A Multimodal Analysis of the Service-Assessment Sequence in Haircutting Interactions

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1. Introduction

In responding to a speaker's utterance, a recipient may show a strong degree of agreement by shaping his/her turn "with minimal gap, often latched or in overlap" (Pomerantz, 1984, p. 69). Let us examine the following example, in which a hairstylist (H) asks a male customer (C3) if he likes his new haircut.

(1a)

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H: Are you sure you l:i[ke it?
C3: [Yeah yeah I l(hh)ike it. Yeah(hh)Hehheh.
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C3's utterance is overlapped with H's turn. His repeated "yeah" are both marked with emphasis. Thus, it is a preferred turn-shape that displays his strong agreement with H (and thus his approval of a new cut). As a result, the hairstylist closes the haircut session right after C3's utterance. However, this is not all we can say about what is going on here when we take a look at their nonvocal actions:

(1b) Haircut Example

As he produces a preferred vocal action, C3 nods and returns the hand-held mirror back to H, also shifting his gaze from it to H. In a way, his nonvocal action is also a preferred action because it displays his satisfaction of his new haircut as well as progresses the sequence towards the closing session. Therefore, his vocal and nonvocal actions complement each other. This phenomenon leads me to the question at hand: Do interaction

participants also orient to others' nonvocal actions? What combinations of vocal and nonvocal actions are attended to by hairstylists as a "display of (dis)satisfaction" of a new hairstyle?

In looking at the service-assessment sequence of haircutting interactions, this paper examines one of the many complex notions of CA, preferred/dispreferred turn shapes (Pomerantz 1984), from a multimodal perspective. Specifically, I explore whether participants simultaneously produce vocal and nonvocal actions for shaping preferred/dispreferred-action turn and what combinations of vocal and nonvocal actions are attended to by others as "a display of (dis)satisfaction" with a new cut. I argue that a multimodal look at preferred/dispreferred turn shapes reveals a larger array of communicative resources to display the degree of agreement, satisfaction, and so forth. Such analysis from this perspective will contribute to a better understanding of prior CA findings as a whole. In addition to this, it will bring further explanation to how participants interactionally come to agree on the aesthetic qualities of a particular product (e.g. a new haircut) is interactionally achieved, as opposed to solely being the end result of a professional's trade skills. The video data segments used for this study come from four haircut sessions between a hairstylist (H) and four different customers (C1-C4). The hairstylist and her customers are from different ethnic backgrounds and the conversation during each haircut session was conducted in English.

2. The Service-Assessment Sequence

For the purpose of this study, I focus on the microanalysis of the service-assessment sequence, where hairstylist and customer determine whether or not the service provided was adequate. Schegloff & Sacks (1973) revealed that people in conversation may formulate agreeable statements as a topic-closing technique, and when agreement is reached they move on to closure—often via the exchange of "ok" and "alright." In other words, people generally seek a shared agreement at the pre-closing stage. In this service-assessment sequence, a general preference for "progressivity" in interaction becomes visible. Also, preference for display of satisfaction adds a sensitive and delicate nature to this sequence, as customers seldom express (or challenge hairstylists with) their negative assessments about the new cut directly with their stylist. Davidson (1984) reveals that the notion of preferred/dispreferred turn-shape can be stretched to the sequence in which the response relevance is acceptance/rejection (as opposed to Pomerantz' agreement/disagreement). Similarly, I claim that Pomerantz' findings can be generalized to the

sequence under consideration here, in which the response relevance is acceptance/rejection of the haircut, and thus "the preferred outcome" (Davidson, p. 105) is acceptance.

3. Multimodal analysis that enriches CA findings

Stivers and Sidnell (2005) claim that "human social interaction [that] involves the intertwined cooperation of different modalities is uncontroversial" (p. 1). Several scholars have looked at different modalities that people employ as communicative resources, such as gesture (e.g. Streeck 1993; LeBaron 1998; Kendon 2004), gaze (e.g. Goodwin 1980; Bavelas, Coates, & Johnson 2002), and material surroundings (e.g. Goodwin 1994; Streeck 1996; Oshima 2003). Jarmon (1996) considers an embodied action as "a fifth domain of turn-construction unit types within the turn-taking system" (3.1.4) in addition to the four types of spoken construction units—words, phrases, clauses, and sentences (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974)— and demonstrates how prior CA findings are applicable to,

and enriched by, an analysis of various bodily actions. Similarly, I take the position that multimodal analysis contributes to prior CA findings concerning face-to-face human interaction.

