TURN-TAKING IN THE CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH QUALIFICATIONS: A CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Paired conversation tasks are a frequently used feature in modern day English language tests that more accurately model conversation in the real world. Using Conversation Analysis (CA), this study analyzes the verbal and nonverbal aspects of four paired tasks from the Cambridge English Qualifications exams at the following levels: B1, B2, C1, and C2. The results provide insight into L2 language use in testing situations and offer suggestions for teachers and language test developers.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Open Doors report (IIE, 2021), over one million international students study at American universities or work in Optional Practical Training. Despite reduced enrollment during the global pandemic, the international student population comprises 5.5% of the total enrollment at US universities. Before applying to US universities, international students take multiple examinations to prove their English ability meets the university's requirements.

One way to predict an international student's success in an English-medium university is by assessing their communication with various speakers. This can be done through paired or small group tests, an alternative to one-on-one interviews between raters and test takers (Brooks,

2009). Paired and group tasks have increased in popularity in the past several decades, from use in large-scale English language tests like the Cambridge English Qualifications (Cambridge Assessment, 2021), to locally administered university placement tests such as Iowa State University's English Placement Test of Oral Communication (Applied Linguistics, 2023).

To analyze paired and group tasks, Conversation Analysis (CA) has proven effective at uncovering how raters and test takers interact (e.g., Galaczi, 2008; Seedhouse & Egbert, 2006). Paired and group tasks initiate interaction between test takers, who switch between speaking and listening roles, which "is not only visible in the discourse but is observable and assessable by raters" (Ducasse & Brown, 2009, p. 440). While studies have been carried out on Cambridge exams (e.g., Glaczi, 2008; Lazarton, 1996), a study of paired task interactions using CA does not appear to have been investigated.

During paired or group examinations, test takers need to demonstrate their ability to pragmatically take turns with their test-taking partner, whom they may not know. Given the fine-grained analysis that CA provides as a tool for discourse analysis (Paltridge, 2012), we aim to investigate how turn-taking takes place between paired test-takers in the Cambridge English Qualifications with the following research questions:

1) What types of turn-taking features, linguistic and nonlinguistic, are used by test takers in a paired spoken test?

2) To what extent do these features differ by test taker proficiency level (B1, B2, C1, C2) as defined by the Cambridge English Qualifications?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conversation Analysis

Although the name *Conversation Analysis* may imply a focus on spoken words, CA involves an intense look at how a conversation unfolds. Sacks et al. (1974) refer to CA as "ethnomethodological conversation analysis" since its purpose is to "describe conversational uses of language" (p. 3). Using transcriber notes, CA can also denote body language. As such, CA involves understanding the actions that take place through language by analyzing turn-taking, turn organization, action formation, sequence organization, repairs, word/usage selection, recipient design, and the overall structural organization of the interaction (Schegloff et al., 2002).

Turns and Turn-Taking

A turn in a conversation can be a phrase, clause, or sentence (Gonzalez-Lloret, 2010). In CA, a transition between speakers is one beat of silence; longer or shorter amounts of silence are "potentially marked and import-laden" (Schegloff, et al., 2002). Speakers may exhibit latching or immediately speak after the other participant has finished speaking (Kasper & Wagner, 2014). Adjacency pairs, paired utterances in which the second part of the pair is conditionally relevant to the first, like a question and answer (Seedhouse, 2005), can be produced immediately or with a pause (Lee, 2020a). In transferring a turn to another speaker, speakers attempt to reduce overlap and allow the conversation to flow naturally (Sacks et al., 1974).

Considering self-repairs as part of a turn, the most frequent location of a speaker's self-repair is within the same turn, which a cutoff can note through fillers such as *uh/um*, a minor/major delay, and lexicon indicators like "y'know" or "I mean" (Fox, 2013). *Ums* may also appear if the other speaker's prior utterance was unexpected or inappropriate (Stokoe, 2014).

Speakers may utilize *replacement* or replace the current discussion with a new topic, which may be pre or post-framed (Fox, 2013) or part of a turn. Speakers may also make repairs even if there is no problem (Lee, 2020b).

