

Sae Oshima*

Balancing multiple roles through consensus: making revisions in haircutting sessions

Abstract: This study demonstrates how participants in haircutting sessions merge different roles during one of the most sensitive moments of an encounter: requesting and/or making revisions to a new cut. During the process of arriving at a consensus of whether or not changes need to be made to the new cut, the stylist and the client negotiate not only the quality of the cut, but also their expected roles. Caring about both the bodies and the minds of customers is an important element in measuring the quality of cosmetological services, a consideration which may oblige stylists to immediately agree with and act upon every client request or concern. However, simply yielding to the customer's opinions can threaten the stylist's role as a beauty expert, one who possesses their own professional standards. The analysis reveals that the participants frequently transform revision requests/offers into mutual decisions through a combination of verbal and bodily actions. In doing so, they harmonize the sometimes conflicting responsibilities of "service provider/patron" and "expert/novice."

Keywords: multiple roles, consensus, client–professional encounter, beauty salon, haircutting, conversation analysis

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1 Introduction

Professional tasks, which may once have been understood mainly in terms of a professional's practical and hands-on expertise, are now increasingly dependent on the practice of communicative skills. Accordingly, a variety of studies have described the significant role of communication in delivering professional services in various settings. Here are a few of the areas in which these studies have

*Corresponding author: Sae Oshima, Department of Business Communication, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark, E-mail: oshima@bcom.au.dk

been carried out: medical and healthcare encounters (e.g., Peräkylä 1998; Robinson 1998; Drew et al. 2001), cosmetic surgery consultations (Mirivel 2008), restaurant service encounters (Kuroshima 2010), public service encounters (Asmuß 2007), travel agency encounters (Ylänne-McEwen 2004), as well as different types of service conducted over the phone, such as software helplines (Baker et al. 2001), emergency assistance (Zimmerman 1992; Larsen 2013), and airline reservation services (Lee 2011). Much of this scholarly work has deemed the successful completion of professional tasks as interactional and local (re) productions, also described by conversation analysts as “the interactional accomplishment of particular social activities” (Drew and Heritage 1992: 17). Similarly, the present paper aims to explore an interactional aspect of a certain type of service encounter, namely haircutting sessions. It specifically centers on the analysis of a common occurrence found in cosmetology sessions: service assessment sequences, in which the service provider and the client determine whether or not the completed work (e.g., a new haircut) in a given session is adequate.

The goal of the service assessment sequence is to achieve a consensus between a stylist and his/her client about the quality of the service: is the service outcome good enough, or does it need revision? At the same time, in arriving at a consensus participants go through several tasks, such as the negotiation of relevant role and power. In today’s beauty-related service industries, the pampering of customers is one of the most important (and desired) elements in measuring the quality of the service provided, which requires service providers to care about both the bodies and the minds of their customers (Gimlin 1996; Willett 2000; Kang 2003; Black 2004; Toerien and Kitlinger 2007). However, providers are also experts in beauty work, and are therefore often expected and obliged to share their expert knowledge and perspectives (Gimlin 1996; McCracken 1996; Jacobs-Huey 2003). Accordingly, the customers play a novice role in this professional context. But the salon is “after all, a commercial environment” (Gimlin 1996: 523), and as patrons, the customers have the right to express their needs and desires about their service outcome. Negotiating these roles can be complex, especially during the service assessment sequence when the client and the stylist share their opinions about the quality of the service that has been provided.

Based on a microanalysis of four cases, this study demonstrates how the participants merge different roles during one of the most sensitive moments in the service assessment sequence: requesting and/or making revisions to a new haircut/style. Here, clients may feel that they know what is best for them, but may also need to avoid stepping into the stylist’s role. As caring service providers, stylists may want to immediately act upon every client request or concern.

On the other hand, simply yielding to the customer's opinions can threaten the stylist's role as a beauty expert. How do the stylist and the customer arrive at a consensus when the issue of revising the service outcome is discussed? What kind of roles do the participants tend to adopt, and how do they negotiate these roles? Do the participants maintain their roles as "expert and novice" and the healthy relationship of "service provider and patron" at the same time, and if so, how?

