(Bynon 1976)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Berber</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semelai</td>
<td>Austroasiatic:</td>
<td>cuh</td>
<td>hayam</td>
<td>(Kruspe 2004)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aslian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kambera</td>
<td>Austronesian:</td>
<td>hua</td>
<td>manu</td>
<td>(Klamer 1998)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malayo-Polynesian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Muna</td>
<td>Austronesian:</td>
<td>sio</td>
<td>manu</td>
<td>(van den Berg 1989)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Malayo-Polynesian</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Coast Bajau</td>
<td>Austronesian:</td>
<td>si’</td>
<td>manuk</td>
<td>(Miller 2007)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Malayo-Polynesian</td>
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<td>English</td>
<td>Indo-European:</td>
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<td>chicken</td>
<td>(Oxford Dictionaries n.d.)</td>
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<td>Germanic</td>
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<td>Louisiana French</td>
<td>Indo-European:</td>
<td>ŋuʃ</td>
<td>poule</td>
<td>(Valdman &amp; Rottet 2009)</td>
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<td>Romance</td>
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<td>Russian</td>
<td>Indo-European:</td>
<td>kš-k</td>
<td>kuritsa</td>
<td>(Liston 1971)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Slavic</td>
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<td>Japanese</td>
<td>Japonic</td>
<td>shi</td>
<td>niwatori</td>
<td>(Bolton 1897)</td>
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<td>Siwu</td>
<td>Niger-Congo: Kwa</td>
<td>shue</td>
<td>kɔkɔ</td>
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<td>Ewe</td>
<td>Niger-Congo: Kwa</td>
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<td>koklo</td>
<td>(Ameka 1991)</td>
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<td>Zargulla</td>
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<td>čük</td>
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<td>Kashaya</td>
<td>Pomoan:</td>
<td>ša</td>
<td>kayi:na</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Southeastern</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atong</td>
<td>Sino-Tibetan:</td>
<td>sa</td>
<td>tawʔ</td>
<td>(Breugel 2014)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brahmaputran</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lao</td>
<td>Tai-Kadai: Tai</td>
<td>sòò, ŋ</td>
<td>kaj1</td>
<td>(Enfield 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahu</td>
<td>Sino-Tibetan:</td>
<td>š</td>
<td>á-gâʔ</td>
<td>(Matisoff 1988)</td>
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</table>
the phenomenon, as the evolutionary landscape to which such words must adapt is strongly constrained by the perceptual and behavioural systems of the animals in question. The effectiveness of prolonged sibilants in shooing words for domestic fowls can be connected to the fact that continuous high frequency sounds are among the sound stimuli domestic fowls are most aversive to (Fischer 1972).

Owing to the narrow ranges of behaviour they seek to elicit, animal-oriented signals may present one of the few areas of language that can be truthfully said to bring behaviour under the control of some stimulus, as Skinner (1957) envisioned. The principle of semiotic adaption to perceptual systems is likely to hold across a wide range of animal-oriented communicative signals across languages.

4 Formats in Move B: the response

So far we have considered the design of Move A, the move by which a recruitment is initiated or pursued. But a recruitment sequence is not complete without a Move B. In what follows, we consider the design of Move B and the further development of the sequence, from simple closure in the case of fulfilment to sequence expansion in the wake of resistance and rejection.

4.1 Nonverbal and verbal elements of responses

Since recruitments by definition are requests for practical actions, many relevant responses are non-verbal and consist of doing the target action. Examples of this are shown in Figure 1B, Figure 2B, and Figure 5B, and further examples are transcribed in extracts (3), (4), (15), (17), (18), (19), (21), and (22). About two-thirds of responses to initial recruitments are fully nonverbal, and the great majority of these fulfil the target action or plausibly start to do so.