Conversation Analysis and Language Assessment

CA has been frequently employed in second language assessment in paired and group oral assessments. Seedhouse (2005) notes that "Language proficiency assessment is probably the area in which CA has had the greatest impact on practice so far" (p. 171). Through CA, researchers have determined that oral proficiency exam tasks like roleplays resemble real-world conversations, which makes them more suitable than exam interviews (Kormos, 1999). Paired oral assessments occur with two test-takers, and group oral assessments occur with three or more test-takers (Ockey, 2009). Through CA, researchers have investigated extraversion (Nakatsuhara, 2011), test-taker interaction (Gan, 2010), test-taker-initiated repairs (Kim & Park, 2015), and topic negotiation (Gan et al., 2008). Researchers have also investigated tasks and the structure of these assessments through CA, including group size (Nakatsuhara, 2011), examiner interventions (Nakatsuhara, 2018), and roleplay tasks (Jian, 2015). Implications of these studies include rater training and test preparation.

One issue in assessment is not mimicking the real world. In institutional settings such as assessment centers, turn-taking is systematically different from ordinary conversation as the speakers orient their conversation to the goal of passing the test (Markee, 2000). Johnson and Tyler's (1998) study found that salient features of natural conversation involved in turn-taking and topic negotiation were not present in Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPI) for college-level English. As such, CA is a useful tool for assessing the naturalness of and discourse features used in exams like the Cambridge English Qualifications.

The Cambridge English Qualifications

The Cambridge English Qualifications are English proficiency examinations for non-native English speakers. The oral assessment consists of individual and paired oral tasks conducted face-to-face with an examiner (Cambridge English, 2021). The levels of the Cambridge English Qualifications are: A2 *Key*, B1 *Preliminary*, B2 *First*, C1 *Advanced*, and C2 *Proficiency*. The test is comprised of four parts, covering the domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The speaking section, administered in pairs, consists of four parts for levels B1-C1 and three for C2 (Cambridge English, 2023). With videos of each level provided online via Cambridge's YouTube channel (English with Cambridge, e.g., 2014a; 2014b; 2014c; 2019), this test is a valuable resource to gain insight into the turn-taking strategies that non-native English speakers exhibit during the test.

Cambridge exams have been studied extensively in second language assessment research. Lazaraton (1996) explored the interaction between test-takers and examiners in the Cambridge Assessment of Spoken English (CASE), concluding that interlocutor support is inconsistent between tests and that the effect of examiner support on scores is unclear (p. 151). Galaczi (2008) investigated the interactional patterns of paired tasks in the First Certificate of English, finding that pairs that demonstrated a collaborative orientation received the highest median Interactive Communication (IC) scores, whereas pairs interacting in a 'solo vs. solo' pattern had the lowest median IC scores. These findings provide evidence that participants should work towards a co-construction of performance during a test.

METHODS

The content examined is the paired speaking portion of the Cambridge English Qualifications, which are publicly available on Cambridge's YouTube channel. The selected

videos are at the following levels: B1 *Preliminary*, B2 *First*, C1 *Advanced*, and C2 *Proficiency*.

A2 *Key*, the lowest level, is not used. The current study addresses the pair speaking task of each

exam, which is two minutes long for levels B1-C1 and three minutes for C2. Therefore, the

current study consists of four test-taking situations with eight test takers, two at each level

(English with Cambridge, 2014a; 2014b; 2014c; 2019). The names, as provided by Cambridge's

YouTube videos, and levels of the test takers are seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Levels of Test Takers, Names, and Paired Speaking Task Length

Level	Test Taker Names	Paired Speaking Task Length
B1 *Preliminary*	Kenza and Mohammad	2 minutes
B2 *First*	Florine and Maria	2 minutes
C1 *Advanced*	Maude and Raphael	2 minutes
C2 *Proficiency*	Annik and Derk	3 minutes

To evaluate the speech between test takers, this study adopted a modified Jeffersonian

CA transcription system (Sacks et al., 1974; see appendix). The data were analyzed in two stages

following a top-bottom approach. We first transcribed the pair-task segment, adding CA

transcriptions for all verbal and nonverbal communication, and rewatched the full segment

holistically to check for accuracy. Following this, we reviewed the full conversation and

identified linguistic and nonlinguistic turn-taking features.

