Gesture as a resource for initiating repair

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In recent years, the inclusion of bodily and material resources has increased dramatically in empirical micro-studies of social interaction. Most of them draw on ethnomethodology/conversation analysis methodology in combination with findings from neighboring fields most noticeably context analysis and gesture studies (e.g., Streeck, Goodwin & LeBaron, 2011). Together they argue that participants draw on a range of resources from various “semiotic fields” (Goodwin, 2000) in the construction of social action. Some of these studies analyze how bodily conduct, in the absence of speech, is organized in much the same way as has been described as first and second pair parts. For instance, a few studies have described how a bodily action is oriented to as an accountable first (e.g. Seo & Koshik, 2010) or second pair part (e.g. de Stefani & Gazin, in press; Arminen et al., forthc.), respectively.

The present paper adds to the description of how bodily conduct can perform an initiating action. The paper analyses how the body can serve as a resource for initiating repair. It describes how a hand gesture, ‘cupping the hand behind the ear’, in the absence of vocal and verbal conduct is oriented to as a repair initiation in a foreign language classroom. The gesture, although it verbally does not indicate the type of trouble -hearing or understanding- the participant is having is treated as a hearing problem, and is generally followed by a repeat of what is treated as the trouble source – the prior turn.

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