Although we focus here on the composition of Move B, an important factor in its design is the format used in Move A, the turn initiating the recruitment sequence. Consider the relative frequency of fully nonverbal responses. Table 6 shows the proportion of fully nonverbal Move B turns in relation to the format of Move A. This shows that nonverbal Move A turns are followed by a fully nonverbal Move B in 77% of cases; the remaining 23% is either composite or

---

6 In the same ethological study of domestic fowls, Fischer (1972) shows that sound stimuli featuring repeated low-frequency sounds are most likely to induce following. This generates the prediction that across languages, words for calling domestic fowls will feature more repetition and lower-frequency sounds than words for shooing them.
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verbal only. On the other hand, responses to interrogative recruitment initiating turns are fully nonverbal in only 17% of cases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move A format</th>
<th>What proportion of next Move B turns is nonverbal?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nonverbal</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imperative</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>declarative</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>si-prefaced</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interrogative</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recruitment formats can be ranked on a cline from more to less coercion (Brown & Levinson 1978). One way to explain this cline is in terms of the response space created by the formats in Move A (cf. also Rossi & Zinken 2016). As we saw above, nonverbal recruitment moves occur only in situations where the context makes abundantly clear what is requested, which places considerable constraints on the response space and makes relevant immediate (and nonverbal) fulfilment. Imperatives similarly push fairly directly for fulfilment and leave little room for other types of responses. On the other side of the spectrum, interrogative recruitment turns in Siwu tend to be negative interrogatives like “why don’t you”, which formulate things either as complaints or proposals, both of which allow verbal or composite responses and push less directly for fulfilment.

One of the main uses of verbal material in a recruitment response is to signal a commitment to fulfilling. We see this in (25). Becca, seated on a low bench, is winnowing rice when Ama, who is trying on a new dress, comes standing with her back to her and says “fix me”. Becca immediately responds “now, I’m coming”, takes a second to put down the rice winnower and stands up. Then she carries out the requested action, zipping up Ama’s dress (Figure 5).

(25) Tailor_995460

1 (3.0) ((Ama walks towards Becca))

2 AMAN di me ((comes standing with back to Becca — Fig. 5A))

fix me
Soverbal responses can claim a commitment to fulfil a recruitment when something stands in the way of immediate fulfilment. They remain, of course, always only claims rather than demonstrations. We saw this in (2), where Beatrice said “yes” to a request while finishing another activity. She was subsequently held accountable for not stopping the other activity soon enough. So recruiters may hold their addressees accountable when verbal claims become incongruent with visible actions.

Sometimes verbal elements of responses can respond to aspects of the design of a recruitment turn. For instance, in (8), Vicky notified Ella that a pan slid off a firestone. Ella responded by righting the pan and by uttering a high-pitched response token “↑↑↑↑”, marking Vicky’s noticing as something counter to expectation. Another example where the nonverbal element of the response fulfils the recruitment while a verbal element responds to its formulation is in (26) below. Odo, carrying a small metal pan holding some food that is possibly hot,
walks towards a bench to sit down but finds Bella standing in his way. He issues a crude request to Bella to get out of the way, which she does, though not without voicing her disapproval of his formulation with the response token *woo*:

(26) Neighbours_880320

1 **ODO**

\[
\text{rùi bie kakɔi sɛ wãrã.} \\
\text{uproot find place:INDEF sit rest} \\
\text{get out of the way and find somewhere {else} to relax}
\]

2 **BEL** ((steps aside to make way)) *woo:* INTJ

\[
\text{woo:}
\]

3 **ODO** ((sits down on bench))

A number of features of turn design conspire to make Odo’s recruitment akin to an extreme case formulation and give it complaint-like qualities (Pomerantz 1986): the verb *rùi* literally means ‘uproot’, the indefinite marker *ɔ* attached to *kakɔi* ‘place’ works to suggest Bella should be anywhere but here, and the construal of her current action as ‘relaxing’ implies Bella, perhaps contrary to Odo, has nothing to do. Bella’s interjection of disapproval *woo:* appears to be addressed to these features.