4. Display of Different Degrees of Satisfaction

In what follows, I will show how both a customer's both vocal and embodied actions are oriented to by hairstylists as a display of different degrees of satisfaction—satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and downgraded satisfaction—with a new haircut.

4.1 Display of Satisfaction

At the beginning of this essay, I introduced an example in which a customer performed an action of approval by way of vocal- and embodied-preferred actions. The following is a similar example involving another customer, C2. She responds to the hairstylist's question with preferred vocal and nonvocal actions.

(2)

```
1 H: °Yeah, so:.
((C2 looks ((C2 looks back at the large mirror; H steps away and
at the hand- looks directly at C2))
held mirror))
2 (0.3)
((C2 lowers the
hand-held mirror))
  H: >Does that look oka[y?<
4 C2:
                          [Oka:y↑ >Yea<.
                      ((C2 looks directly at H, nodding))
  H: Alri↑ght. Awesome.
((Looks away)) ((Takes the hand-held mirror from C2))
             ((C2 looks to the front))
  C2: Thank you.
   H: You're welcome↑.
```

While C2's spoken utterance in line 2 may indicate a "same evaluation" because she does not use any "intensifier" to answer H's question (Pomerantz, 1984), it is slightly overlapped by H's turn (and thus can display an alignment) and her utterance "Yea" is emphasized and clear-cut. Thus, I argue that her vocal action is shaped somewhere between "same evaluation" and "upgraded." Now, what makes C2's turn even a clearer

Pomerantz (1984) names one type of agreement "same evaluation" in which "a recipient asserts the same evaluation as the prior speaker's evaluation" (66). Another is the "upgrade," which is "an assessment of the referent assessed in the prior that incorporates upgraded evaluation terms relative to the prior" (65).

sign of satisfaction are her nonvocal actions. As soon as H looks directly at C2, C2 lowers the hand-held mirror that she has been holding up in front of her face (line 2). That is to say, C2 no longer looks at the new cut in the hand-held mirror. She then looks directly at H and nods during her utterance (line 4). These preferred nonvocal actions complement her preferred vocal action. H treats C2's actions as a display of satisfaction and therefore initiates in closing the haircut session via spoken utterances as well as a nonvocal action (taking the hand-held mirror from C2) (line 5). They then close the session with closing remarks (lines 6-7). The nonvocal actions seen in this example complement C2's preferred vocal actions, indicating sequence closure. More important is that in this example, C2s' actions are treated by H as a display of satisfaction, allowing the stylist to initiate closing the haircut sessions.

4.2 Display of Dissatisfaction

Pomerantz (1984) identifies "dispreferred-action turn shape" as a type that "minimizes the occurrences of the actions performed with them, in part utilizing the organization of delays and nonexplicitly stated action components, such as actions other than a conditionally relevant next" (p. 64). For example:

[Example 22, from Pomerantz, 1984: p. 63]

```
A: God izn it dreary.
(0.6)
A: [Y'know I don't think-B: [°hh- It's warm though,
```

According to her, disagreement is frequently preceded by a delay device termed "no immediate forthcoming talk" (p. 70). In the next example, C3 does not immediately act in response to H's explanation of what she did with the new cut.

(3a)

While H's completion point is clearly marked—by downward intonation and grammatical closure—, her utterance is followed by a 1.5-second-pause. After the pause, C3 says "okay," which is not more than a mere acknowledgement. Thus, his delayed vocal turn is marked as a dispreferrred action. Noticeably, during his spoken utterance, C3 keeps

looking at the mirror. As opposed to preferred actions, dispreferred vocal actions often accompany actions which can result in prolonging the sequence. Such visible actions can be taken as dispreferred actions, as they do not progress the sequence towards closure. In turn, the hairstylist also treats these actions as a display of dissatisfaction (or "non-satisfaction" at the least). Here is what happens after a customer produces a dispreferred turn-shape:

(**3b**)

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Ps: (1.5)

((C3 slightly nods, looking at the mirror))

4 C3: Okay.=

((Slightly nods, keeping his gaze to the mirror))

5 H: =Then you can do whatever you want right here, too, if you wanna=

((H momentarily, directly ((Pulls and twists C3's hair on the back of gazes at C3's hair)) his head, looking at the mirror))

((C3 shifts his posture accordingly with H's move))

6 H: =make it messy too1, (0.8) you know really it's just up to you.=

((H continues to twist, looking at the mirror))