FINDINGS

Both verbal and nonverbal patterns emerged in the resulting CA transcripts of the

Cambridge Assessment Qualifications paired discussion tasks. Verbal features included

questioning, intonation, overlapping and latching, pauses, and fillers. Nonverbal features

included eye contact, gestures, and body movement. Each verbal and nonverbal feature will be

described first (RQ1), and a description of how these verbal and nonverbal features differ by test

taker proficiency level (RQ2) will follow. In addition, English errors were observed, which will

be discussed in terms of how they affected turn-taking. Advice for teachers will also be provided.

Questioning

Students took turns asking open and closed-ended questions. Since the task requires

participants to decide together and the prompt provides multiple options, asking questions about

the options available prompted turn-taking. As seen in the interaction between Mohammad and

Kenza (B1), the most common questions observed were "what" questions, mainly in response to

the possible task options.

41→   M: What about this <u>bag</u>? what do you <u>think</u> about this bag? ((pointing to the picture)) (.)

42   K: Mmm, (1.0) I don't think (.) that it's a good idea, ((shaking her head)) (.)

"Why" questions were observed with rising intonation at level B2.

7→   F: Uh (.) why do you think that? °Actually°? ((looking at M))

8   M: Um: because I think to spend ((spoken as es-spend)) time in parks are good with the family. ((quick
9   look at F and returns to looking at the paper)) (.)

In this example, test takers disagree on how the town could attract tourists. By including the

softly spoken "actually," the partner prompts discussion into her partner's diverging opinion.

While asking questions generally helped students converse with each other, we observed

some issues with questioning. Asking questions did not always guarantee a response from a

partner, as was seen several times in level C1.

19 →   M: .hhh A:nd what about starting your family? (.) Umm (1.0) again umm (.) there is a (.) fina:ncial #criteria#
20   ((looking at R)) to consider I think, (.) .hhh Umm (.)

Beyond asking a direct question to her partner, Maude initiated other turn-taking features, including pausing, using rising intonation, and making eye contact with her partner. Given the need to communicate during the test, when a partner does not respond, the other partner may keep talking using fillers like *umm*.

Finally, questions can shift the discussion away from the speaker, which is acceptable unless the test taker has not spoken enough. A well-formulated question does not necessarily elicit complex vocabulary, grammar, or sentence structures, as seen in this C2 example:

72→	D:	What do you think about E?
73	A:	Well, it looks like um: (.) I don't- I don't really connect it with environment, because it's just old
74		used cars that are being compressed= ((makes smashing motion with hands))
75		

While Derk asks several questions to Annik, she never asks questions to him. Instead, Derk could have used his turns to share ideas instead of switching to a new topic.

Within these transcripts were no examples of students asking for their partner to repeat what they said, nor targeted repair initiators such as, "What do you mean by __?" (Kim & Park, 2015). Due to these videos being publicly available on Cambridge's YouTube channel, these videos could have been selected for their lack of breakdowns or other-initiated repairs.

Intonation

The use of intonation was seen in all four paired discussions. Students used intonation to give up the floor, offer the floor to their partner, and keep the floor. Students were able to increase their intonation at the end of a sentence to pose a question, which prompted their partner to reply, as seen in this B2 dialog:

```
32      M:    [Yeah

33→     K:    [And he can watch pictures, whatever he wants?

34      M:    Yeah, ((K nods)) [and you keep
```

Even though Kenza made a few errors, by raising her intonation at the end of her sentence, she set the stage for her partner's reply.

In addition, students were able to use continuing intonation to demonstrate they had more to say or lower their intonation to mark that they were finished talking, which opened the floor for their partner.

```
17→     F:    Uh: Ma:ybe (.) if you are a kind of nature person, ((looking at M)) if you like nature a lot, (.) then
18            parks are ((looking at M)) probably (.) much better than a lot of shops. ((looking at M)) [(h)

19      M:                                                                                              [Uh
              °Yes°
```

Even though Florine (B2) paused after the word "a lot," which could have given her partner a chance to respond, her continuing intonation may have assisted in her keeping the floor. Once she uses a falling intonation when saying "shops," Maria begins to speak.