In sum, we have seen here that the bulk of successful responses to recruitments are nonverbal. Verbal elements of responses may vary in relation to recruitment format, and may occur (i) to claim commitment when something stands in the way of immediate fulfilment; (ii) to respond to action affordances of the design of the recruitment. But a further, major role for verbal elements of responses to recruitments is in the domain of resistance and rejection, to which we now turn.

### 4.2 Repair, resistance and rejection

Sometimes, requests are not immediately fulfilled, but questioned, resisted or even rejected. Resistance and rejection rarely come in the form of explicit claims of unwillingness. Rather, participants have a variety of ways to avoid immediate compliance (Kent 2012), though none of them comes for free: as we will see, resistance and rejection (and more generally, dispreferred responses) tend to lead to interactional turbulence.

‘Repair’ refers to the practices people use to deal with problems in speaking, hearing and understanding (Schegloff et al. 1977). In (27), Mum and dad are
Mark Dingemanse

preparing food with Sesi and some other family members close by. Following a joke, dad produces extended laughter, in overlap with which mum asks Sesi to get something, the request infused with a laugh particle. In response, Sesi initiates repair using “what?” and Mum redoes the recruitment, providing a more explicit formulation, after which Sesi complies.

(27) Neighbours_4875900 (Dingemanse 2015: 234)

1 DAD həh hɛ hɛ hɛ HA [HA HA HA HA HA HA

2 MUM [Sesi su ɛ(h)ɛh ira) ] tɑ mɛ PSN take HES thing:INDEF DAT me

Sesi take uhuh: the thingy for me

3 SES be: what:Q what

4 MUM su kadadisĩbi bo mɛ. take small.pot.DIM bring me

take the small pot and bring it to me.

5 SES ((complies by bringing small pot))

An other-initiation of repair starts a side sequence (Jefferson 1972), signalling some trouble that first needs to be resolved before the base sequence can be resumed. A side effect is that the position where a response would be relevant is pushed back at least until this embedded side sequence is closed (in this case, until after line 4). This makes repair initiation a powerful tool that can also be used for secondary purposes. Above we saw how affirmative verbal responses may claim alignment with the goal of a recruitment, but may also hold off actual fulfilment. In a similar way, repair initiations claim communicative trouble but at the same time can be a device for protracting a sequence and delaying fulfilment (Sacks 1992; Schegloff 1979).

Consider (28), where Sesi is asked to fetch a bag to go get a load of plantain from a household in a neighbouring hamlet. Although Mum’s formulation is sufficiently vague to allow Sesi to choose a fitting bag himself “from inside this thing here” (a reference to a shed nearby), he initiates repair, asking “what d’you mean bag?” (line 3). The other people present are quick to respond: Aunty

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7 The dismissive connotation of the indefinite marker ɔ in bagɔ is hard to capture in translation. “Whatever bag?”, “Which bag?”, “What bag?” are possible alternatives.
taunts “you’ll just go with your bare hands?” and Sesi’s father suggests “your school bag.”, a suggestion that, after laughs all around, is elaborated by Aunty to reveal the absurdity of Sesi’s question (line 7). After this barrage of non-serious responses, Mum’s seemingly serious follow-up question remains unanswered by Sesi.

(28) Neighbours_113171

1 MUM ba su ira ní, ba- ba fe àdì ɛɛ- come take thing FP come come pass 2SG-take HES come get {the} thing, come come pass {so} you take uh

2 MUM ɛ bagi i iraɔ amɛ mmɔ ní. HES bag LOC thing:INDEF inside there FP uh a bag from inside this thing here

3 SES mmɛ bá̃gɔ: which bag:INDEF-Q what d’you mean bag?

4 (0.9)

5 AUN ne nrঃ nrঃ aâsɛ[: CONJ hand-DIST 2SG-FUT-go-Q so you’ll just go with your bare hands?

6 DAD [fo] skūl bagi. 3SGPOSS school bag your school bag.

7 ((all laugh together))

8 AUN kele adi siko se si àsu. go 2SG-remove books ? LNK 2SG-take throw your books out and take it

9 MUM bagi na i ɛɛ ngbe gɔ fo ṣe sia áwu sa mmɔ: bag lack LOC HES here REL your father put clothes farm there-Q there’s no bag uh where your dad puts his farming clothes?

