An Analysis of Story-Launching Sequences in Ordinary Conversations and Implications for Second Language Teaching

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Abstract

The present study aims at investigating common storytelling practices and the implications this has on language learning. For this purpose, two casual conversations among three native English-speakers, totaling 2.5 hours, were video-recorded and analyzed using conversation analysis, an emic approach. The study focused on answering the following research question: What are the story-launching practices employed by close friends in casual conversations? The analysis found that the most prominent story-launch practice was assisted story preface, which occurred in three of the four story launches in the data. The study also examines other key story-telling practices, such as disjunctive markers to manage topics and the role of the recipients. This study has significant implications for language learners, as these practices are often not included in current teaching materials and yet are essential for the interactional competence of language learners.

Introduction

Storytelling is an important facet of social interaction for not only people speaking their native tongue, but also for learners of that language. Storytelling is often done to build social relationships and the storytelling process has been shown to promote creativity, cultural awareness and mutual respect amongst the participants (Evans, 1990). For learners of a second language, storytelling not only has the possibility to increase their English ability, but also their growth as a person. It would therefore be beneficial for learners of English to understand the storytelling sequences and practices as they naturally occur in conversations. Conversation analysis (CA) aims to explore these practices and bring to light some of the common methods used by native speakers of a language to tell stories. By incorporating these practices in language teaching pedagogy, teachers can help learners to be better prepared to engage in conversation with others.

This paper firstly reviews the literature on storytelling practices in daily conversation. It then analyzes storytelling practices from CA perspective in a naturally occurring conversations among three roommates. The paper describes story-launching practices and discusses implications for learners of English.

Storytelling and Second Language Learning

Storytelling is a great vehicle for teaching English to speakers of other languages. Palmer, Harshbarger and Koch (2001) studied the effects of storytelling on children's literacy and oral language development and found that it greatly facilitated many areas, including creative thinking and language abilities. Further, it also enhanced their learning through social interaction, increased their awareness and respect for other cultures, and allowed them to build upon their previous knowledge. With all of these benefits, we can see how storytelling in TESOL can greatly improve not only the learners' English skills, but also their overall growth and awareness. Evans (1990) suggested that storytelling also develops second-language skills through awareness-raising and manipulation of paralinguistic elements, such as gestures, tone and pitch. This will help the students convey their meaning through specific paralanguage and nuances.

Importantly, Kasper & Prior (2015) pointed out that doing storytelling exhibits the communicative competence of both speakers and recipients as they interact and engage with each other. They eluded to the importance of storytelling by explaining how it accomplishes specific socials actions in of itself. These kinds of actions may include complaining, blaming and even forming relationships with the participants of the talk. Not only does the speaker relay a personal experience, but they also accomplish specific actions. Furthermore, as participants interact in talk, they can understand what actions their words are accomplishing. Responding to storytelling is an important part of communicative competence. Canale and Swain (1981) stated that "knowing how to be a supportive recipient by effectively conveying alignment and affiliation is an essential part of the ability to use language appropriately in context, an important component of communicative competence" (as cited in Hanlon, Nguyen, & Terazawa, 2014, p. 3). Since storytelling is a complex and multifunctional process to express social actions in ways that rely on both the speakers' and the recipients' understanding, it is a site where learners can practice interactional competence. In storytelling, the learner must not only be competent in language forms, but must also be made aware of the proper speaker/recipient roles in a storytelling exchange.

Learning how to tell stories in conversation is key to learners' development of communicative and interactional competence. For example, Barraja-Rohan (2013) studied the story-telling practices of a Japanese-English learner, Akiko. In the study, Akiko launched the story through a story preface time sequence, but did not continue to tell her story through. Rather, Akiko revealed the story through answering the recipient's many questions. Later in the talk, Akiko improves by telling her stories across a number of turn construction units (TCU) in a more natural way. In the classroom, language teachers often ask learners questions, encouraging them to elaborate on a topic or story. This may feel familiar and natural for learners, based on their classroom experience, but it is not how people tell stories in real talk. This reinforces the need for storytelling practices to be incorporated within current pedagogy.