Appropriate intonation by one partner does not mean their partner will respond appropriately, even if paired with other turn-taking features such as pausing or making eye contact. The beginning of Maude and Raphael's (C1) task is an example of this:

```
1       M:    ok (.) so: (.) let's talk ((looking at R )) about choosing (.) a university (.) first?(.) ((R silently nodding his
2             head)) hmm, (.) I think people have to: think about, (.) well. (.) .hhh  first (.) the students ((looking at R)) have
3→            to (.) think about what they like?=((looks at R))

4       R:    =yeah ((looking at M , nodding))
```

Maude begins by suggesting one of the topics - big life decisions that people must make. Stressing the topic, raising her intonation, and pausing, her partner only silently nods. Deciding

to continue speaking, Maude begins discussing the topic, frequently pausing and glancing at her partner, only to get a one-word response from him in line four.

Lower-level test takers often used intonation incorrectly during turn-taking. As seen in this B1 example, Mohammed almost always ended his utterances with a rising intonation, possibly from his L1. Kenza picks up on which statement to respond to, possibly by paying attention to the content of his message.

16	M:	°Yeah°, (.) a:nd (.) for this football ((pointing to picture)) I think no? because (.) I: can't play ((shaking
17→		head)) football al- every day? (1.0) if there is some students or: (.) from their fans they can: (.) play and
18→		(.) keep it away from their studying or something?
19→	K:	((nodding)) I think it would be a good idea, (.) for the balloon football, ((pointing to picture))
20	M:	°Yeah.° (.) And for this there? ((pointing to picture)) (1.0) no, (.) because or. if they have a lot of
21		children a::nd from their fans ((K looking at M)) they can give it to their children? ((pointing to picture
22		and looking at K))

Despite incorrect intonation seeming not to interfere with the conversation, teaching students suprasegmentals such as intonation may be advantageous for paired task exams. If both partners use this linguistic feature, they may have a better sense of their partner's intentions and be better able to respond in real-world situations.

Overlapping

Overlapping was observed in all interactions, as this is a common practice when conversing. Overlapping occurred in various situations, including to emphasize a new word.

24	M:	For a book or [album, ((pointing to picture)) ((opening the middle part of the booklet for picture to be
→		clearer))
25		
26	K:	[for the book ((helping M by opening the booklet for the picture to be clearer))
27	M:	I think it's album for pictures?=
28	K:	=For pictures [yes,

By repeating the word album twice, Mohammad (B1) brings up an important word for the paired

task, to which Kenza overlaps with "for pictures," which shows her understanding of the word.

Note that levels B2 and C2 are the only tests where the prompts are pictures; no written

description or vocabulary words are used.

   Test takers often overlap or have latched utterances throughout their discussion. Most

overlapped and latched utterances occurred later in the discussion, once participants had talked

for a minute or more. The C2 participants, however, began overlapping and completing each

other's sentences from the beginning.

```
15    A:    Yeah

16    D:    It seems [like
→

17    A:              [Yeah they look happy=
→
```

When read together, the sentence "It seems like they look happy" can be parsed from the two

students' dialogue.

   Often, overlapping or latched pairs occurred when participants agreed, usually with one

speaking and the other chiming in with "yes," "yeah," or similar utterances. C1 participants

exhibited this pattern in several areas of the discussion.

```
29     M:    You need to think about the jo:bs [maybe.

30→    R:                                     [Yes ((R nodding))=

31     M:                                             =because I think that's now .hhh  umm most of the
32           parents, I mean ((looking at R))  two parents are working so they [need to (.)

33     R:                                                                      [Yeah= ((R nodding))
```

While Raphael is not contributing much to the conversation, he is demonstrating "supportive

listening" (Ducasse & Brown, 2009), which may be reassuring to Maude, who spoke for most of

the discussion. Finally, sometimes students overlap or latch when disagreeing or negotiating with their partner. As seen in this excerpt, Maria (B2) may be echoing the sentiment expressed by Florine in the previous utterance when she says "no."

30	F:	Yeah, de-definitely but I don't think (.) [uh
31→	M:	[No,=
32	F:	=it will attract a lot of tourists because of one club I [think,=
33→	M:	[Yes.=
34	F:	=It's a combination of (.) several °things°=
35	M:	=Uh-huh.=
36	F:	= °that attract tourists°

Although not clear what Maria's intentions were, overlapping and latching onto Florine's utterances creates a unique dialogue. Florine had abruptly prompted the pair to discuss another idea to attract tourists, which may have brought about this pattern.