10 BEL shuɛ: (.) màko-su maũ ta madaa kutsùɛ ní. INTJ (.) chicken they.TP PROG they:disturb ear FP shoo: the chickens are disturbing.

11 (3.0)
So here we have a recruitment turn followed by a repair initiation that not all parties to the conversation take fully seriously as an indication of trouble. What it is taken as becomes clear later in the interaction, when half a minute has passed and there is still no sign of Sesi fulfilling the request. As (29) shows, Mum pursues a response, upgraded with mlâmlâ ‘quickly’ and a final particle ní (line 38), implying, as we have seen in §3.3.3, that it should have been attended to before. In the continued absence of a response, Aunty observes, “kids are difficult” and Mum adds “kids are extremely difficult” in a second position upgrade that allows her to agree yet also assert her own epistemic access to the matter (Heritage & Raymond 2005).

(29) Neighbours_1131171 (continued from ?? )

- ((27 turns or 35 seconds after line 10))

37 (2.4)

38MUM bɔ: mlâmlâ ní.

bring IDPH.quickly FP

bring it quickly now!

39 (1.0)

40AUN màbi bɔle. màbi ba ɔle

children force children have force.

kids are difficult

41MUM màbi ba ɔle pápápápápàpa.

children have force IDPH.extremely

kids are extremely difficult.

Mum and Aunty’s statements that kids are “difficult” treat Sesi’s troubles in this sequence as related to his teenager status rather than as a true problem in hearing or understanding. In effect, it appears they take Sesi to be exploiting repair to delay or even avoid fulfilling a recruitment — a possibility that also puts his behaviour in (17) and (27) in a new light.

Repair is not the only way to resist a recruitment. Several other ways are illustrated in example (30), which continues (20) above. Three women are chatting together. Aku and Charlotte have asked Emma to watch over a little boy for a moment while his mother is occupied with a task in a neighbouring compound. At line 7, Emma ignores the initial recruitment. Following a response pursuit
by Aku, she then objects “I don’t know who’s picking him up” (line 10), a crafty formulation that enables her to imply she is unwilling to fulfil the recruitment without going on record as saying so. Aku formulates a high-pitched response pursuit “↑You hear?↑”, reasserting the relevance of a response to the request. Following this pursuit, Emma produces a well-positioned yawn, hearable as a claim of tiredness and by implication inability (line 12). In a final bid to secure compliance, Aku repeats the recruitment, now adding “I myself {will do it} when I’m back”, thereby trying to overcome Emma’s unwillingness by proposing to share the task but also accounting for her own inability to do it immediately.

(30) Maize3_673020 (continued from 20 above)

7 (0.8)

8 AKU puta ũ (.) anɔ:
    lift him (.) 2SG:hear:Q
    pick him up (.) you hear?

9 (0.8)

10 EM lèiye ngɔ toòputa ũ ní
    1SG:NEG-know REL:who PROG-SCR-lift him FP
    I don’t know who’s picking him up ní

11 (1.0)

12 AKU ↑anɔ:↑
    2SG:hear:Q
    ↑you hear↑

12 (0.7)

13 EMM mmmhh ((yawn))

14 (1.1)

14 AKU la ũ si lò ba (.) mmɛ nɛto si lò ba.
    hold him LNK 1SG come (.) I self LNK 1SG come
    hold him until I’m back I myself {will} when I’m back

So we see here that a recruitment can be resisted by simply ignoring it (line 7), claiming a lack of knowledge as to who should fulfil it (line 10), or producing a yawn where a response would have been relevant (line 12). Of note is
that throughout, Emma avoids going on record as being unwilling, revealing the lengths to which participants will go to avoid directly rejecting a recruitment.

