

## Assessment in Responses to Storytelling and Topic Management in Ordinary Conversations

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### Abstract

The functions of assessments in conversation analysis are to evaluate, express, or exhibit speakers' opinions or specific knowledge about an event, object, or feelings during the conversations. While various assessments can occur in a wide range of sequential positions and can be utilized by both the speakers and recipients, this paper focuses on two functions of assessments: responses to storytelling and topic management (topic shift and termination), focusing on the recipients' responses. I analyzed two data samples collected from ordinary conversations among close friends who are native English speakers and discovered that they display various assessment tokens in ordinary conversations. The findings show authentic examples of deploying assessments, including non-lexical assessment (e.g. *uhuhu, hhh*), brief assessment (e.g. *eoh, ah, wow, good, lovely, crazy, what*), or extended forms of the assessments to display affiliative responses and use it for smooth transactions of topic shifts or topic closures.

### Introduction

During conversation, people regularly express assessments to exhibit their opinion or specific knowledge about an event or object (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987; Heritage, 2002). Compared to continuation tokens (e.g. *mhm, yeah*), which invite speakers to continue to hold the floor, assessment tokens can exhibit the recipient's finely tuned connection in the ongoing telling (Wong & Waring, 2020, p. 95; McCarthy, 2003, p. 59). The ability to produce assessments to achieve actions in conversations cannot be taken for granted in second language learning (Barraja-Rohan, 2011, p. 481). Thus it is important for teachers to first understand assessment practices and then to introduce learners to these practices over.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how native English speakers deploy assessments to respond to the story and manage topics in everyday conversations. The sections below will outline how assessments are defined and explore how assessments are described in the conversation analysis (CA) literature. While assessments in ordinary conversation can be utilized by both the speakers and recipients, I will highlight the assessments made by recipients in two data samples. This paper also explores literature pertaining to CA lessons to improve L2 learners' interactive competence. It discusses the importance of teaching the use of assessments in conversations as well as its teaching implications.



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### Assessment in Conversations

Sorjonen & Hakulinen (2009) adopted the term assessment "to refer to an evaluative act, typically performed by an utterance that contains a negative or positive prediction of a referent or a state of affairs expressed by the subject or the object of the sentence" (p. 281). Assessment is used to secure a recipient's co-participation with the speaker, evaluate prior talk, and match the affective stance displayed (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987, pp. 6, 11). Assessments can take many shapes, some of them being quite elaborate with extended sentences and even sequences of turns being devoted exclusively to the activity of doing an assessment. While assessments can be uttered with clear lexical content such as *Oh wow* and assessment adjectives such as *cute*, *fabulous*, *lovely*, *terrific*, they can also be simply expressed with various gestures like nodding or shaking the head, leaning the body in or out, clapping, and sounds like *Ah::* or *Oh* with an up and down intonation contour (cf. M. Goodwin, 1980, as cited in Goodwin, 1986, p. 214).

When assessments are positioned in the beginning of sequential turns, it shows the understanding of the previous talks and projection of the coming talks. Antaki (2002) cited Pomerantz (1984), who speculated that "one assessment could be heard as a commentary on a previous one" (p. 5). According to Antaki (2002), terms like *wonderful*, *lovely*, *brilliant*, and the like are considered to be "high-grade assessments" (HGA). These phrases are regarded as preferred responses, often coming with the news mark *oh*, or can be placed on its own in sequential turns. Assessments display upgraded expressions of a prior assessment and show understanding and recognition (pp. 5–6). Goodwin (1986) also contends that assessments show an evaluation of "what is being talked about" (p. 210). When assessments are uttered in sequence-closing turns, it foresees topic shift or topic termination (Schegloff, 2007). Assessment has various functions and can occur in a wide range of sequential positions in conversation. This paper will focus on two functions of assessments: responses to storytelling and topic management (topic shift and termination).