((C3 touches his hair, looking at the hand-held mirror))
```

Following C3's dispreferred actions, H elaborates on her comment not only by performing a vocal elaboration, but also elaborates with the bodily action of styling C3's hair.

In the next example, C3's spoken utterance ("Okay") is latched onto H's utterance, but it is low in volume and not more than a mere acknowledgement. Also, he looks at H as she starts gesturing, but he soon shifts his gaze back to the mirror despite the fact that H is still looking at him. Following C's dispreferred actions, H starts fixing C's hair with hair wax.

(4)

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4 C3: = °Okay (.) =

((nods))

((C3 looks at the hand-held mirror))

((H's gesture continues))

5 H: =Let's see. °Let me put some of the (big

((H's gesturing hands ((Walks toward the mirror and grabs hair stop momentarily)) wax/gel))
```

Pomerantz (1984) distinguishes acknowledgement from agreement, saying that with agreements, "recipients of prior assessments claim access to the referents assessed," while with acknowledgements "they acknowledge prior deliveries but make no claims of independent access" (p. 92). I take the same position and argue that acknowledgements are different from a display of satisfaction. Therefore, C3's vocal action is not yet a sign of satisfaction. In addition, his action of looking back at the hand-held mirror is a dispreferred action. These dispreferred vocal and embodied actions of the customer were attended to by H as displays of dissatisfaction. In both examples (3) and (4), H elaborated on her explanations of the possible things that a customer could do with the new cut as well as fixing it.

A display of dissatisfaction can be accomplished by a customer's bodily action that extends the sequence. In the following example, a customer (C4) first produces a somewhat positive response to H's question. The hairstylist then orients to it as a sign of satisfaction by saying "okay."

(5a)

```
1 H: >Does that< look okay?

2 C4: Uh-huh.

((Slightly ((Moves his head nods)) to look more in the mirror))

3 H: Okayį.

4 Ps: (1.8)

((C4 feels the back of his hair with his right hand))
```

C4 first responds to H's question with a somewhat preferred vocal action ("Uh-huh"). However, this is not necessarily a display of satisfaction because it is mere "same evaluation"—it is not upgraded with any intensifier, it is not emphasized, nor is it overlapped. At the same time, C4 keeps looking at the mirror, which, in line with my previous observations, is a dispreferred action. Thus, H could have taken C4's turn as a display of dissatisfaction and as initiating an action that aims for his satisfaction. However, H merely orients to C4's vocal action and says, "Okay." On a side note, H had warned C4 before the haircut session started that she would have to be somewhere at certain time. Thus, it might have been the case that she *chose* to disengage herself from the dispreferred actions of C4 (rather than overlooking them) and to only orient herself to a certain aspect of his spoken utterance (of the mild agreement expressed by "uh-huh"). No matter what intentions she had, they do not end up in closing just yet; C4 extends the sequence by

continually looking at the mirror as well as feeling the hair on the back of his head. This extension is now attended to by H. She elaborates with another question:

(5b)

So far, I have shown cases where H orients to Cs' consistent vocal and visible actions. But what if they happen inconsistently, such as a combination of a vocal action that indicates closure and an embodied action that indicates sequence prolonging? How does H orient to such turn shapes of the actions of customers?

4.3 Display of Downgraded Satisfaction

Pomerantz claims that even though a person "agrees," it could imply disagreement if the agreement was downgraded, in which case the first of the two speakers "often reassert[s] stronger assessments" (p. 68). For example:

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[Example 31, from Pomerantz, 1984: p. 68]
A: She's a fox.
L: Yeh, she's a pretty girl.
A: Oh, she's gorgeous!
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In this example, the participant L "downgrades" her agreement by the use of the term "pretty" which is a "scaled-down or weakened evaluation" term relative to "fox." As a result, A treats L's response as a non-agreement/disagreement and reasserts a stronger evaluation.