The yawn, a physical display functioning as a claim of unavailability, brings us into the territory of accounts (Heritage 1988): the explanations that often accompany dispreferred responses. Embodied accounts such as Emma’s yawn are relatively rare, and special in being off record. More commonly, accounts are verbal and on record, as in (13), where Dora asked “aren’t you bringing me water?” and Efi answered “I’m just going up here, I’ll be back”, accounting for her failure to fulfill the recruitment by noting a competing commitment.

Yet another way to resist a recruitment is to propose another course of action, and by far the rarest way to reject a recruitment is to actually say “no”. Both of these happen in the next example. Odo is asked to hold Aku’s child for a moment. Others present include Mercy, a 3 year old child, Hope, Odo’s 9 year old son, and a hairdresser and her client, both visibly occupied. Even though Aku has already walked up to Odo and is holding up the child before him, Odo declines. He does so using a complexly formatted turn featuring a declination, a reason, and an alternative course of action: “no, I didn’t give birth to the child (.) I’m like (.), give it to uh” (line 4) — all features in line with what we know about the design of dispreferred responses (Levinson 1983: 334–35; Heritage 1984: 265–66),

![Figure 6: Aku approaches Odo (in blue shirt) holding out her infant (line 3); after Odo’s refusal, Hope (foreground) is recruited to hold the infant (line 12)](image)

(31)  Compound5_737320

1  AKU  Ee, Odoi!
     voc  PSN:DIM
     Hey, little Odo

2  (0.7)
In response to Odo’s rejection, Aku starts to formulate a name “Me-”, then self-repairs to Odo’s son “Hope”, walking away from Odo and asking Hope to hold the child. Odo meanwhile finishes his word search and says “Mercy” (line 7), likely the name that Aku abandoned. Odo then begrudgingly volunteers to take the child after all, since he had other plans for his son Hope (line 9), but Hope already comes running towards Aku and Odo. Aku takes issue with Odo’s suggestion (line 11) while Hope takes over the child (12). The expansion of the sequence after Odo’s rejection is typical for what happens after dispreferred responses (Schegloff 2007).

Summing up, how do people resist a recruitment? Not without collateral damage to the conversational sequence. They may initiate repair, which has the effect
of buying some extra time, but as the side sequence closes a response is still relevant and they are likely to provide it (27), or be held accountable for failing to do so (28). They may try to ignore the recruitment, but are likely to be held accountable for failing to respond, as in (29) and (30). They can provide a reason (12), propose another course of action, say no outright, or any combination of these things (31), but all of them tend to lead to post-expansion of the sequence.

In short, it seems the deck is firmly stacked against resistance and rejection, and the organisation of interactional resources point to fulfilment as the most expedient way to reach sequence closure. This reflects an observation made in some of the earliest work on the organisation of preferred/dispreferred actions: such actions “are both inherently structured and actively used so as to maximize cooperation and affiliation and to minimize conflict in conversational activities” (Atkinson & Heritage 1984: 55).

4.3 Acknowledgements

Sometimes, a two-part recruitment sequence is followed by an expression that has the interactional function of closing the sequence: a sequence closing third (Schegloff 2007). One example is (32), in which Awusi asks Yawa to pour water in a pan with plantain to be put on the fire. While Yawa is pouring, Awusi says mile “that’s good” to indicate there is now enough water in the pan. This expression is also used when one is poured a drink, to indicate “this is enough”.

(32) Maize3_286780

1 AWU fore ndu- fore ndu i berɛdzɔ amɛ. ((points to pan with plantain))
    pour water- pour water in plantain pan
    pour water- pour water in the plantain {pan}.

2 YAW ((takes jerrycan, pours water))

3 AWU mile:
    AGR:N-be.good
    that’s good

One form of a sequence closing third that is not attested in the Siwu collection is an acknowledgment like “thank you”. The simple practical actions studied here never receive verbal expressions of gratitude. Instead, such expressions appear to be reserved for more momentous occasions, for instance when people have spent a day assisting each other with manual labour on the farm or in town. The importance of gratitude in such cases is enshrined in a Siwu greeting routine often heard in the morning: gu fɔ kɔmakade karabra “for your work yesterday”, answered with (gu) fɔ kpe: “and yours”.