### Assessment as a Resource for Responding to Storytelling

The important affiliative role of assessments in conversation is that "they not only display the recipient's continued interest in the conversation but also show how he or she relates to and empathizes with the speaker" (Goodwin, 1986; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992, as cited in Barraja-Rohan, 2011, p. 490). During storytelling, affiliation displays the recipient's support of the speaker's convictions and feelings and the recipient's responses to the story. Responses may range from passive actions such as non-verbal *nodding* to active actions like *asking questions* (Couper-Kuhan & Selting, 2018, as cited in Wong & Waring, 2020, p. 207). Prior (2017) described that empathic responses could be conveyed through a series of "affiliative and emotive involvement" in ordinary social interaction. Empathic responses include both minimal responses such as *mm*, *uhuh*, *yeah*, uttered in "short length" and "unmarked prosody" (p. 7). Prior (2017) also cited "response cries" such as "Oops! Oh my Gosh! That's terrific!" as one of the most common and substantial showings of empathy lexically and prosodically, which allows both the speakers and recipients to situate themselves with one another through interactional settings (Couper-Kuhlen, 2012b; Goffman, 1978; Heritage, 2011; Terasaki 2004[1976]; Wilkinson & Kitinger 2006, as cited in Prior, p. 7). Wilkinson and Kitinger (2006) investigated "surprise reaction tokens" as a

subset of “response cries” from a corpus of 600 instances in English-language talk. They categorized “surprise tokens” as an “interactional resource” and “social phenomenon” to display emotion, particularly surprise. According to their findings, people display surprise with non-lexical tokens such as “whistles and gasps” and lexical tokens such as “wow, gee, gosh, Jesus Christ, my goodness, oh my word, oo:h!, oh:!, good gracious, oh my god, oh shit, blimey” and even with silence in delayed responses to show “affiliation and disaffiliation” and fulfill an exhibition of “social actions” (pp. 152, 153, 178).

### **Assessment as a Resource for Topic Management**

An assessment token can serve as the pivot in a topic shift in conversation. Assessments in a topic shift can display heightened involvement with the speakers’ prior talks and are used as a tool for the smooth transition of a topic. The HGA is often deployed to make a bridge to shift a new topic; it often comes with the format of [HGA] + [next topic or resumption of closing] (Wong & Waring, 2020, pp. 173-174; Antaki, 2002, pp. 5, 6, 22).

Assessment can also be used for topic termination (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987, p. 49). According to Girgin & Brandt (2020), assessment tokens such as *right, good, and fine* in the third turn perform to “end the sequence and close down the interaction” (p. 6).

### **Teaching Assessment in L2 Classrooms**

Button & Lee (1987) affirm that CA has a vast impact on L2 teaching and learning as it enables L2 learners to be exposed to the “social organization of natural language-in-use” (as cited in Barraja-Rohan, 2011, p. 480). The norm of using ordinary/authentic conversations in the L2 classroom offers learners the opportunity to experience “real-life language” and “socially distributed knowledge” (Barraja-Rohan, 2011, p. 481). Though multiple studies report a need for explicitly teaching L2 learners’ Interaction Competence (IC), its adoption was still in its early stage by Barraja-Rohan’s (2011) evaluation a decade ago, and this is still true today. In her study, Barraja-Rohan (2011) reports that two groups of beginning and intermediate levels of students used various minimal response tokens such as *yeah, okay, mm, and oh*, but none used assessment in their instruction conversations before any lessons on CA concepts were given (p. 490). Below is an example of a conversation between two L2 learners modified from Barraja-Rohan (p. 482).

Example (reproduced from Barraja-Rohan, 2011, p. 482)

(Kim is a male Korean and Ha a male Vietnamese. Both are learners of English)

- 1 Ha: ehm actually mm I-I have applied er for a (...) university of
- 2 [technology
- 3 Kim: **[yes,**
- 4 Ha: already.
- 5 Kim: **o:h**
- 6 Ha: last mm er for last half year I was doing my master degree
- 7 in that university?
- 8 and that master degree by research. now I’m waiting some
- 9 equipment?

10           that equipment doesn't come; so so I can't do nothing now  
11           so I go back to TAFE to [take English;  
12 Kim:                                   [mm, mmhm,  
13 Ha: because at first I arrive at Australia  
14           I did ten weeks English in (...)  
15 Kim: **yeah,**  
16 Ha: so I go back to do more;  
17 Kim: **mmhm;**  
18 Ha: but next year I go back to uni [I continue to do my master  
19 Kim:                                   [mmhm,  
20 Kim: **mm,**  
21 Ha: next. ((end of conversation))

The example shows a lack of affiliation, and these patterns of conversations are repeatedly found in other L2 learners' interactions (also see Ohta, 1999, as cited in Barraja-Rohan, 2011). Barraja-Rohan's study, reveals that after being exposed to the series of Interaction Competence (IC) concepts and practices, the L2 learners, including the Korean student, Kim, showed some improvement of displaying affiliation appropriately in conversation when evaluated (2011). Barraja-Rohan's study inspired this paper's examination of assessment in naturally occurring conversations to inform L2 learners.