Fillers

Fillers, including *umm*, *hmm*, and *mmm*, were observed in the paired discussion. Among the four videos, fillers could constitute a turn in themselves but were only sometimes indicative of turn-taking. One example of a filler is a full turn in C1, wherein a response to a one-word answer is returned with a filler and a one-second pause:

22	R:	Yeah ((nodding)) (.)
23→	M:	Mmm (1.0)
24	R:	Yeah you have also to think about- of your- am ready already=

This single filler line prompts Raphael to take another turn, where he delivers a longer utterance, though he needs help finding the right words. Nonetheless, this exchange prompts further discussion. In this study's four paired discussion tasks, fillers were mostly placed at the beginning of sentences as students began their turn and collected their thoughts. Back-to-back fillers can be seen in this excerpt:

42→ K: Mmm, (1.0) I don't think (.) that it's a good idea, ((shaking her head)) (.)

43→ M: Mmm but it's useful (.) nowadays? ((looks at K)) you can use it for going to schoo:l? or for going to
44   the gym? You can put your to:lls (.)

Although filler expressions like "I see" can be seen in other second language assessment paired tasks (Fox, 2013), these fillers were not seen in these transcripts. As fillers can buy time when preparing what to say, teaching a small variety of fillers to use sparingly could provide students with additional strategies to use during a high-stakes test.

Pauses

Pauses were seen throughout all levels of the Cambridge English Qualification videos. Since the videos were not analyzed using software to determine the length of pauses in milliseconds, only one-second or longer pauses were identified. Between the test takers, pauses can lead the other partner to take a turn, especially when combined with a rising intonation or other turn-taking features. This can be seen in this B2 exchange:

29→ M: It depends the: (.) age of the tourists, ((looking at F)) no? (1.0)

30   F: Yeah, de-definitely but I don't think (.) [uh

While Florine might not have been familiar with the Spanish "no?" based on the intonation of the sentence and the pause that followed, she determined it was her turn to speak.

Pauses, however, do not always lead to the partner taking a turn when combined with other features, especially if the features indicate the speaker wants to talk more.

5→ K: ((nodding)) I think the t-shirt (.) ((pointing to the picture)) is uh the best idea? (2.0) so:, (1.0) if he had
6   the t-shirt with him (.) he can always remember the team? (.) ((looking at M))

With a two-second pause after the word "idea," followed by another second pause after the word "so," Kenza (B1) may have wanted her partner to respond. However, her statement and upward intonation could have caused confusion. Moreover, the continuing intonation of the word "so" allowed her to keep her turn longer. Similarly, Florine (B2) pauses, raises her intonation, and looks at her partner; her partner, however, does not respond.

1   F   ((F looks at diagram in booklet)) .hhh Well, I think (.) all the ideas on the- the- on the booklet are quite
2→   :   good actually? I think holiday flats will attract more tourists because there is just more sp::ace? (1.0)
3   ((looks at M, M is nodding)) Uh for the tourists to live in ((looks at M)) while they're on holiday? (.)
4   And (.) what do you think about that? ((looks at M))

While at the higher levels, these pauses may have prompted supportive listening (Ducasse & Brown, 2009), this kind of support does not often occur at the B1-B2 level. Similarly, Galaczi (2008) found few instances of listener support when using CA on CEFR B2 level interactions but frequently found such support at the advanced levels. As Cambridge levels are aligned with CEFR levels (Cambridge, 2015), our findings also support Galaczi (2008). To support test takers, though, supportive listening skills could be taught to students at lower levels.

Eye Contact

Eye contact was inconsistent among the pairs and had differing degrees of impact on the conversations. Some pairs, especially at levels B1-B2, had low eye contact and could take turns

without much issue.

38→	M:	=by the cover ((looks at K and smiles,
39		K laughs)) #It's amazing,#=
40→	K:	= Ye:s ((nodding, smiling)) .hhh

Kenza (B1) almost always had her hand over her mouth, looking at the booklet. In all four

conversations, the exam booklet was the focus instead of the other partner. At the B2 level,

Florine looks at the booklet for extended periods, and Maria never looks at Florine.

1	F:	((F looks at diagram in booklet)) .hhh Well, I think (.) all the ideas on the- the- on the booklet are quite
2		good actually? I think holiday flats will attract more tourists because there is just more sp::ace? (1.0)
3		((looks at M, M is nodding)) Uh for the tourists to live in ((looks at M)) while they're on holiday? (.)
4		And (.) what do you think about that? ((looks at M))
5→	M:	((M head facing towards F but eyes directed towards the booklet)) Uh:: well: I agree with you? but
6→		maybe (.) providing parks ((F looking at M)) is (.) much (.) better?