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The absence of acknowledgments like “thank you” in everyday recruitments in Siwu forms an apparent contrast with accounts of frequent thanking practices in some other societies (Aston 1995; Becker & Smenner 1986). However, these studies tend to focus on service encounters, which are quite different from the kinds of recruitments studied here (Apte 1974). One crucial difference is that everyday recruitments are almost always repayable in kind. So perhaps “thank you” or other ways of verbalising gratitude are less necessary because of an implicit norm that where possible, we hold ourselves available and willing to help others in turn — a norm that underlies the web of interdependence and reciprocity in resource-sharing that is typical of human societies (Melis et al. 2016). In contrast, service encounters present an asymmetry: we obtain services or goods that we do not control or produce ourselves, so paying back in kind is harder, which makes it more important to verbally express gratitude.8

5 Sequential structure and social asymmetries

5.1 A “rule of three” in social interaction?

Non-minimal sequences amount to a little less than a third of initial recruitments in the core collection (44 out of 146). Most of them are resolved after one pursuit (33 cases); the remainder takes two pursuits (10 cases) except for one that takes three pursuits.9 We see the same in other-initiated repair, where non-minimal sequences amount to about a quarter of 153 independent sequences and resolving a single troublesome bit of talk tends to take just one, sometimes two, and rarely more than three other-initiations of repair (Dingemanse 2015).10 So recruitment and repair usually take only one attempt (as in a minimal sequence),

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8 Children, like adults in service encounters, are also frequently in the position of not being able to pay back in kind. So perhaps the fact that children are socialised (in some societies) to say “thank you” and indeed to use more prolix forms in general is a reflection of this asymmetry in agency.

9 The only cases involving more than three attempts are those involving small children, and as we will see below, these are dissimilar in other ways as well, a key difference being that such children are not held accountable for misunderstandings and failures to response in the same way as other participants.

10 I am indebted to Nick Enfield for our discussion of this pattern in sequences of other-initiated repair. The general pattern seems to be confirmed even in conversations involving people with Parkinson’s disease, where one might expect more protracted sequences of other-initiated repair (Griffiths et al. 2015). Schegloff’s discussion of self-repair notes that “[a]lthough not common, two successive repairs on a same repairable, yielding (together with the repairable) three tries at that bit of talk, are not rare” (Schegloff 1979: 277).
sometimes two, and seldom three or more attempts (Table 7).

Table 7: Distribution of independent sequences of recruitments and other-initiated repair by number of attempts (adult interaction only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>attempts:</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>&gt;5</th>
<th>total independent sequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>recruitments</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other-initiated repair</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If this pattern proves representative and robust, it may point to a “rule of three” (or a “three strikes” principle) in social interaction: a disruption of progressivity in pursuit of a fitting response rarely takes more than three successive attempts, with a preference for less. Research is needed here, starting with the identification of deviant cases, which may reveal to what degree it is a consequence of the structure of complex social action, and to what extent participants orient to it as a socially normative phenomenon.11 Perhaps the needs addressed in recruitment and repair can overwhelmingly be solved in one go, and the diminishing numbers of cases with more than one attempts are in line with an expected probabilistic distribution. Perhaps participants balance intersubjectivity and progressivity (Heritage 2007), and three attempts mark a tipping point where pursuits become too disruptive to overall progressivity. This may also be a fruitful area for cross-species comparison (cf. Wilkinson et al. 2012 on repeated requests for meat sharing among chimpanzees), linking to a more general theme of communicative persistence.

5.2 Social asymmetries

An interest in social asymmetries has long been a prominent feature of cross-linguistic studies of requests and recruitments (Brown & Levinson 1978; Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). On the basis of this literature, one might expect the organisation of assistance in interaction to be influenced by social asymmetries, such that, for instance, the selection of one format over another, or the nature of responsive actions, would differ depending on the relative social status of participants.