### **Research Question**

The research question of this paper is: How do close friends who are native English speakers use assessments in responding to the storytelling and topic management in ordinary conversations?

### **Data Collection and Methodology**

The data were from two 45-minutes conversations recorded via Zoom. Each recording was between two participants. All participants are native English speakers of second and third generations of Asian descent such as Japanese, Korean, Singaporean, and Vietnamese. One dyad, Julie (pseudonym) and Sue (pseudonym) are close friends in college, and the other, Kim (pseudonym) and Min (pseudonym), are coworkers. In the recordings, the dyads talked about things happening in their daily lives and shared specific issues and concerns that arose. Before the recording, the participants were not informed about the research questions or the focus CA concepts to be analyzed. Because of the nature of the data collection method, which captures audio interactions only, any of the non-verbal interactions were excluded from the analysis. The analysis was done based on examining the data in the recordings together with the transcripts using the Jefferson (2004) Transcription System.

In the present study, the analysis follows the methodology of conversation analysis (CA), especially the emic approach, which takes participants' views to understand what is going on in the conversation (Have, 2007). The analysis is guided by several studies on assessment and

affiliation (Antaki, 2002; Barraja-Rohan, 2011; Girgin & Brandt, 2020; Goodwin, 1986; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992; Prior, 2017; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006; Wong & Waring, 2020).

## Data Analysis

### Assessment as Responses to Storytelling

#### *Assessment to Show Understanding of Telling*

In the following segment, two coworkers (Min and Kim, pseudonyms) are having a casual conversation in the late evening about random things. In their conversation, various assessment tokens in the non-lexical, brief, and extended forms are uttered to display evaluating prior talks.

#### Segment 1: Offer Brief and Extended Assessments to Evaluate Prior Talk

(24:03- 33:54)

1 Min: all i know is =i mean, >it's not the biggest thing  
 2 in the world.<  
 3 (.)  
 4 ↓but, (.) um, (.) if you (.) are >waiting a< (.) a long time  
 5 for ↓it, it's disappointing(.) to get <empty ↓bags.>  
 6 ↓So.  
 7 (0.4)  
 8 just >in case< somebody's >looking into it<  
 9 and just eating it and joyfully eating it on their(hh) own.  
 10 (0.2)  
 11 Kim: **that's ↓funny. Well, not really**  
 12 that's a ↑it i mean, ↓yeah.  
 13 people getting ripped off.  
 14 **that's not funny, ↓but I mean, it's funny** in a certain ↓way.  
 15 **hhh.**  
 16 (0.2)  
 17 Min: **i know.** hhh I was like, Whoa, you know,  
 18 don't touch my ↓mui.  
 19 uh[hh  
 20 Kim: **[hh=**  
 21 Min: =huhuh.  
 22 (0.2)  
 23 Kim: So, did they send you new ↑ones?  
 24 (.)  
 25 if um a customer says, ↓Hey, this bag was ↑emptish? Hh  
 26 Min: ↓well, they have a ↓disclaimer.  
 27 Kim: ↑↓**O[h::**  
 28 Min: [°saying that° they've a disclaimer saying we will,  
 29 we're not ↓responsible.

In this segment, Kim is self-repairing to display mixed assessments, including brief and extended forms, to evaluate the unpleasant incident described in Min's prior talk about receiving an empty box in the mail order of Mui. In line 11, Kim produces "that's funny, well, not really," which is an assessment, then self-repair on assessment, and in line 14, "that's not funny, but I

mean it's funny in a certain way." In her long turn from lines 11 through 16, Kim provides an evaluation of the incident described by Min's prior talk and shows her empathy toward Min's feeling of disappointment.

The speaker, Min, produces a discourse marker "I know" in line 17, showing her affiliation responding to the recipient before moving on with her telling. The overlapping laughter in line 20 also conveys the recipient's agreement with the speaker's feelings. Also, Kim's brief affiliative assessment "↑↓Oh::" marked with a rising then falling pitch and prosodic stress in line 27 displays her surprise and disappointment, which aligns with what Min is telling and thus indexes her affiliation with Min. Heritage (1984) considers *oh* "a change-of-state token" which exhibits "implicit manifestations of understanding" (as cited in Kupetz, 2014, p. 6).