Another implication storytelling practices have for language learners is the role of a good recipient. Kim (2016) mentioned that following a story is more complex than it seems, that the listener must be able to understand the story, monitor the development of events, and know when the story reaches a climax so they can provide an appropriate response at the right time. Part of communicative competence in storytelling and social interaction is knowing when to give responses and what kind of responses are suitable.

Native speakers of English acquire the skills to tell a story in English naturally through their acquisition of the language and their constant exposure to authentic situations. Second language learners, on the other hand, may have learned how to tell stories in conversations in their first language but have a limited exposure to these authentic situations in the target language. Yet, when we look at

typical ESL/EFL texts teaching storytelling, they are lacking in the authentic manner in which stories are told between native speakers. For learners of English as a second or foreign language, the mechanisms used to naturally tell a story are not explicitly taught and may not even be noticeable at first. The learners may know how to tell stories through learning the specific elements of a story, such as the setting, plot, characters, conflict, climax, and ending but they do not know how to tell the story from start to finish as seen in a typical conversation (Wong & Waring, 2010). An understanding of storytelling practices in everyday conversations is a prerequisite for the teaching of storytelling. In the next section, I will review what makes up the practices of storytelling.

Storytelling Practices

Storytelling has been studied through two approaches: one examines the structure of stories, and the other analyzes how storytelling fits in ongoing conversations. Within the first approach, Labov and Waletzky (1966) stated that a narrative can be structured to include key elements, such as a "person, place, time, and behavioral situation" which is called orientation structure (Labov & Waletzky, 1966, p. 32). This is the structure of most, but not all, narratives in talk. Meanwhile, conversation analysis (CA) looks at elements of storytelling in talk and how stories emerge, develop, and close in the flow of conversations. Jefferson (1978) noted how stories are locally occasioned in turn-by-turn talk, because a next utterance is produced based on what was communicated in the previous utterance(s). In regards to storytelling, this means a story is either triggered by a previous utterance or is introduced methodologically, in order to relate the story to previous talk. While stories do have the structure mentioned by Labov & Waletzky (1966), CA takes a more fine-grained approach and emphasizes the social actions done through storytelling practices (Kasper & Prior, 2015).

Wong and Waring (2010) laid out the basic practices in storytelling sequences as they happen in real talk, which can be summarized as: (1) launching the story, (2) telling the story, and (3) responding to the story. They observed that these sequences are specifically designed to give the speaker adequate time to tell their story, thus suspending their talking turn until the story is finished. They then break each sequence into subtypes of sequences, which will be described in the following paragraphs.

Launching the Story

Story-launching can either occur within a single turn or in a sequence (Wong & Waring, 2010; citing Jefferson, 1978; Lerner, 1992; Sacks, 1974). Wong & Waring (2010) explained that launching a story in a single turn usually only occurs when the story is triggered by previous talk. Jefferson (1978) described two distinct methods for initiating a triggered story within a single turn: (1) through the use of disjunctive markers and/or embedded repetition and (2) through the use of a conventional story-prefixed phrase which related to the same topic as the next utterance. Examples of disjunctive markers includes *oh*, *that reminds me*, while conventional story-prefixed phrases include *one day*, *as a matter of fact*, and *I heard X* (Wong & Waring, 2010). Additionally, embedded repetition is when a part of prior talk is mentioned and that part gets repeated, an example being –*speaking of X* (Psathas, 1995).

Launching with a sequence, on the other hand, can happen through the use of three types of sequences; (1) preface sequence, (2) assisted story preface, and (3) three-part series of turns (Wong & Waring, 2010). A preface sequence occurs in two turns, involves a story preface, and allows the other participant(s) to align as the recipient(s). Sacks (1974) defined a story preface as a device used to establish the recipient has not heard the story before, and described it as containing an offer to tell, a brief characterization and a specific source or time. Wong & Waring (2010) explained that these kinds of devices differ greatly across cultures due to their own sociolinguistic traditions and contexts. Another

type of story launch with a sequence is an assisted story preface, which happens when the launch is initiated collaboratively. Lerner (1992) described this sequence as containing a story prompt, provocation or a reminiscent solicit and recognition of the story. Lastly, the three-part series of turns, derived by Mandelbaum (1987), occurs when one participant launches a story and another forwards its motion, allowing the original speaker to continue with the story.