2 Multiple roles involved in client–professional encounters

Although the goal of client–professional encounters and the expected roles of the participants may seem clear (i.e., the professional fulfills the client's needs), past studies have revealed the complex – and occasionally inconsistent – nature of the multiple roles that are involved in client–professional interactions. For example, Vehviläinen (2003) discussed the dilemma of career training counselors. While their ideal role is to facilitate their clients' planning process by "helping students to 'think for themselves'" (Vehviläinen 2003: 410), they also often have to fulfill the clients' expectations of their role as knowledgeable and experienced experts who provide clients with solutions. Similarly, in their analysis of a genetic counseling clinic encounter, Sarangi and Clarke (2002) found that while the counselors worked to avoid the role of expert advisor by authenticating their expertise in their own field and disclaiming their knowledge in adjacent fields, the clients were persistent in looking for the professionals to play an expert, authoritative role. On the contrary, clients may assert their own competence instead of taking the assumed role of novices. In Waring's (2007) study of tutoring sessions at a graduate writing center, tutees (the client) established the role of coassessor instead of the role of a passive advice recipient, when accepting advice from their tutor (the professional). Thus, constant negotiations of relevant roles constitute an important element in securing the smooth progression of client–professional encounters. In other words, tensions may arise when professionals and clients fail to align with the set of roles toward which they tend. Heritage and Sefi (1992), Heritage and Lindström (1998), and Hall et al. (1999) all observed such problematic instances, where a social worker or a health visitor played the role of an expert who was equipped with the solution, while the mothers portrayed themselves also as competent and knowledgeable. Indeed, while professionals are expected to display their expert knowledge in their respective fields, they may also be careful about the issue

of clients' "keenness to deal with the situation competently" (Hall et al. 1999: 302), or a client may show a resistance to the professional's advice.

While professionals and clients may encounter problematic moments and dilemmas due to the complex issue of the multiple roles involved in their encounters, balancing different roles can be an effective tool in carrying out professional practice, or offset some of the problems relating to professional tasks. Examples include: a medical doctor navigating a set of therapeutic and pedagogical roles for providing a professional reasoning of specific treatment (Sarangi 2010); a health visitor enacting the role of a mother who shares the same experiences as her client (instead of highlighting her institutional role as the baby expert) when dealing with sensitive issues like a mother's lack of affection for her baby (Heritage and Lindström 1998); and home helps disclosing aspects of their personal life with a view to moving away from their institutional roles as "care providers/recipients" when potentially problematic moments arise out of such relationships (Heinemann 2007).

As seen above, multiple roles can be perceived either as problematic or as beneficial, depending on the context of the observed setting and activity in question. However, one suggestion underlined by previous studies is that professionals may be able to aim for a satisfactory outcome by carefully managing their multiple roles, and by tending toward "surveillance instead of service" (Heritage and Sefi 1992: 413). This notion becomes especially valuable among beauty-related professionals, whose central task involves working with multiple roles. Previous studies have revealed the various roles that hairstylists play as they provide a service to their clients. While they are hair experts and consultants (Jacobs-Huey 2003), they are also fashion and style experts (Gimlin 1996). At the same time, they are friends, nurturers, and pamperers (Eayrs 1993; Gimlin 1996; Sharma and Black 2001) who attend to the clients' various needs and problems including any family issues they disclose (Black 2004). Accordingly, a cosmetologist may attain professional status through a well-mixed combination of presenting expert knowledge and emotional care of their client (Toerien and Kitinger 2007), or in other words, by harmonizing the two roles of "the trained professional offering advice, and also the service worker being paid to give the client what she wants" (Black 2004: 117).

However, the work of fulfilling both these roles as a beauty expert and a caring service provider may become challenging at times, for example, when working with customer requests. As a caring service provider, the stylist may want to listen to what the client desires. But simply accepting the client's request may threaten the stylist's role as the expert. One solution for the stylists is to take the difficult decision to diminish one role by prioritizing the other, as described by Gimlin (1996). According to her, hairstylists' attempts to demonstrate their specialized area of

expertise – including the technical aspects of haircutting, as well as aesthetic aspects of what the hair should look like – often fail when the clients express different views from those of the stylists. The stylists then prioritize their role as carers/pamperers who simply fulfill their clients' wishes instead of maintaining their professional perspectives and opinions. The aim of my study is to take a closer look at how such a dilemma arises and is dealt with by stylists and customers in interaction. How do they simultaneously manage their roles as “expert and novice” and the healthy relationship of “service provider and patron?”