While a lack of eye contact could be seen as not wanting to take a turn, test takers may have been

focused on looking at the prompt.

In addition, uneven eye contact between participants can cause inconsistent turn-taking,

as seen in this C2 excerpt.

8	A:	= a typical calendar
9→		picture or (.)((A looks at D, D looking at booklet))
10	D:	Yeah [definitely
11	A:	[It doesn't look too bad so I don't think this is a suitable picture (.) [Picture B
12	D:	[Yeah they are having=
13→	A:	= Hmm?= ((A looks at D again when he started talking))
14	D:	=the good life in there

Annik frequently tried to make eye contact. However, Derk only looked at the booklet. Annik

even made eye contact with the test examiner during parts of the paired task, which might signal

her desire for eye contact. Annik shows surprise when she is overlapped by Derk, possibly due to

the lack of eye contact, which causes the conversation to become disjointed.

Eye contact does not always equate to long, meaningful interactions, however. Even

between partners who routinely establish eye contact with each other, like the C1 pair, a partner

might not take a turn, or they might only say a single word.

```
1       M:    ok (.) so: (.) let's talk ((looking at R )) about choosing (.) a university (.) first?(.) ((R silently nodding his
2             head)) hmm, (.) I think people have to: think about, (.) well. (.) .hhh  first (.) the students ((looking at R)) have
3→            to (.) think about what they like?=((looks at R))

4→      R:    =yeah ((looking at M , nodding))
```

Like many of the previous features, eye contact can be practiced for paired assessments and in

the real world. Furthermore, exams can be structured in a way that allows for the prompt to be

removed before the discussion begins. Partners can sit facing each other too, like Iowa State

University's EPT-OC (Applied Linguistics Program, 2023), instead of side-by-side like the

Cambridge English Qualifications.

Gestures and Body Movement

Gestures are used with intonation and questioning and can be integral to a conversation.

For language learners taking a high-stakes exam, however, gesturing can seem limited, mainly

pointing to the exam booklet.

```
20      M:    °Yeah.° (.) And for this there? ((pointing to picture)) (1.0) no, (.) because or. if they have a lot of
21→           children a::nd from their fans ((K looking at M)) they can give it to their children? ((pointing to
22            picture and looking at K))

23      K:    Yes? ((meeting M's eye contact))
```

The interaction above is one of the few instances where Kenza (B1) turns to look at her partner. Both partners need to look at the booklet, though, especially when participants like Mohammad only say "this" (a soccer ball) and do not say what *this* is.

Gestures can be used to keep the floor or to signal that the other person should take a turn, such as extending an open palm toward the other person. While these interactions were not seen, perhaps because the participants sat side-by-side, there was one example of Raphael (C1) using body movement and gestures to keep his turn or train of thought.

```
10      R:   ((leans forward a bit)) And I think you have also to: umm choose the right university for (.) umm (.) like
11           where you- you can study ((looking at M, gestures a continuing motion)) the subject you will want to ((M
12→          looking at R and nodding)) and also that (.) the university (.) with the subject that is the best [university

13      M:                                                                                              [uh-huh ((nods))
```

This is the first instance Raphael speaks more than one word, and his gestures demonstrate his plan to talk at length. It would be interesting to see if the number and type of gestures change if the examinees face each other and do not have the prompt in front of them during the task.

English Errors

As a final note, partners appeared to adapt their responses when they heard their partner struggling with an English word or making English errors. This took several forms and occurred across all levels of the Cambridge English Qualifications. One of the most poignant examples of this is when Maria (B2) makes errors when suggesting the town install security cameras.

```
27→     M:   =°of the people that want to stole°

28      F:   Yeah. ((F smiling)) °building a large.° ((F reads from booklet)) No. I don't think building a large
             night club is really a good idea to attract tourists (.) .hhh ° I don't know.° ((looking at M))
```

Maria's sentence is jumbled and when she makes an error; Florine looks at the booklet and suggests another topic. This abruptly stops the problematic security camera discussion. Partners

were also helpful and lenient with pronunciation errors, either ignoring the issue or finishing

what they inferred was their partner's intention.