Telling the Story
After the story launch, the actual telling of the story takes place and is done by either a single party in a single or multiple turn(s) or multiple parties together (Wong & Waring, 2010). If the speaker is the only one recounting the story, then it will become a single party telling. During the storytellers turn(s), the main elements of a story will be relayed. These elements include the background information and climax of the story (Wong & Waring, 2010). If more than one of the participants knows the story, they may tell it together, which is known as a multi-party telling (Lerner, 1992; Mandelbaum, 1987). A relevant point in multi-parry telling is that the speakers of the story also take turns responding and commenting on the story, for example, with laughter (Lerner, 1992). Wong and Waring (2010) identified five types of multi-party telling techniques; verify details, monitor for errors, repair troubles, render own part, and engage in complementary telling.

Responding to the Story
Lastly, during the telling and when the telling is complete, recipients often produce some form of response (Wong & Waring, 2010). Schegloff (1982) pointed out the importance recipients play in storytelling sequences through their offering of continuers. While the recipient usually responds throughout the telling of the story, they also play a critical role at the end of the story. The recipient has three tasks once the story ends, which are (1) to show understanding that the story is completed; (2) to show an appreciation of the point of the story; and (3) to keep the conversation by building further talk based on the story (Wong & Waring, 2010). Jefferson (1978) mentions that stories are sequentially implicative, meaning they inherently trigger further talk in conversation. She explains that subsequent talk is often triggered by the story told and that speakers use a range of techniques to relate subsequent talk to the previously told story. This is important for learners, as it guides them on how to continue to talk after a story has finished.

CA has brought to our attention the natural practice behind these sequences as people converse in their daily lives. However, whereas these may be natural to native speakers, they may not be so obvious for learners of English (Wong & Waring, 2010). With the knowledge of how to properly converse through storytelling, learners of English can experience greater confidence in their English skills and meet new people and cultivate relationships with those around them.

Research Question
This paper aims to explore and understand the methods used in real life conversation to tell stories among close acquaintances. Specifically, I will answer the following question: what are the story-launching practices employed by close friends in casual conversations?

Methodology
The data was collected from two conversations taking place at the home of the participants, for a total of two and a half hours. The participants were close friends and roommates: Anne (pseudonym), Kylie (researcher), and Mary (pseudonym). The data were collected during the later hours of the day, when

the participants usually gather around and chat about whatever went on during the day. This was typically after work or school and after the participants had their dinner. The participants usually talked every night for the sake of enjoying each other's company and staying involved in each other's lives.

The data were analyzed through an emic approach (ten Have, 2007). This means the data was analyzed through the perspective of the participants without assumptions by the analyst. As part of the conversations and the friends' circle, I was able to refer to their shared member-knowledge to shed light on what went on in the conversations. The analysis does not include anything that cannot be supported through the data as it occurred in a specific moment in interaction.

The data was collected without prior motivation of an analytical focus or knowledge of this paper's research questions. While the data was collected, the participants did not intentionally support any ideas or create any phenomena to support any ideas discussed in this paper. The data was then transcribed using the Jefferson notational system (Jefferson, 2004). A later inspection of the data found many instances of storytelling. Five of the stories stood out the most and will be described and analyzed in detail.

Data Analysis

The examined data shows five different story telling sequences. The analysis will focus on the launching of these stories, in two formats: (a) launching though preface sequence and (b) launching through an assisted story preface.