3 Data

The examples shown in this paper have been drawn from a larger set of video data consisting of 30 sessions at ten beauty salons in the United States, collected between 2005 and 2007. As I watched video-recorded interactions, I identified the service assessment sequence as the unit of analysis which usually takes place toward the end of a cosmetological session and could be as quick as 30 seconds, or as long as 5 minutes. Generally speaking, the sequence is initiated by some form of action from the stylist that invites/solicits a customer's service assessment, such as offering a handheld mirror, turning the chair, and providing an explanation and/or asking a question about the cut. The customer then provides a course of responding action, that is, physical inspection and verbal assessment/(dis)agreement. My specific interest lies in the moments where the matter of revising the newly done haircut is brought up by one of the participants,¹ and I adopt conversation analysis to analyze various communicative practices that coparticipants attend to and employ in requesting and/or making revisions to a new cut. For transcripts, I use the system developed by Gail Jefferson (see ten Have 1999, as well as the appendix).

4 Revision as a mutual decision: harmonizing multiple roles

A customer's request for revisions may imply his or her dissatisfaction with the quality of service. If this is the case, not only may the stylist's professional

¹ Among the data collected, there was an additional case where the matter of revision was brought up by the stylist. Although I do not discuss the example here, it also confirms the participants' work and orientation to harmonizing multiple roles.

identity be threatened, but the customer also may have to undergo the social discomfort of face-to-face personal criticism. Therefore, both customer and stylist handle the issue of revising a haircut carefully, resolving the situation by reaching a mutual decision through the use of various verbal and embodied actions. For example, a stylist may immediately show his/her “authentic” agreement with the customer’s assessment (which may indicate a revision request), as in the following example. This example has been retrieved from a recorded session at a unisex salon that operates on both an appointment and a first-come, first-served basis, due to the high number of stylists on hand. The session was recorded on a Sunday afternoon, and there were about eight customers waiting for their turn in a lounge. The customer, Chaz, is meeting the stylist, Nita, for the first time, and the two of them talk about miscellaneous events in their lives throughout the cutting procedure. During the styling session, Nita shows Chaz how to style the cut for different occasions, specifically for going out socially and for going to work. As Nita finishes styling Chaz’s new haircut, she looks at him through the reflection in the large mirror in front of them and asks if he likes the cut.

(1) “Chaz & Nita” 00:27–00:37

- 1 ((Nita almost finishes styling, and shifts her gaze from Chaz’s haircut to Chaz in the large mirror))
- 2 Nita: How are you liking it? Do you like it?
 ((Nita arranges the back of Chaz’s haircut, looking at him in the large mirror))
 ((Nita nods))
- 3 Chaz: [It’s good. (.) °Yea.°]
 ((Chaz pulls his chin to see the top of his cut))
 ((Nita nods and starts walking off the camera))
- 4 (0.4)
- 5 Chaz: But it’s not work yet. °>So I didn’t wa[nna]<° =
 ((Chaz lightly rumples up his hair))
- 6 Nita: [No:.]
- 7 Chaz: =H[hhhh]
 ((Chaz scratches his nose, looking toward Nita off camera))
- 8 Nita: [Yea. (0.3) Exactly.]

- 9 (0.7) ((Chaz shifts his gaze from Nita off camera to the large mirror, touching his hair again, but soon retracts his hand when Nita walks back to fix his hair, smiling))
- 10 Chaz: Let's pretend we don't have to go to work=
- 11 Chaz: =tomorrow morning.
((Nita fixes Chaz's haircut, looking at it and smiling))
- 12 (7.5) ((Nita continues to fix the styling of Chaz's cut))
- 13 Nita: °(This right here), I think it's a bit° (.)
|
((Nita shifts her posture and gaze toward the counter))
- 14 Nita: too heavy.
- 15 (0.4)
- 16 Nita: It's not laying the way I want it to, [so].
|
((Nita faces Chaz with a comb and scissors))
- 17 Chaz: [Alright.
- 18 ((Nita begins to cut Chaz's hair))