### ***Assessment as a Resource for Affiliation***

In Segments 2 through 5, two college friends, Julie and Sue (pseudonyms), were doing small talk to catch up on their latest events and news via Zoom before and after Julie's presentation practice. The following segment is an example of how the recipient displays affiliation in addition to understanding through assessments.

#### Segment 2: Assessment as a Resource for Affiliation

(41:17- 42:20)

- 1 Sue: ↓yeah >en i was< i'm (.) like, >i don't know< i >really feel  
 2 like i should go to a doctor for this or something because<  
 3 i just this's not normal to like, (.) think that much \$like, while  
 4 I'm sleeping-hh  
 5 Jul: **hh[hh.**  
 6 Sue: [like i just could not  
 7 (.)  
 8 then i tried to (So I like tried) meditating.  
 9 (.)  
 10 i've tried (.) doing yoga before.  
 11 I've tried doing the breathing exercises.  
 12 (.)  
 13 i've tried (.)  
 14 >Literally every single thing that you could try<  
 15 hh I tried it >and like i just can't like i don't understand.  
 16 (0.3)  
 17 Jul: ↓**hu:mm, (.) >what are you< <THinking about ↓though>.**  
 18 Sue: i don't even (.) ↓everything.  
 19 (.)  
 20 >like when i say< everything like i mean like down to like,  
 21 <scenarios, memories> like,  
 22 (0.2)  
 23 [like, random things like,  
 24 Jul: **[hhh**  
 25 Sue: hum, (.)i wonder how they make bagels like or just like,

26       (.)  
 27       how like,(.) the day is gonna play out with  
 28       (.)  
 29       like certain people saying interpret it like what I say  
 30       (.)  
 31       it's just like life goes on  
 32       en like, even if i'll fall asleep or wake up,  
 33       like continuing the thought in my sleep.  
 34       (0.2)  
 35 Jul: **Wo:[:w**  
 36 Sue:     [like it's just a natural like automatically I'm thinking.  
 37       (0.3)  
 38 Jul: **That's ↓crazy, ↓hum.**

In this segment, the recipient, Julie, displays her support for the speaker's activity by yielding the floor to the speaker's multiple turns, explicitly telling things that she tried to resolve her sleeping issue, from lines 1 through 4, another long turn in lines 6 through 16, and then 18 through 34. At the beginning of listening to the speaker's talk, the recipient just presents a non-lexical assessment of laughter "hhh" during the speaker's turns in place in lines 5 and 24. The recipient's laugh may indicate that she goes along with the speaker's joking mode as the speaker's story is uttered in a smiling voice. As the speaker's sleeping issues seemed more serious than expected, the recipient's reaction started to change, displaying a brief assessment of "↓hummm" and asking the question of "what are you thinking about though" in line 17. The brief non-lexical assessment "↓hummm" in falling pitch followed by a short pause in line 17 indicates the recipient's sensing the seriousness of the speaker's sleeping issue. According to Kupetz (2014), by displaying an understanding, the recipient shows her "strong orientation to the problem, and seemingly asks the question in order to understand even better" (p. 16). The follow-up question in line 17 indicates the recipient's understanding of the matter. As the speaker's story reaches the climax, the recipient displays her empathy and affiliation by deploying affiliative assessment tokens, "Wo::w" in line 35 and elaborated assessment token "That's ↓crazy" in line 38, in which the recipient conveys emotive involvement as well as establishing empathy moment with the speaker.

### **Assessment Used for Topic Management**

#### ***Assessment as a Resource for Stepwise Topic Shift***

Unlike disjunctive topic shift, which moves into a new topic in a drastic or abrupt manner, a stepwise topic shift moves a topic from one to the next in a gradual manner, and is regarded as "the best way to move from topic to topic" (Sacks, 1992, as cited by Wong and Waring, 2000, p. 173). For a stepwise topic shift in conversation, the assessment token can serve as the pivot (Wong & Waring, 2020, p. 173). Segments 3 and 4 are examples of using assessment tokens as the pivot in stepwise topic shift methods.