Story-launching Through Preface Sequence

The first example is a story launched through a preface sequence by Mary with an intended recipient, Kylie (Excerpt 1):

Excerpt 1: Story Time
```
1    Mar: tks oh my go:d,
2         looks at Kylie
3         (0.4)
4         ↑story time hm. [hh.
5    Kyl:                [hh
6    Mar: ↑yi rem(hh)ember that k(h)i:d ↓that i told you i:n:
7         my class that kept laughing at me?
8         (0.2)
9    Kyl: yea:h.
10        [STORY CONTINUES]
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Mary launches the story with a preface sequence, the launch takes two turns and is similar in fashion to most preface sequence story launches (Wong & Waring, 2010). Mary beings with a pre-pre of the story (line 1), which also serves to foreshadow the story's characteristics as shocking or surprising because of the nuance "oh my god" portrays. This phrase is typically used when someone wishes to express a feeling of surprise. Moreover, "oh my god" also functions as a disjunctive marker as it serves to shift the topic of conversation. Mary then offers to tell the story in line 4 by saying "Story time!" This utterance is a reference to Mary always having stories to tell the group and more specifically, Kylie. Due to their close friendship, Mary often shares her unusual stories with Kylie and Anne. Lines 1-4 are the initial

launch into the story, providing an offer to tell and a characterization of the story. Kylie's laughing response (line 5) in sync with Mary shows a positive interest in the story. Mary orients to this by using the last-to-next bias (Wong & Waring, 2010) to be the next speaker to launch the story in line 6.

It is also interesting to note that Mary chooses Kylie as the recipient amongst the participants by her non-verbal gestures. In the video, Mary looks directly at Kylie in line 2 when she first launches her story. This direct gaze selects Kylie as the recipient. In line 6, she calls on their previous exchange(s) about a person and specifically asks Kylie if she remembers them, indicating that the story is being told with Kylie as the intended recipient. This turn also gives Kylie the chance to recall the original story and get ready as a recipient. Kylie orients to this request of recognition by confirming her recognition in line 9 by saying, "yeah," thus also indicating her readiness for the current story. Lastly, line 6 is delivered with laughter in the words "remember" and "kid" which signals to Kylie that the story may have a humorous impact. This also gives Kylie an indication as to when the story ends, because that will be when the humor is delivered.

Story Prompt Through Assisted Story Preface
In Excerpt 2a, Mary told another story about how she failed her psychology test. This time the story was launched with a story prompt through an assisted story preface.

Excerpt 2a: Psych Test
```
1   Ann: ask her how she did on her psych test=
2   Mar: =HE:H I FAILE(hh)D hh
3   Kyl: did you [really?
4   Mar:         [ok so did you- ok what happened yesterday was,
5        (.)
6        [STORY CONTINUES]
```

Anne initiates the story launch in line 1 with a story prompt, which happens when someone prompts another to tell a story. In this case, she is prompting Mary to tell Kylie about how Mary did on her psych test. Mary orients to this initiation in line 4 when she tells the story's upshot. With Kylie's topicalizer ("did you really?") in line 3 showing encouragement for expansion, Mary begins the storytelling (line 4). The way Mary launches the story is similar to preface sequence, because she gives a general characterization in line 2 and points to a specific time source of the story in line 4. It is important to note that when Mary says, "I failed" in line 2, she does so with embedded laughter, which also signals to the recipients that the story has some humorous effect. We will see that this aspect of the story launch has consequences for the subsequent telling and the recipients' responses.

Excerpt 2b occurs when the story reaches its climax. In line 11, Anne predicts the end of Mary's story, being that she was in the wrong class. Mary confirms it with a "yeah" (line 12) and Anne laughs (line 13).

Excerpt 2b: Psych Test Pt. 2

```
7        [Later in the story]
8   Mar: and then she said oh yeah we're just gonna study for the
9        test? and i was like oh ok so like I must be in the right
10       class, because i have a test tomorro:w and like ya know.
11  Ann: you were in the wrong (.) [class
12  Mar:                           [HHMM yeah. so then [like
13  Ann:                                              [HA
```

The climax is revealed to the recipients in lines 8 and 9 and Anne orients to the humor through laughter in line 13. Taken together, Excerpts 2a and 2b show that story launches are not only used to start a story, but also to instruct recipients in an implicit way about when and how to react.

Excerpt 3 is another story told by Mary. The story is occasioned by noticing remarks made by Kylie and Anne. Mary addresses this by telling a story, explaining why she is using her old phone again despite having received a new one from her dad recently. The story starts in line 5 and continues on.

Excerpt 3: Old phone