There is one large set of recruitments where social asymmetries clearly play a role: those involving small children as recruitees (recall that these were col-

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11 One indication that the “rule of three” relates specifically to disruptions of progressivity (as opposed to being a general limit on repeated behaviour) is that multiples of successful recruitment sequences in close succession do occur, as in example (21), which features at least six nonverbal requests and responses.
lected separately from the 207 cases that make up the core collection of Siwu recruitments). The following extract is from a multi-party conversation in which a mother asks her toddler, less than 2 years of age, to come to her. The sequence involves six pursuits until compliance follows at line 11.

(33) Cooking1_93710

1 MUM  Sise (.) ba.  
    | Sise (.) come. 

2 (0.8)

3 MUM  ba.  
    | come.  
    | come

4 (0.4)

5 ESI  mama sɔ ba.  
    | mum says come.

6 MUM  tba:  
    | tco:met

7 (0.6)

8 ESI  tma:ma sɔ tba:  
    | tmm:et  
    | says tcom:et

9 (1.2)

10 ESI  Yaa  tMA+tMA sɔ BA  
    | IDPH  MUM  SAYS  COME

11 CHI  ((turns and walks towards mother))

12 AMA  c  nyɔ ne yaa.  
    | 3SG  watch it  IDPH.absently  
    | it was just staring  yaa [absently].

13 MUM  ((holds up underpants))

14 CHI  ((steps into underpants))

This sequence differs in several ways from most others considered so far. The number of pursuits appears to flout the “rule of three” (though none of the participants individually puts in more than three attempts). The pursuits are all simple
repetitions with few changes except in prosody, in stark contrast with other pursuits we have seen which involve reformulations and reasons. Despite many pursuits, the child does not provide any form of response until the nonverbal action in line 11, and there is no evidence it has mastery of devices like repair initiation or other practices people use in non-minimal sequences. Whereas recruitment and response usually tend to be taken as a matter between recruiter and recruitee, here two other participants join in pursuing a response (lines 5, 8, 10), and a third provides an account for the lack of response of the child (line 12), showing it is seen as accountable behaviour while implying the child cannot (yet) speak for itself.

Combined, these observations suggest that child recruitees may be treated differently: they are treated as still having to learn how to respond to recruitments, and they are not held accountable for their interactional conduct and for possible troubles in understanding in the same way that other participants typically are. While it may be tempting to say the child is treated this way because of a social asymmetry, it is at least as plausible to say that cases like this show how social asymmetries are socially constructed and reinforced. The sequence is a socialization routine as much as an attempt to get the child to do something.

Social asymmetries also surface in sequences other than those involving very young children. Particularly telling of the social construction of asymmetries are moments when participants orient to them. Recall some of the turbulent sequences involving Sesi—a teenager—and his parents and alloparents. When in (29), Sesi’s aunt and mum noted that “kids are difficult”, they invoke the category of kids—which forms a contrast set with adults—to make a complaint about Sesi’s unwillingness. It may be a universal feature of teenage behaviour to try and find ways to escape household chores. Likewise, it may be a universal feature of caregiver talk to complain about this. That is one way in which social asymmetries can become tangible in interaction.