Segment 3: Pivot (Surprise Assessment) + New Focus/Topic

(2:58 - 3:27)

- 1 Jul: ↓no in (.) ↑wyoming, (.) or what's somewhere next to↑idaho,  
 2 Sue: [ahh  
 3 Jul: [↑wisconsin], °montana° montana!  
 4 (.)  
 5 over there like there's it's snowing.  
 6 Sue: **what?**  
 7 Jul: yeah, [colorado, it's snowing.  
 8 Sue: [yeah.  
 9 **oh my god.** >Well yeah< cuz >jason said that< like in  
 10 nebraska, it's free::zing and it's a thundersto::rm >  
 11 that's been rai[ning<  
 12 Jul: [°wha::t°  
 13 Sue: and then like the >east coast is just like, < (.)  
 14 blizzard, [hhh.  
 15 Jul: [hhh.

As the conversations progressed, the topics had broadly shifted from the preparation of the graduate program to a wildfire that took place in California and snowfall in Colorado. The first assessment uttered in this segment is a surprise assessment of “what” displayed in rising intonation in lines 5 and 12. According to Selting’s analysis (1996), *what* displays the recipient’s *surprise* or *astonishment* is represented by “increased pitch and extra loudness in comparison to surrounding units” (as cited in Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006, p. 154).

Another surprise assessment token posed in this segment is “oh my god” in line 9, which serves as the pivot into a subtopic and the foretell characteristics of freezing in Nebraska that the speaker is about to present (p. 176). The topic marker “well yeah” in line 9 serves as a transition into a subtopic, and the “yeah” in both lines 8 and 9 may also serve both as a response token and a signal incipient speakership signaling that Sue will be bringing in something different in the next turn. Though freezing may not be a whole new topic as they continued to talk about the latest aberrant weather conditions, it was still new to Julie. By bringing a new focus on freezing in Nebraska, Sue shows her active engagement in the conversations. Her “and then” in line 13 indicates that she continues to talk about the same topic.

#### Segment 4: Assessment Used for Stepwise Topic Shift

(27:38-28:10)

- 1 Jul: uhum  
 2 Sue: see. [Yay.  
 3 Jul: [°yeah, ya know,, >**that makes me**< **So:: happy to** ↓hear.  
 4 **like how you are (.) just trying things out and it's okay**  
 5 **because you're >Listening to< your ↓body and (.) you know**  
 6 **what <you (.) like> and <what you don't ↑like> and just**  
 7 **>finding a balance< between that.**  
 8 **that's really awesome** and like what i >like about< that  
 9 (.) girl that i fall, follow that we did the 54 card



10 pickup ↓(with)?  
 11 (.)  
 12 Sue: uhum.  
 13 Jul: um, (.)she and her (0.3) ↑hubby (0.2) um that's like,  
 14 (.)  
 15 (continue...)

Segment 4 shows the mixed methods of stepwise topic shift as it takes multiple stages to construct a topic shift. In line 3, the acknowledgment, “yeah” and the assessment “that makes me so happy to hear” serve as the pivot. In addition, Julie summarized Sue’s previous talks about how hard she has been trying to maintain her exercise described from lines 4 through 7. In line 8, Julie expressed another assessment token, “That’s really awesome,” which also serves as the pivotal utterance and then gradually turns up to other topics about a girl she follows on social media.

### ***Assessment as a Resource for Topic Termination***

While offering assessment is used as a resource to shift a topic, it also foreshadows topic closure. Withdrawal is a way to phase out a range of turns within conversations. Participants collaboratively accomplish topic closure by deploying resource talks, intonation, and non-verbal body movement (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992, p. 174).

### Segment 5: Assessment as a Resource for Closing Topics

(3:27-3:44)

1 Sue: and then like the east coast is just like, (.) blt. [hhh  
 2 Jul: [hhh  
 3 (0.4)  
 4 oh my ↓God=  
 5 Sue: =>okay well,< >tell me about your presentation?<  
 6 oh, i °wanna° know >everything you learned<.  
 7 (0.3)  
 8 Jul: okay, let me just give you a <little (0.2) ↓presentation.>

In this segment, the series of small talks were signaled to terminate collaboratively by sharing laughter in lines 1 and 2, with 0.4-second pauses in line 3, and with an assessment closing turn, “oh my God,” with a falling down intonation contour uttered by Julie in line 4. The overlapped laughter “hhh” in line 2 foreshadows a topic termination, and the affiliative assessment “oh my God” uttered in line 4 displays that the recipient is aligning with the speaker’s telling and showing her heightened engagement in the conversation. After the successful topic termination done in lines 1 through 4, a new topic for practicing presentation as the main event of the conversation was initiated by Sue with the combination of the topic marker “okay well” and a topic initial elicitor “tell me about your presentation?” in line 5. In line 8, Julie offered a preferred response: a report of a newsworthy event uttered with the preface marker “okay.”