```
1   Mar: and then i presented today? [(and xxx)
2   Ann:                             [so what part of psychology
3        teaches you abou:t being a habitual liar.
4        (1.0)
5        cuz °that's the part [we need to talk about°
6   Kyl:                      [°you just dripped water on your phone°
7   Mar: i know it keeps happening. but i just keep wiping it off=
8   Kyl: =<↑wait are you using your old phone again?>
9   Mar: yea::h.=
10  Ann: =wait <you got a new phone?>
11  Kyl: her dad's phone.
12  Mar: yeah, my dad sent his phone because it has a better battery?
13       (.)
14       [STORY CONTINUES]
```

The story is an example of a story initiation preface sequence triggered by preceding talk (Wong & Waring, 2010). Kylie and Anne request this story through their noticings in lines 8 and 10, which were triggered by Kylie's noticing that Mary is dripping water on her phone (line 6). After Mary's complaint as a response (line 7), Kylie asks Mary about her phone in line 8, recalling from background information that she had received a new phone, which she was not using at that time. Mary answers her in line 9 by saying, "yeah." Their exchange seems to prompt another noticing, this time by Anne (line 10), due to her not having the information shared between Mary and Kylie regarding Mary's phone. Kylie answers for Mary in line 11 by explaining that the new phone belonged to Mary's father. Mary's storytelling (line 12 and beyond) is thus a response to Anne's question in line 10 about how she got a new phone in the first place. In her story (not included in Excerpt 3), Mary also answers Kylie's question about why she is back to using her old phone. It would seem the two noticing remarks function

as a request to tell the story, which is one form of story launch through a preface sequence (Wong & Waring, 2010).

An interesting note is the use of the word *wait* by Kylie (line 8) and Anne (line 10), which led to the telling of the story. In both cases, wait is uttered in a similar fashion, to show surprise over something unexpected. Kylie did not expect to see Mary using her old phone again as it is clear through her turns in lines 8 and 11 that she knew Mary had replaced her phone. Conversely, Anne shows her surprise to hear the news that Mary had gotten a new phone to begin with (line 10). Both instances of turn-initial *wait* in lines 8 and 10 seem to suggest that *wait* is used to invoke previously known information and seek an account. It would be interesting in future research to see the uses of the word *wait* beyond its literal meaning in conversations.

Excerpt 4 shows the launch of a story told by Kylie through an assisted story preface launching sequence. The participants knew that something strange happened to Kylie prior to this meeting. In fact, the talk happens quite quickly when Kylie arrives home and after the incident.

Excerpt 4: Bus stop