Nita initiates the service assessment sequence by asking two questions in succession (line 2), and Chaz's answer to the first question overlaps with Nita's second question. Here, instigated by Nita's questions, Chaz also starts engaging in physical inspection by moving his head downward, and then provides his response to Nita's second question (line 3). By this time, Nita is already shifting her bodily posture for the next course of action, which is to walk off camera, perhaps to get a handheld mirror for an upcoming official physical inspection. At this point in the sequence, client and provider typically proceed to a second, more official service assessment sequence with the aid of a handheld mirror. In this case, however, as Nita walks off, Chaz comments on the present style's appropriateness for work rather than for the weekend, and lightly rearranges the cut on his own (line 5). Similar to Schegloff's (2007: 66–67) argument that second speakers often provide a preferred response as a default before changing it into a dispreferred answer, Chaz only raises the matter after having provided a positive response (line 3). Furthermore, instead of verbalizing his dissatisfaction with the current style, or making a request, he makes a statement about the weekend (the session was recorded on a Sunday) with which Nita can easily agree: "it's not work yet" (for him). Through these practices, he seeks to minimize the chance of disparaging Nita's expertise, which may arise from such a revision request. He also indifferently touches his hair (line 5), but does not



Figure 1: Chaz touches his hair

quite fix it on his own (Figure 1). In fact, as soon as Nita agrees with him by saying “No” at full volume (line 6), Chaz retracts his hand, making the haircut available for the stylist to fix. At this moment, he also shifts his head off camera toward Nita and laughs, presenting his previous commentary as somewhat comical (line 7). Chaz then touches his hair again (line 9), but this does not even last a second, and he immediately retracts his hand when Nita walks back to him. Again, here he does not perform “fixing,” but his hand movements rather function as a gesture of a novice, marking it as an attempt to display his anticipation of the expert’s work on the cut. Through verbal and embodied actions, Chaz not only minimizes the possibility of an uncomfortable moment arising, but also manages to draw attention to Nita’s role as an expert (and therefore to his role as a novice) and invites Nita to join this decision-making process.

Correspondingly, Nita builds up her expert role throughout the possibly reputation-threatening moments by treating Chaz’s report as *non-news*, that is, as something that is agreeable and that she perhaps already knew. Note how quickly she agrees with Chaz’s comment (line 6) and upgrades her agreement through additional remarks (line 8). When she walks back to Chaz, she vigorously and repeatedly ruffles up his hair, during which *she* decides that the front of the cut needs additional cutting (lines 13–16). Even though the issue was initially launched by Chaz, Nita manages to join the process of deciding to style the cut for nonwork. Specifically, Nita yields to what Chaz wants while maintaining her identity as an expert: she does not just listen to and align with Chaz’s

moves,² but dynamically engages in expressing that she also *thinks* as he does about the cut. As a result of Chaz's carefully organized actions and Nita's active involvement, the event of modifying the cut is made into a mutual decision between them.

This example has also shown that participants regard access to a haircut as one way of embodying their expert or novice status. Chaz cautiously coordinated his hand movements so that the stylist had preferential access to the cut. He only lightly touched his haircut when Nita was absent, and promptly relinquished the access to Nita when she was ready. He also yielded the right to fix the cut to Nita, although he could easily have done the restyling himself. The next example, by contrast, shows a customer fixing the front of his cut while the stylist is still working on the back part of the cut. How does the stylist retain the role of professional while seeking to ensure customer satisfaction in these circumstances?

This segment was recorded in the same salon where Nita works, but on a different weekend. Jack, the customer in this example, had visited the salon in the past, but this was his first time with Adel, the stylist. After cutting Jack's hair, Adel shows Jack how to style the new cut with hair wax, and then solicits Jack's feedback.

(2) "Jack & Adel" 01:03–01:32

- 1 ((Adel has been styling Jack's new haircut
and explaining how to style it on his own))
- 2 Adel: Something kinda like so?
((Adel is styling the side of the head, looking
at Jack and his hair in the large mirror))
- 3 (0.5)
- 4 Jack: °Sure, °=
- 5 Jack: =yeah I usually go flip it up a little bit more.
((Jack starts lightly fixing the
front with both hands))
((Adel slightly moves her hands to the
back of Jack's haircut and continues
stroking his hair))

² I follow Stivers (2008) and Steensig and Drew (2008) in distinguishing the terms "alignment" (cooperation on the structural and sequential level) and "affiliation" (cooperation on action and stance level).