While people can shape their downgraded agreement by way of vocal actions alone, face-to-face interactions may offer more opportunities for speakers to downgrade their response to the original assessment. This section will demonstrate how "downgrading" is achieved by customers' mismatched combination of vocal and nonvocal actions. Accordingly, the hairstylist orients to a customer's display of downgraded satisfaction (that indicates non-satisfaction/dissatisfaction) by continuing or reopening the sequence (as opposed to closing the session). To start with, we will first take a look at the following example in which C1 responds to H's assessment and question with preferred vocal actions:

```
H: (3.2) This ( ) has more volume=
H: =than what you usually have so I blow-dried it.=
C1: =Right, right.
H: Yea:h=
C1: =Okay, tha în[k yo:u
H: [Do you l:ike i:[:t?]
C1: [Yes >thank you.<=
H: =Is that length okay?</pre>
```

C1's response to H's assessment is latched onto H's utterance and is marked with stress, which shapes it as a preferred turn (line 3). In line 5, C1 apparently initiates the closing of the session by saying "okay, thank you" again latching onto H's turn as well as marking her utterance by a high pitch and vocal emphasis. Then, why does H continue to ask a question in line 6 and again in line 8, despite C1's immediate, emphasized "Yes" in line 7? What accounts for H's actions—disorienting to C1's preferred actions? One plausible explanation for H's actions is found in C1's dispreferred nonvocal actions:

(6b)

```
H: (3.2) This ( ) has more volume=
  ((Runs her fingers through Cl's hair, while facing towards the large
   mirror))
  H: =than what you usually have so I blow-dried it.=
       ((C1 looks up toward H)) ((H looks at C1))
                    ((H shakes her upward-facing palms))
   C1: =Right, right.
       ((Looks at the hand-held mirror))
   H: Yea:h=
((Gazes at the large mirror and steps back))
   C1: = Okay, tha n[k yo:u]
       ((Runs her fingers through her hair))
((Looks at H)) ((Looks at the mirror))
6
  H:
                    [Do you l:ike i:[:t?
   C1:
                                     [Yes >thank you.< =
                         ((Looks at H)) ((Looks at the mirror, shaking
                                         her head from side to side))
  H: =Is that length okay?
   ((Both keep looking at Cl's hair in the large mirror,
     as C1 keeps shaking her head from side to side))
9 Cl: ((Brings another hand to support the hand-held mirror and looks
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intensely at it))
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Notice that C1 looks up toward H when H starts gesturing (shaking her open palms), and H also looks at C1 (line 2). C1 then responds to H's comments ("Right, right"). As she produces this preferred vocal action, she exits from the mutual gaze and looks back toward a hand-held mirror while H is still looking at her. In line 5, along with what seems to be her closing statement, C1 briefly looks at H at the beginning of her utterance but again immediately shifts her gaze back to the portable mirror. H then continues by asking, "Do you like it?" (line 6). While C1 responds with a preferred vocal action, her gaze is coordinated around the mirror, rather than around H (line 7). C1 briefly looks at H right before she says "Yes", but soon she looks back at the mirror as she produces her spoken utterance, shaking her hair from side to side. H then intends to continue the sequence by asking another question (line 8).

In short, while C1's preferred vocal actions display a clear sign of satisfaction, H coordinates her next actions with C's dispreferred nonvocal actions. Ekman and Friesen (1969) may categorize C1's actions as "nonverbal leakage"—"the betrayal of that withheld information" (p. 89) that provide deception clues. They claim that nonverbal actions can "speak louder than words" (p. 88); for example, a person may somehow nonverbally show contradicting emotions while verbally claiming to feel differently. Their point is that, once we are aware of it, we can easily get rid of such nonverbal leakages and thus reduce the information revealed. I argue, on the other hand, that it is no longer easy to draw a line between unintended "leakage" and a deliberate and explicit use of a communicative resource. While they might have been unintentionally "leaked," C1's nonvocal actions *consequently* become effective communicative strategy. The proof is that this sequence is followed by another consultation (they revisit some pictorial images and discuss the image of a cut C1 had in her mind) and another haircutting session begins.

Example (7) provides a similar case, except that the combination is the opposite; a customer combines a preferred nonvocal action with a dispreferred vocal action.

In response to H's closing statement, C3 lowers the hand-held mirror in his hand and thus shifts his gaze from the hand-held mirror to H. This visible action of C3 signals his alignment with H's closing action. C3 simultaneously produces an acknowledgement ("Yea"). As I previously mentioned, this is a mere acknowledgement and is relatively low-pitched. In other words, C3's vocal action is not a preferred action. H then orients to it as

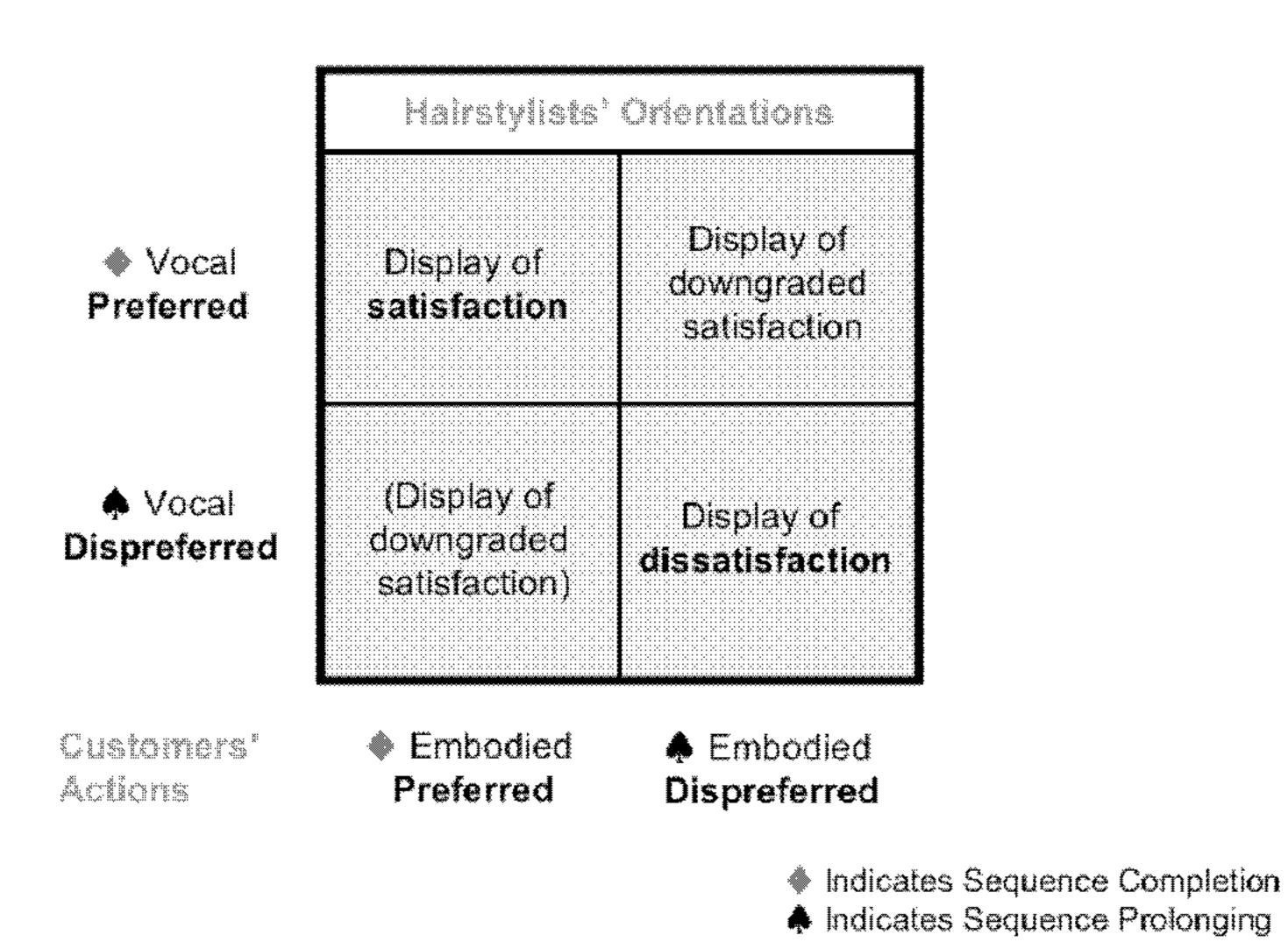
an indication of dissatisfaction; C3's action is followed by H's question of whether he really likes it. C3 then displays a strong agreement (see [(1) haircut example] at the beginning of this essay), and the session closes. Despite C3's visibly displayed preference, H did not treat the customer's utterance as a sign of satisfaction until he also produced a preferred vocal action.

5. Discussion

A hairstylist's orientation to a customer's vocal and embodied actions can be summarized as seen in

Figure 1. In the examples above, hairstylists treat customer actions that indicate closure as a display of satisfaction, while doing the opposite for customer actions that indicate sequence prolonging.

(8) Figure 1



Pomerantz' argues that "actualization of minimizing the occurrences of overtly stated disagreements" (p. 76) is important because "across different situations, conversants orient to agreeing with one another as comfortable, supportive, reinforcing, perhaps as being sociable and as showing that they are like-minded" and thus view "disagreeing with one another as uncomfortable, unpleasant, [and] difficult," therefore "risking threat, insult, or offense" (p. 77). In my haircutting data, such a principle of social interaction became especially tangible when co-present interactants concurrently employed dispreferred nonvocal actions and preferred vocal actions. Indeed, a multimodal look at preferred/dispreferred turn shapes reveals a variety of actions for interactants to take in order to avoid uncomfortable performances in social interaction.

This multimodal observation also leads us to understand a particular product (e.g. a new haircut) as what Button (1992) calls an "interactional product." The production of a

² Button (1992) argues that activities in job interviews are interactionally constructed and that job candidates' answers are "interactional products." In other words, if an interviewee did not "do well," it is not only the interviewee's fault but it is also because of an interviewer's way of asking questions.

successful new haircut certainly yields to much more than a hairstylist's trade skills, and a multimodal analysis of the service-assessment sequence certainly contributes to a further explanation of such a product that is interactionally produced. The following example is a deviant case found in my data; the hairstylist only orients to a customer's spoken utterance ("yeah") and closes the session despite the customer's display of non-satisfaction.

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(9)
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H: ((Having been drying C1's hair with a hairdryer, both facing a large mirror))

H: Feel through your hair and tell me if it's (thin enough)

((Stops drying C1's hair)) ((C1 feels through her hair))

((Looking at C1 in a large mirror))

Ps: (1.9)

((C1 feels through her hair, looking at the large mirror))

C1: Yeah, (0.5)(it is).

((Continues to feel through her hair and looking at the mirror))

Ps: (2.0)

((C1 continues to feel through her hair and looking at the mirror))

H: ((Walks behind C1 and takes off the cover))

C1: Thank you.

H: You're welcome.
```