Although I have focused so far on evidence of social asymmetries in the moment-by-moment unfolding of the interaction, such social asymmetries do not emerge out of nothing. Knowledge about social membership categories and kinship relations is usually available, or at least assumed to be available, to participants in interaction (Terkourafi 2005; Enfield 2013), and so may also influence social interactions without being explicitly oriented to in talk. The most relevant durable social asymmetries for Siwu speakers are grounded in a combination of age and kinship relations. Older age generally comes with higher social status, and kinship structure provides a framework for allocating rights and duties (such that parents and alloparents can exercise deontic authority over younger kin). Based
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on this, most recruitment sequences in the corpus can be classified as involving a dyad that is (i) symmetrical with A and B having approximately the same social status, (ii) asymmetrical with A higher in status than B, or (iii) asymmetrical with A lower in status than B. For 18 cases, it was not possible to apply the metric confidently (Table 8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relation</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No relevant asymmetry (A≈B)</td>
<td>91</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1), (3), (18), (21), (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A higher than B (A&gt;B)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td>(2), (22), (27), (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lower than B (A&lt;B)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>(14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>(9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For a large majority of participants in recruitment sequences, there is no evidence of a social asymmetry between them, reflecting the fact that a lot of everyday social interaction in the corpus is between peers. In about one fifth of cases, participant A can be considered higher in social status than participant B; most commonly, these are cases where parents or alloparents address younger people in the household. In contrast, there are only 6 cases where participant A is clearly lower in social status than participant B. The relative paucity of such cases suggests that people may be somewhat less likely to recruit the assistance of others higher in social status — possibly as a way to avoid resistance, rejection, or other types of interactional turbulence (Brown & Levinson 1978; Floyd, this volume). So social asymmetries may influence how likely people are to recruit assistance or collaboration from others.

Do social asymmetries also influence matters of formulation or format selection? An analysis of the core collection of recruitment sequences provides little evidence that social asymmetry (as operationalised here) is a decisive factor in format selection or in the design of responsive actions. Instead, as we have seen

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12 The following elements of format design and selection did not seem to be affected by the absence, presence or direction of social asymmetry: type of recruitment (object transfer versus service); verbal or nonverbal means of recruitment; construction types (imperative, interrogative, declarative, si-prefaced); presence or absence of an account in the recruitment turn; use of mitigating or strengthening devices; relative frequency of fulfilment versus resistance or repair; presence or absence of an account in the response. For three variables, there are not enough cases in the collection to draw firm conclusions about a possible role for social asym-
throughout this study, many matters of formulation and selection appear to be more directly affected by local factors such as establishment of joint attention, relation to ongoing activities, and sequential position as initial or subsequent. This fits a recurring theme in systematic comparative work on informal conversation: micro-scale local factors like attention, participation framework and sequential position seem more directly consequential than macro-sociological factors like social status, power, or politeness.

6 Conclusions

The domain of recruitments provides a microcosm of how linguistic resources combine with bodily conduct and adapt to social interaction. Malinowski, observing everyday social interaction on the Trobiand Islands a century ago, noted that “The structure of all this linguistic material is inextricably mixed up with, and dependent upon, the course of the activity in which the utterances are embedded” (Malinowski 1923: 311). Recruitments provide a privileged locus for observing this intertwining of speech and action.

Some of the resources used in recruitment sequences bear a language-specific signature. For instance, Siwu makes available a $i$-prefaced format to mark consecutive actions in larger projects, and final particles like $ló$ and $ní$ for mitigating and strengthening recruitments. But beneath the language-specific resources, the recruitment system appears to be fundamentally cut from the same cloth across languages and cultures. Recruitment formats and responses are adapted to recurrent interactional challenges, from calibrating joint commitments to specifying practical actions and managing activity structure. The Siwu recruitment system appears to be one instantiation of a sophisticated machinery for organising collaborative action that transcends language and culture.

Transcription conventions & abbreviations

Conversational transcripts follow the Jefferson conventions (Jefferson 2004), with the following adjustments: speech between $f$ represents higher volume • $↑$ represents a pitch rise • words in free translations with no direct equivalent in the original material are {marked so}. Interlinear glosses follow the Leipzig glossing metrics: the relative frequency of requests to alter an ongoing trajectory of behaviour; the relative frequency of trouble assistance prompted by current or anticipatable trouble; and the relative frequency of resistance and rejection.
rules (Comrie et al. 2004), with the following additions: FP final particle • HES hesitation marker • ING ingressive • LNK linker • 0 object marker • PLUR pluractional reduplication • PSN person name • SCR subject cross-reference marker.

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1 Recruiting assistance and collaboration: a West-African corpus study


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