- 6 Adel: Flip it up a little bit bit more?
 |^L((Jack starts fixing more aggressively))
 ((Adel retracts her hands
 from Jack's hair))
- 7 Jack: [Yeah.
- 8 (1.5) ((Jack continues to fix the hair; Adel slightly
 moves from left to right, repetitively nodding))
- 9 Jack: Like that?
- 10 (0.7) ((Adel continues to nod;
 Jack stops his hand movements))
- 11 Adel: Yeah, yeah, (>yeah<).
 |
 ((Adel nods three times))
 |
 ((Jack retracts his hands and puts them down))
- 12 (2.5) ((Adel lightly strokes the side of Jack's hair))
- 13 Adel: Cool, (.) =
 |^L |^L ((Adel shifts gaze down,
 ((Adel lightly strokes taking out Jack's collar from under the cover)
 the lower back of
 Jack's haircut))
- 14 Adel: =I was pushing forward and you were pushing back.
- 15 Jack: hh alhhrihhght hh
 |
 ((Adel shrugs shoulder))
- 16 Adel: You know? Hh
 |
 ((Adel smiles))
- 17 (6.0) ((Adel continues to fix Jack's collar,
 while Jack and Adel continue smiling))
- 18 Adel: O : : ka [: : y.
 |
 ((Adel takes off the cover))
- 19 Jack: [A:lri::[ght.
- 20 Adel: [Darling.=
- 21 Jack: =Right. (.) Great.
- 22 (1.2) ((Jack stands up))
- 23 Adel: Swe[et.
- 24 Jack: [Thank you.
- 25 Adel: You' re welcome.

Having explained to Jack how to style the cut, Adel asks for Jack's approval (line 2), and Jack provides a positive response ("Sure, yeah" in lines 4 and 5). Similar to Excerpt (1), Jack's response is followed by a contradictory statement about Adel's styling work. Moreover, he starts fixing the front of his cut with both of his hands while Adel is still stroking the back of his hair (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Jack restyles the cut

As in the previous example, the stylist does not treat the client's comment as new or unanticipated. Instead, she calmly repeats it in a question format (line 6), making Jack's affirmative answer a relevant and preferred action, which he performs via an overlapping response (line 7). However, what is different from the previous example is the degree of the customer's physical involvement in modifying the style. Recall that Chaz made sure that his stylist had preferential access to his haircut. Jack, however, continues to expansively fix his cut on his own, and in fact, Adel relinquishes her access to the cut by retracting her hands (line 6). The action of fixing the style is now taken over by the customer, blurring the boundaries of the participants' roles as stylist (expert) and customer (novice), which can threaten the stylist's status as a professional.

Now, let us observe how Adel solves this issue. As Jack works on fixing the hairstyle, Adel watches his behavior from behind him, while continuously nodding – sometimes deeply, approximately five times (line 8). This not only indicates her understanding of what Jack has meant by "flip it up a little bit more," but marks Jack's actions as non-news, claiming her epistemic status as

an expert.³ Also, by reacting to Jack's bodily actions through head nods, Adel treats Jack's movements in fixing the style as actions that make her response relevant. That way, Adel successfully joins the process of fixing the style; the revision of the style – once taken over by Jack – now turns into a collaborative event between them. Jack eventually affiliates with this context when he seeks Adel's response as he is close to finishing the restyling. His utterance in line 9 can be seen as pursuing Adel's understanding of what he means by "flip it up a little bit more,"⁴ and/or seeking Adel's approval on his fixing work. What is noteworthy here is that Jack keeps his hands frozen around his head even after he finishes styling, and puts them down only when Adel responds (line 11). Such bodily behavior indicates Jack's orientation toward Adel's role as an expert who completes the revising activity, as he could otherwise simply lower his hands before he receives Adel's response. Here, Adel affiliates with Jack by repeating "yeah" and overtly nodding, thereby seeking to ensure Jack's satisfaction; but it also serves to *approve* of Jack's work, which authenticates her role as a hair expert. When Jack puts his hands down, Adel brings her hands back to stroke the side and back of Jack's hair (line 12). Her hand movements here do not seem to contribute much to the appearance of Jack's haircut, but she still touches his hair and concludes the event of fixing it. These actions by Jack and Adel portray their appropriate roles in the given context: Adel is the expert who has the right to make a final decision of whether the modification has been successful. The sequence of fixing is followed by Adel's claim that she had not done anything wrong – yet another way of demonstrating her expertise (line 14).⁵ Jack treats this as a joke with laughter (line 15), which Adel joins in with (line 16), leading to a peaceful completion of the sequence (lines 18–25).

