When does repair occur?

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Recent cross-linguistic analyses have revealed that repair, defined by Levinson (1983) as an alteration that is suggested or made in the course of conversation in order to correct or clarify a previous contribution, occurs very frequently in conversation, suggesting that it might be a universal feature of human communication (Dingemanse et al., 2015). Does this mean that people repair every bit of conversation that requires repair? Recent laboratory studies have shown that people often fail to even *notice* moments of incoherence in conversation (Galantucci & Roberts, 2014; Roberts, Langstein, & Galantucci, 2016; Galantucci, Roberts & Langstein, 2018), suggesting at least one reason for a negative answer to the question. In one study, people engaged in dyadic instant message conversations often failed to notice that their conversation had been crossed multiple times with that of another dyad (Galantucci & Roberts, 2014). A second study (Galantucci, Roberts, & Langstein, 2018) extended these findings to face-to-face conversation, suggesting that low sensitivity to conversational incoherence might well be a natural feature of human communication. Furthermore, an informal analysis of the transcripts of these studies revealed that even when people seemed to notice the moment of conversational incoherence, they often forewent repair. The present study is aimed at further investigating this surprising observation. In particular, we test the hypothesis that people in the studies by Galantucci and colleagues forewent repair because they were involved in casual conversations in which a moment of conversational incoherence had no tangible consequences.

We had six participants perform a simple task of moving small objects on a chessboard according to the instructions of a confederate who, on the third of four trials, uttered an instruction containing the non-word "skask" (the instruction was as follows: "please pick up the skask and move it to C5"). When one of the objects had no well-known name (see Figure 1a), five of the six participants forewent repair and moved that object. In an attempt to increase the rate of repair, we replicated the study with two objects with no well-known name (Figure 1b). Four of six participants forewent repair and moved one of the objects with no well-known name.

The results of this pilot study suggest two conclusions. First, supporting the hypothesis of the study, repair frequency increases when the tangible consequences of foregoing repair are more likely. Because this was a very small increase (from 1 of 6 to 2 of 6), further investigation, which is ongoing in our laboratory, is needed to properly evaluate this conclusion. Second, some people forego repair even when it is fairly likely that doing so will lead to a tangible consequence. Taken together, these conclusions suggest a second reason for a negative answer to the question that prompted this study. Even when incoherence is noticed and repair is needed, people might still forego repairs.
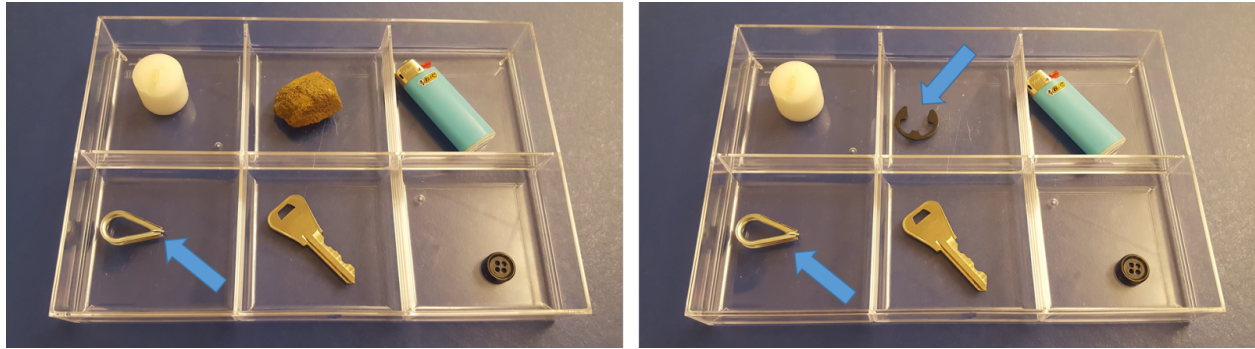
*Figure 1***a.** One object with no well-known name   1**b.** Two objects with no well-known name

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