```
0         Kylie turns on the camera to record
1   Mar: you had a rough day BUT hh
2   Ann: that was kinda mean (.) agreed. (.) you shouldn't say shut up
3         kylie that's not nice.
4   Mar: that hurts my feelings.
5   Kyl: [ok-
6   Ann: [you hurt her feelers=
7   Kyl: =>↑you didn't hear all the things she said to me when you
8         were gone.<
9   Ann: oh.
10        Mary makes a shocked face
11  Kyl: HHH
12  Mar: what did i hh sa(hh)::y
13  Kyl: $i don't remember$
14  Ann: HHH
15  Mar: ↑i didn't say anything mea::n.
16      (1.0)
17  Kyl: i feel like you said <one mean thing>=
18  Mar: =i probably didn't?
19      (.)
20  Kyl: oh
21  Ann: HHH
22  Kyl: °(>i thought you were gonna say did<) hh damn°
23  Ann: ↑i probably didn't. hh
24      (1.0)
25        all laughing
26  Mar: okay. tell your story
27  Kyl: oh
28      (.)
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29        it's not that lo:ng? but,
30        (1.0)
31        i hh just got on the bus, and then i missed my bus stop? so i
32        got off the bus
33        (.)
34        and then i was like oh my god where am i?
35        and i checked the map. and it was a twelve minute drive
36        back to the palace, and i was like if it's a twelve minute
37        drive then it's gotta be like a twenty (.hhh) to thirty
38        minute walk and then i was freaking out like oh my god i'm
39        gonna die here. and then there was their weird truck that
40        started to like come my [wa:y
41 Mar:                           [mm oh no
42 Kyl: and i was like [weird truck?
43 Mar:                 [weird trucks?
44      All laughing in unison
45 Kyl: and then i was like ↑no just- just act like you belong here.
46      so i was just walking like no this is MY area this is MY
47      neighborhood and it w- no hh
48      (.)
49      they like pulled over and stopped and i was like i don't know
50      if that's where they were planning to stop or not, but that's
51      when i freaked o(hh)ut and i started just running?
52      (.)
53      and then-
54      Mary makes a shocked face
55 Kyl: HHH
56 Mar: =WHY WERE YOU RUNNIN:G
57 Kyl: HHH after they stopped i was like well f* this? I was like
58      i'm just gonna run? so then
59      (.)
60      i started running and i saw another bus coming to a bus stop
61      and i was like oh my god im just gonna get on that bus and go
62      wherever it takes me until i figure out what to do: cause i
63      don't w-
64 Ann: so then she calls me
65 Kyl: yeah so i get on the bus and then i'm like i don't know
66      where this bus is going so then i'm freaking out and i'm like
67      i don't know what to do and then i was like ↑i just need to
68      talk to my mo:m.
69 Mar: so then i call my mo:m?
70 Ann: and she's like ((crying noises)) mom and immediately i'm like
71      [what's wrong what_
72 Kyl: [hhh
73 Ann: and so i was sitting here in the middle of dinner with Allie
74      like we're chowing down on my salad that she wasn't hungry
75      for
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76        (3.0)
77  Mar: hhh
78  Ros: and
79        (.)
80  Mar: [hhh
81  Kyl: [hhh
82  Ann: wine everything so i'm like immediately just jump up start-
83        she gets her keys we're like okay so now we're gonna go
84        rescue Kylie so we're like send me your location, let's just
85        go?
86  Mar: yeah
87  Kyl: but then like so the bu:s went somewhere and then it stopped
89        and then
90        (.)
91        like i could- there was a- >like that was the end of its
92        route so it turned around< and it was waiting so then i just
93        checked the app to see where it was going and it turns
94        out it was gonna drive past the palace, so
95        (.)
96        that's where i needed to go anyway, so i was like okay this
97        is good so
98        (.)
99        then ↑i just stayed on the bus until i got to my stop. hhh
100 Mar: oh i thought it was a l- i thought it was like °i dunno°
101 Kyl: in the moment it was very scary
102 Mar: i would imagine
103       […]
```

The story launch occurs in line 26 when Mary requests for Kylie to tell the story that her and Anne were waiting to hear. This is another example of an assisted story preface, launched by Mary and told by Kylie. This story launch is quite interesting and unusual because Mary directly requests Kylie to tell a story by saying, "tell your story" in line 26. However, the participants worked up to this moment in the many turns preceding it and even in their interaction before this conversation.

Anne and Mary had heard about what happened to Kylie prior to this conversation. This is evident in line 1 when Mary says "you had a rough day" to Kylie. This assessment in and of itself opens up a relevant slot for a telling from Kylie.

However, Anne interjects and accuses Kylie of being rude to Mary earlier. Kylie gives an account for her behavior, saying that Mary was rude to her first. However, in the lengthy accusation and denial sequence (lines 2-25) between Kylie and Mary, the consensus seems to be that it is unclear if Mary actually said something to hurt Kylie's feelings. That is, Kylie remains to be the culprit for saying something rude toward Mary with no acceptable reason. This may be the trigger for Mary to demand a story from Kylie as an explanation for her behavior. That is, Mary is opening up a slot for Kylie to account for Kylie's wrongdoing toward her (line 26). In complying with Mary's demand and by telling her story, Kylie collaborates with Mary in the restoration and renewal of their friendship.