In the two instances above, the stylists successfully maintained their professional status despite the role-reversing moment. In particular, they also affiliated with the customers' requests, preserving their relationship as a service provider and a patron. The next example differs from the previous examples in that the stylist is the one to initiate the revision of the haircut, but presents the same phenomenon: both parties work toward making a mutual decision and harmonize their multiple roles.

This example features Kira, and her stylist, Britney, at a different salon. Kira sees Britney every other week to have her hair washed and styled, and the data were recorded at one of these "regular" sessions. The whole session took approximately an hour and a half, during which Kira and Britney talked about

3 I thank Referee C for this observation.

4 I thank Referee A for this observation.

5 I thank Referee C for this interpretation.

their personal lives, occasionally inviting the videographer to join their conversation. Having progressed through the familiar steps of shampooing, drying, and styling, Britney now asks Kira to inspect the haircut.

(3) “Kira & Britney” 00:09–00:26

- 1 ((Britney has finished styling Kira’s hair))
- 2 Brit: (You might) wanna see.
 ((Britney picks up a hand-held mirror
 and hands it toward Kira))
- 3 (0.7) ((Kira smiles))
- 4 Kira: Yeah::[:y thank you.
 ((Kira receives the mirror))
- 5 Brit: [Uh-huh.
- 6 (0.5) ((Kira adjusts the mirror in front of herself,
 while Britney steps behind Kira and
 looks at the back of Kira’s hair))
- 7 Kira: [Oh, it looks really nice.
 ((Kira moves her head to the side
 and looks into the mirror))
- 8 Brit: [Is that too much in your face?
 ((Britney palms ((Kira moves her head back)
 her own bangs))
- 9 (0.5) ((Kira moves her hand toward her bangs))
- 10 Kira: U:::m (.) a little bit.
 ((Kira moves her hand ((Kira palms her bangs)
 around her bangs))
- 11 (0.7) ((Britney looks into the hand-held mirror
 that Kira’s holding))
- 12 Brit: (A[bove’s thick?]
 ((Britney shifts her gaze to one side
 and looks for something))
- 13 Kira: [Cuz (it’s like)
 ((Kira pats the top of her bangs))
- 14 (0.8) ((Kira shakes her head from side to side))
- 15 Kira: Yeah (.) [hhhh (.) hhh
 ((Kira looks back in the ((Kira again pats
 hand-held mirror)) the top of her bangs))

- 16 Brit: [Mm hh]
 ((Britney shifts her gaze back to Kira in
 the hand-held mirror and picks a comb))
- 17 Brit: °Let me try.°
 ((Britney steps alongside Kira and
 starts combing Kira's bangs))
- 18 Kira: °Yeah.°
- 19 (4.0) ((Britney combs Kira's bangs))

Britney initiates a service assessment sequence by asking Kira to look at the cut with a handheld mirror (line 2), and Kira aligns with Britney's moves through talk and embodied actions (lines 3–6). Once Kira finds an appropriate position for the handheld mirror, Kira and Britney both make an utterance, overlapping with each other: Kira provides a service assessment (line 7), and before hearing it, Britney asks Kira whether her bangs are too much in her face (line 8). Britney's question here demands Kira's yes/no answer, but also invites Kira to look specifically at her bangs. Accordingly, Kira soon brings her hand upward to touch the bangs (line 9). The next action for Kira to take is providing a yes/no response, but her choice is complicated since more than one preference structure is involved in Britney's question. First, Britney's question may function as a pre-offer to fix Kira's bangs,⁶ in which case the preferred subsequent action would be a go-ahead response from Kira. However, since Britney has already spent time styling the cut, declaring the unsuitability of the bangs may convey a criticism of Britney's sense and skill as a stylist. It is also possible that Britney's question was simply intended to suggest to Kira how to inspect the haircut. In these cases, declining the pre-offer (showing satisfaction with the way the bangs have been styled) would be a preferred action. Which preference structure dominates here and shapes the construction of the second pair part?