Notice that C1 takes more than a second before she produces her utterance "yeah". When she finally produces it (line 4), her low pitched voice, adding nothing more to her reply than "it is," even confirms her vocal action as a dispreferred action that indicates downgraded satisfaction or even dissatisfaction. Correspondingly, she keeps feeling through and looking at her hair during and after her utterance (lines 4-5). Such dispreferred nonvocal actions display, in alignment with my previous observations, a sign of dissatisfaction. C1 then keeps feeling through and looking at her hair until H walks behind C1 and begins to take off the cover. C1 acknowledges this action of H as a closing remark, and orients to it by saying "Thank you."

This was, in fact, the second service-assessment sequence for this customer that day. Right after the first sequence, which we saw earlier in example 5, C had requested her hair to be more "thinned-out." So having just fixed the cut (as seen in this clip), C's satisfaction might have been more expected by H, which may explain her disorientation to C's dispreferred actions. In any case, the new cut was "approved" and the session was "mutually" ended during this sequence. However, this second session was again unsuccessful, because C had to return yet a third time, as soon as H finished cutting the next customer's hair.

If H had oriented to C's dispreferred actions here, or if C did not provide any resources that could be taken as a sign of satisfaction, they might have reopened (or continued) the cutting session and avoided labeling the new cut as "unsuccessful."

Therefore, the production of a successful or unsuccessful new haircut yields from much more than a hairstylist's trade skills, and can be largely attributed to interaction.

Another possible explanation of the unsuccessfulness of the new cut may be done by extracting "incorporated preferences" (Heritage, 2003) that the hairstylist sometimes employed in her questions throughout the sequences³. For example, H asks, "does it look okay?" and simultaneously starts clearing up her tools *before* a customer responds. Or, with a different customer, she asks, "do you want it more thinned-out?" and grabs scissors *before* the customer has said anything. An in-depth look at incorporation of preferences/dispreferences by way of multimodal resources may be the next step toward understanding the significance and a better understanding of prior CA findings as well as their wider applications in various communicative settings.

When looking at Pomerantz' findings on preferred/dispreferred-action turn shapes from a multimodal perspective, we may gain insight into how the orders of talk-in-interaction are vocally and nonvocally organized. While I have only illustrated a limited use of communicative resources in my brief study, such analyses from this perspective will contribute to the enrichment of prior CA findings as well as the enrichment of understanding various communicative events, such as seen in professional interactions, everyday interactions, or in any of the events described above in my own data.

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³ Heritage (2003) claims that an interviewer in news interviews incorporates preferences in his/her question (e.g. "won't you"), and thus an interviewee aligns/disaligns with the preferences in his/her answer.

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