15   M: [Yes= ((nodding))

16→   R: =with the shubject- subject (.)

17   M: Hmm (.) like, (.) the best results in an exam or °something° like that.

In this excerpt, Raphael (C1) had taken the floor but started to lose track of his sentence, ending

by making a pronunciation error and self-correction. After pausing, Maude completed his idea.

Partners also were lenient when their pair struggled to find a vocabulary word, even if the other

partner might not have known the word either.

32   A: =Frizzy water? ((looking at D)) like filtered water=

33→   D: =Yeah [I know

34   A: [from a spring? So I also don't think this
35   is [suitable

Here, Annik is trying to describe a picture of a woman drinking a glass of water. While Derk

could have offered a word here, he demonstrates his comprehension. This is also seen a few lines

later when Derk struggles to say the phrase "developing country," correcting himself after saying

"third world country."

38→   D: [I think, C? (.) yeah is- is a rather good one. You see- you see all the (.) it's a it's a third-world
39→   country def-developing country (.) °certainly.°

40   A: Yeah and you can also see in between all the forests parts, so maybe there was a lot of forest-
41   deforestation going on before so, (.) they could build houses?

Finally, students seem to notice when their partner is struggling and take that as their cue

to take a turn, as seen with the B1 students here. While the examiner had previously said that the

football club is celebrating its 50th anniversary, the spelling of the word 50th is not written on

the picture prompt - only the number "50" is visible.

1	M:	Mmm (.) I think the calendar is (.) perfect or the t-shirt, because, (.) for me? the calendar year I can see:
2		my club every day:? ((M looking at K)) ((K nodding, left hand covering half of the mouth during the
3		most of the conversation throughout the conversation)) When I (.) just checking the date? I can see my
4→		club, and they are enjoying by the fi- fifth anniversary for their- forth or fifth established for their club?
5	K:	((nodding)) I think the t-shirt (.) ((pointing to the picture)) is uh the best idea? (2.0) so:, (1.0) if he had
6		the t-shirt with him (.) he can always remember the team? (.) ((looking at M))

In the shared task, all partners demonstrated pragmatics and comradery when speaking. At no

point did the students draw attention to an incorrect word, mispronunciation, or other issue.

CONCLUSION

This study provides another example of how CA can reveal aspects of L2 language in a

testing environment. The findings suggest both linguistic and nonlinguistic features are present

in L2 turn-taking, which can inform teaching and learning. Questions can initiate a topic, change

the topic, or keep the conversation going. Intonation, a feature of turn-taking that may not be

well utilized by L2 learners, can result in confusion if the listener misses the cue of a falling

intonation to signal a turn's end or the speaker uses a rising intonation when making a statement.

Overlapping speech can show engagement in a discussion, and pauses can lead to their partner

taking a turn, especially when combined with rising intonation and eye contact. The findings of

the use of eye contact represent a word of caution to test developers; when a prompt is in front of

test takers, it may lead them to look primarily at it and not make eye contact with their partner.

Several limitations can be observed in the selection of videos and the lack of information

related to them. As the Cambridge videos are uploaded on their YouTube channel, the test takers

may not represent average participants and might not demonstrate linguistic or test-taking

features that occur in non-recorded settings. As viewers, we do not know how authentic the

testing situation was—if students had a practice round before recording or received additional

advice beforehand. In addition, we do not know if these students passed the speaking portion, which limits our interpretation.

Despite these limitations, this fine-grained look into L2 conversation practices provides insight into the verbal and nonverbal patterns L2 speakers exhibit in paired test-taking environments. We hope the ideas gleaned from this study will be useful to teachers, test developers, and students in the MIDTESOL region and beyond.

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APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

[	The point where overlapping talk occurs
=	Contiguous utterances (no pause between utterances)
(.)	Micropause, a pause less than one second
(1.0)	Length of the pause in seconds
.	Falling or final intonation
?	Rising intonation, not necessary a question
,	Continuing intonation
:	Lengthening a sound
-	Cut-off or self-interruption
word	word stress or emphasis
(word)	Uncertainty as to what was said
(( ))	Body language remarks
.hhh	Audible inhalation or inbreath
hhh	Exhalation
#word(s)#	Laughter in the voice
(h)	Laughter
$_o$word$_o$	Spoken softly