

## Contribution with Hand-Raising in Graduate Student Self-Selection: Bringing Legitimacy to the Focal Shift of Talk

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Hand-raising is an extremely useful device for classroom self-selection. According to Sahlström (2002), it exhibits a student's willingness to participate, and is a means by which to attract the attention of the teacher. Kawabe, Yamamoto, Aoyagi, and Watanabe (2014) analyzed various situations and student factors to affect hand-raising in the classroom. The practice of hand-raising is generally found to occur at the teacher's turn transition relevant places, or TRPs (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). The conventional process of self-selection with hand-raising involves a student bidding for a nomination, and the self-selector becoming ratified to speak after the teacher nomination is provided. It was also suggested that later bidders tend to be selected more frequently than the first bidders, who may raise their hands slightly prior to the teacher's early TRPs. Thus, "teachers may reward the late hand-raisers for sufficient listening" (Sahlström, 2002, p. 53-54).

There are instances, however, where hand-raising is concurrently employed with the self-selector's onset of speaking, while teacher invitation or nomination is absent. I call this practice *contribution with hand-raising*. Although it appears to be one way for would-be self-selectors to successfully seize the floor, the hand-raising in such cases may transcend its basic function to exhibit the student's willingness to participate. In this short analysis, I demonstrate the precise role(s) that hand-raising plays in *contribution with hand-raising*. The data for this study are extracted from an extensive video recording of graduate-level courses at a university in the United States. The transcription of the video data followed Jefferson's symbols and conventions (Lerner, 2004). This study employs conversation analysis (CA) to conduct empirically based investigations of the social organization of conversation, or talk-in-interaction (ten Have, 1990).

Below, two examples are presented: asking a question of the prior content (Extract 1), and extending what was said with a personal account (Extract 2). Both extracts occur in Discourse Analysis—a course team-taught by Teacher 1 (T1) and Teacher 2 (T2). T1 has been introducing the technical terms "out of face," "wrong face," and "shame face," when this first extract begins. T1 continues to explain their definitions, illustrating them with an anecdote of her own:

### Extract 1: Shame face

- 01 T1: so for instance, say you- you're ↑tea::ching in a cla:ss, whe::re uhh, (1.0)  
02 the student has a different no:tion o::f (.) uhhm (.) distance,  
03 >like physical distance between teacher and student,  
04 ↑this is actually what happened to me ↑before,<  
(8 lines omitted)  
13 for him or he::r, it could be puh-  
14 >you know perfectly appropriate to be that ↑close<, (.)  
15 but it was not for me (.) so °there was a mismatch°.  
16 (2.0)

- 17 S7: → [°so what was the ] [ difference between wrong face and shame face? °]  
 18 → [((raises her hand)) ] [((points to the PowerPoint ))]  
 19 T2: shame face[↑describes what happens if you are either in wrong face  
 20 S7: [((lowers her hand))]  
 21 T2: or out of face.



Figure 1: Onset of line 17: “so what was-”



Figure 2: Middle of line 17: “difference between-”

T1 explains “out of face” by sharing her personal experience with a student who would talk to her in close physical proximity. After T1’s turn completion and a two-second gap in line 16, S7 raises her hand, looking at and then pointing to some similar terms on the PowerPoint (Figures 1 & 2). Concurrently with this action, she begins speaking *sotto voce* (“So what was the difference between ‘wrong face’ and ‘shame face?’”) in lines 17-18.

Despite raising her hand, S7 did not wait to be nominated by the teacher before speaking. This raises a question as to why S7 did not just jump in without raising her hand. One possibility is that her question is not focused on the teacher’s illustrative story, but rather on the larger issue of understanding the various terms, where the focus of the talk shifts from T1’s experience to S7’s understanding of the terminology. This shift may in part be signaled or mitigated by her hand-raising. In other words, by raising her hand, the student may be attempting to make her spontaneous self-selection with a focal shift of talk look “legitimate” and “official” to the teachers and the class.