Then a new topic was launched with the assisted story preface, “let me just give you a little presentation.

Wong and Waring (2020) pointed out that while minimum utterances like *okay* or *well are* often employed for possible pre-closing in the turn completion of a topic, assessment tokens such as *great, so nice, that’s good, lovely*, and the like can also occur as topic boundary markers. Shifting to a new topic is a way of closing a current topic (p. 179).

#### Segment 6: Collaborative Assessment as Resources for Closing Topics

(25:43-26:06)

- 1 Kim: i didn’t see any um, (.) anything else on the tracking.  
 2 i didn't get a tracking number or ↓anything.  
 3 so, (.) i contacted them.  
 4 >i was like<, well (.) it’s been two months.  
 5 uh, let me know (.) if you see anything by next week  
 6 >and then< we’ll do something about it.  
 7 (.)  
 8 so as soon as um uh, (.) it came (.) in ↑nothing.  
 9 so they just reimbursed me for everything.  
 10 (.)  
 11 Min: **that** ↑**is** ↓**lovely**.  
 12 **>that was< <So::** ↓**lovely**.  
 13 (0.2)  
 14 **um** (.) i did a forbidden of (.) that bed bath, wait,  
 15 (0.3) bed and body works order.

In segment 6, the recipient closes the speaker’s current talk by offering the assessment “that is lovely” in line 11 and an elaborative assessment “that was So:: lovely” in line 12. In CA, the terms like *wonderful, lovely, brilliant*, and the like are considered to be “high-grade-assessment.” They are regarded as preferred responses, often come with a news mark *oh*, or can be placed on their own in sequential turns. The HGA is deployed to make a bridge to shift a new topic; it often comes with the format of [HGA] + [next topic or resumption of closing]. After uttering “um” after posing a 0.2 pause in line 13, Min starts a new topic in lines 14 and 15 (Antaki, 2002, pp. 5, 6, 22; Schegloff, 2007, as cited in Wong and Waring 2020).

### Discussion and Conclusion

I have offered a detailed empirical analysis of when and how assessments are used in ordinary conversations among friends and close acquaintances who are native speakers. The main focus of the analysis is identifying the patterns of assessments uttered by participants when responding to storytelling and managing topics. In the observed conversations, the participants deployed various assessments to respond to the storytelling, utilizing non-lexical assessments (e.g. *hummm, uhuhu, hhh*) or brief assessments (e.g. *oh, ah, wow, good, lovely, crazy, what*). They also used extended forms of the assessments to evaluate prior talks or ask follow-up questions to display empathy

toward the speaker's talk or their heightened engagement in the conversation in an appropriate manner. The findings also showed that the assessments were used as a resource for topic management. For a pattern I have discovered in connection with topic shifts, participants displayed the mixed methods of stepwise topic shift as it takes multiple stages, including the acknowledgment, "Yeah," and the assessments "that makes me so happy to hear," "that's really awesome" which serve as the pivotal utterance before turning to another topic. Regarding the patterns for topic termination, minimum utterances (e.g. okay, well) were employed as possible pre-closing in the turn completion, and high-grade-assessments (e.g. great, so nice, that's good, lovely) occurred as topic boundary markers. According to Wong and Waring (2000), shifting to a new topic is a way of closing a current topic.

Wong and Waring (2020) contend that it is necessary for L2 learners to learn the importance of using various response tokens appropriately. As reflected in the data, native speakers are capable of utilizing all sorts of assessment appropriately without being given specific training or education for that because they acquire diverse interactive competence (IC) implicitly throughout the interactions since birth. The cases analyzed in segments 1 and 2 can illustrate how to deploy assessments and affiliation when responding to the storytelling through interactions in conversation. Also, the cases analyzed in segments 3 through 6 can provide authentic examples for L2 English learners' exposure to some effective ways of shifting and terminating topics. As a recipient, one can be more sensitive to the speaker's signal to attempt a topic shift. As a speaker, one can use any topic shift methods when trying to avoid or deviate from topics that are too personal, sensitive, uninteresting, and so forth in a proper manner. These practices will help L2 learners improve their IC and establish adequate social skills required to build up relationships surrounding them (Barraja-Rohan, 2011). For teaching assessment, it is important for L2 teachers to understand basic practices to manage topics and respond to storytelling through various affiliative assessments.

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