Kylie orients to Mary's story prompt but also seems to include characteristics of a self-initiated story preface by giving a general characterization of the story in line 29. Due to the manner in which Kylie begins her story ("oh it's not that long, but…" in lines 27-29), it almost seems like a dispreferred response to Mary's request for Kylie to tell her story. Kylie's response-initial "oh" in line 27 is quite interesting. Heritage (2002) suggests that oh-prefaced response can be used to disengage their opinion from agreement with the first speaker's assessment of the matter in focus. In this case, it may be used to indicate that Kylie's story will not live up to the expectations projected by Mary's demand for an account. Of note, the "oh" in line 27 is followed by a pause (line 30), which takes the shape of a dispreferred response to Mary's prompt. Together with the use of "oh" and the pause, Kylie's characterization of the story in line 29 indicates that the story may not be what the recipients are expecting, namely, a justifiable reason for being 'mean' to Mary. This can be seen later in the talk when Mary responds to the climax of the story ("oh I thought it was a l- I thought it was like I dunno" in line 98). It seems Mary's expectations were not met by Kylie's actual story, which is also what Kylie was alluding to in her characterization of the story in the beginning. As we see later in the story, Kylie's story involves a moment in which she felt her life was in danger (lines 45-58) and Mary shows her shock during the telling (line 56). This suggests that the story itself has details that can be made dramatic. However, we need to consider the story in its context and what actions the participants are achieving with it. Kylie's treatment of the story at its launch as not worthy as a justifiable account for her earlier behavior toward Mary may be her way to indicate that her earlier behavior was not excusable.

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis above reveals that the most common method used in the recorded conversation to launch a story was the assisted story preface, which occurred in Excerpts 2, 3 and 4. In Excerpt 2, Mary's story was prompted by Anne telling Kylie to ask Mary about her test. In contrast, the story in Excerpt 3 emerged from Mary providing an account for using her old phone after getting a new phone. In Excerpt 4, Kylie's story is requested by Mary as an account for Kylie's mean behavior to Mary. By raising learners' awareness of assisted story prefaces to launch stories, they will be able to recognize when to tell a story as opposed to just giving an account or explanation for the situation. This is very beneficial because, in the natural flow of conversation, it may be hard for learners to recognize the proper time to tell a story and many may miss the chance. Further, as Kylie's story characterization in Excerpt 4 showed, stories can be presented in ways that fit the speaker's action, in this case, offering some sort of subtle apology to a close friend.

The other story-launching methods observed in this study include preface sequence and the use of disjunctive markers to shift the topic and bring up another story. In Excerpt 1, Mary used this method to talk about this person in her class. The way she used it was very simple yet grabbed the attention of the recipients quite well. This is because she gave a brief characterization and elicited attention with her laughter and excitement over the story. A preface sequence is very useful for learners because it is quite simple, requiring only two turns of talk to initiate, and can be used in many instances. If a learner wishes to tell a story but is unsure how to naturally bring it up, they can use the preface

sequence by offering to tell, characterizing and referencing the story (Wong & Waring, 2010, p. 129). By raising learners' awareness, they can learn how to grab the recipients' attention through this sequence. This will ensure the recipients want to hear the story and are engaged in it.

A third important aspect of the analyzed story launches is the active role played by the story recipients. Story launches are not a single-authored endeavor by the incipient story teller; rather, it is a collaborative effort by all parties. In Excerpt 1, the recipient aligned with the storytelling activity by producing only minimal tokens, yielding the floor to the teller. In Excerpts 2a and 4, the recipients prompted the storytelling and showed support and readiness. In Excerpt 3, the storytelling was triggered by the recipients' noticing of an object in the teller's possession. This has implications for learners as it suggests that they can use their role as a recipient to align with and facilitate story launching in conversations. This is useful especially at times when learners want to continue a conversation but are not sure what to say next; they can prompt the other participant(s) as the speaker(s).

When equipped with these story-launch practices, learners will likely feel more confident of their language abilities in talk. They will be able to better participate in talk, share their own stories and thus build strong relationships with the participants. All of these benefits will in turn prepare them for real talk and improve their experience with the language. For this reason, it is imperative for language teachers to consider supplementing their current curriculum to include story-telling practices.

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