The next segment shows another case of raising one’s hand and speaking simultaneously to obtain the floor while shifting the focus of talk. In this extract, the teacher (T1) is discussing the topic of identity change depending on location, while providing an account of her personal experience as an Italian American. Prior to the beginning of the extract, T1 was describing her experience of identifying herself as “American” in Europe, but as “Italian” in the U.S. This extract begins with T1 telling students about her husband’s trouble understanding this shifting self-identification:

Extract 2: You are not Italian

- 41 T1: >yeah my husband never got it either-  
 42 why’re you saying you’re ↑Italian,  
 43 you are not ↑Italian-<  
 44 Ss: [((laughter)) (inaudible) ]  
 45 T1: [you are American[(inaudible)]  
 46 T2: [she for exa]mple[(inaudible)- ]

47 S6→ ((Figure 3))  
[YEAH ( . ) I] ↑ fi::nd (0.2) ]  
48 → [((raises hand))] [((put down his hand))]  
((Figure 4))  
49 [that ↓the- where're-you-from identity] ↑interesting,  
50 [((opens his palm up)) ]  
51 when I was in Japan I'm American (0.2)  
52 but get back ↑he::re, (0.5) a::nd,  
53 I am a Floridian born in ↑Florida,  
54 I'm from Orlando,  
55 and in Orlando that's where you're from,  
56 then I'm from Winter ↑Garden



Figure 3: Onset of line 47: "YEAH I-"



Figure 4: Line 49: "that the where -"

In line 46, T2 begins to speak "she for example-" in overlap, and is then cut off halfway by a student (S6), who begins speaking while raising his hand in line 47. In the midst of the laughter and other overlapping utterances, S6 uses a loud, clear voice as he says, "Yeah." "Yeah" may be used to affirmatively acknowledge the prior talk while setting up for upcoming discussion. In other words, the speaker may be performing a shift, from being a passive recipient to being an incipient speaker (Jefferson, 1993; Wong, 2000).

S6's process of acquiring the floor in lines 46-49 is intricate. He first interruptively utters, "Yeah," as soon as he raises his hand, while T2's turn is underway (Figure 3). However, this does not cut off T2, who continues with her utterance, but then stops as S6 continues with "I". Right before S6's further attempt at an emphasized continuation of his utterance on "find" along with hand-raising, T2 abandons her turn. Once S6 has obtained and secured the floor, he takes a 0.2-second pause and lowers his hand, just as his first mission has been completed in line 47. After this pause, he launches his multiple units in lines 49, telling a story while he puts his palm up (Figure 4). This practice is reminiscent of a turn-entry device absorbed in overlap as a turn-acquiring technique (Schegloff, 1987a); this technique was applied here, but did not fully work on the first attempt, though it worked on the second. Nevertheless, the way the self-selecting speaker S6 first used "Yeah, I find" to secure the turn, then took time once the floor was his before shortly afterwards coming back and providing the content of the turn, resembled the process of this practice.

The simultaneous hand-raising in this segment may again mark a shift of the agentive focus. We must note that after the "yeah" and a micro-pause, S6 begins his turn construction unit (TCU) with "I find," launching a shift from the teacher's story to his own.

Thus, in Extract 1, the self-selector obtained her turn after a two-second gap, while in Extract 2, the turn was obtained soon after T1's talk and in overlap with T2's utterance. After

raising her hand and speaking simultaneously, the speaker in Extract 1 immediately moved her hand to point to the class material while asking a simple question, whereas the speaker in Extract 2 paused while lowering his hand, and began his multiple-unit turn describing his experience. Despite the differences between the two extracts, the self-selectors in both cases use *contribution with hand-raising* to launch a shift of perspective from the teacher's to his or her own without deviating from the general topic of discussion, and the hand-raising may have been employed to legitimize or mitigate such a shift.

In sum, the act of hand-raising in *contribution with hand-raising* exhibits two main accomplishments: (1) securing a turn with an agentive shift of talk; and (2) mitigating such a shift itself. The combination of hand-raising and speaking overall appears to be a very powerful device for acquiring a turn: The raised hand ostensibly exhibits the speaker's willingness to participate to the teachers and the class, while the speaking is a forceful way of launching the turn. In other words, the hand-raising creates an appearance that the student is following the formal process for participation—answering an invitation to bid; however, underneath this procedural appearance, simultaneous speaking is used as a strategy of perhaps securing and maintaining the floor before other students do. Thus, when hand-raising and speaking are performed concurrently, the impact on the turn-acquisition execution is high and we could possibly argue that the combination can extend its effect through turn maintenance as well.

The analysis has also shown that *contribution with hand-raising* gives the self-selector a “one-person legitimizing process” to be a ratified speaker. The two extracts consistently demonstrated that it involves a shift of the agentive focus to oneself without deviating from the larger topic. This concludes that whatever the shift of focus a new speaker is creating within the ongoing topic, the speaker raising his or her hand legitimizes such a shift and applies facework (Goffman, 1967) to alleviate the friction arising from the shift in the self-selection. Even in cases of uninvited participation, and despite the strong impact on turn acquisition, hand-raising plays a significant role of signaling the agentive shift while mitigating such a shift itself.

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