Having briefly touched her bangs, Kira partially accepts Britney's pre-offer – if that indeed was Britney's intention – by saying “a little bit” (line 10). At the same time, she hedges (“um”), and does not provide a clear yes or no, which are characteristics of a dispreferred response. By providing an ambiguous, mitigated response with a delay, she works with the “multiple preferences” (Schegloff 2007: 73–78) that are involved in Britney's question. Yet it is still not clear what Britney had meant by her earlier question, so the negotiation of the next course of action continues. Neither of them takes a turn; instead, they both look into the

⁶ An offer is frequently preceded by a pre-offer to avoid the risk of rejection (Schegloff 2007: 34–37).

handheld mirror (line 11), then speak almost simultaneously. Although it is an incomplete sentence, Kira's "Cuz" (line 13) projects that she is about to provide an explanation of her former utterance. Britney, however, seeks to move the sequence forward by asking another question that elicits a clearer go-ahead response from Kira, and by shifting her posture, looking for something on the counter (line 12). Her actions here at last indicate what she is about to do – fix the bangs – and that is when Kira provides an affirmative answer in the form of a preferred-action turn: clear-cut and emphasized (line 15). Once Britney receives it, she makes an offer (line 17), and Kira accepts it (line 18).

In examples (1) and (2), the stylists organized their actions so that the event of fixing the cut – originally initiated by the customer – became a result of their *mutual* decision. In this example, it is the stylist who takes the initiative for the event, and the customer organizes her actions with a view to achieving a mutual decision. Taking a close look, Kira does not merely accept the offer. As soon as Kira sees Britney looking for a comb (line 12), Kira conducts an additional physical inspection by shaking her head overtly and looking at the bangs from a different angle (line 14, Figure 3). Only after that does she produce her affirmative response (line 15). By performing physical inspection prior to her utterance, Kira manages to shape the response in the form of her own thought based on the new visual information gathered. In the end, Kira successfully balances the multiple preference structures and upholds not only Britney's expertise (and therefore Kira's novice status), but also her own status as a patron: she did not just follow the service provider's judgment but also provided her own thoughts and insight.



Figure 3: Kira looks at the bangs from a different angle

5 Revision as a participant's solo decision

The previous examples have shown the stylist and the customer working to formulate the event of fixing a cut as a mutual decision between them, and harmonizing their expert/novice responsibilities with the service provider/patron relationship. However, participants do not always orient to the mutuality of a decision. This section examines a case in which a stylist passes up the opportunities for joining the process of decision making. Does this “failure” mean that the stylist is not a sophisticated communicator? Or does it indicate different expectations about the appropriate roles of stylist and customer?

The unisex chain salon in which Allison works operates on a first-come, first-served basis. The client, Greg, walks in for his haircut on a weekday evening and waits approximately 10 minutes until Allison calls his name. Having cut Greg's hair, Allison provides Greg with a comb. He takes it and starts inspecting the haircut, styling it in his own fashion. Compared to the previous examples, where the stylist participated proactively in the process of inspection by explaining and/or joining the customer in evaluating the new cut, Allison seems to treat the inspection as the customer's private performance: she walks away to find a handheld mirror, and when she comes back to Greg, she does not watch his behavior but instead looks somewhere else. We pick up from the end of Greg's 12-second-long inspection, where parties talk for the first time in this assessment sequence.

(4) “Greg & Allison” 00:15–00:46

((4 lines of the beginning of this sequence have been removed))

- 5 Greg: What about, (.)
 |
 ((Allison looks up at Greg))
- 6 Greg: maybe, (we can take just like a little bit) =
 |
 ((Greg picks at the strands of hair on the
 right side of the cut, while measuring
 approximately ¼ inch with his left hand))
- 7 Alli: =Mor[e on the si:des?
- 8 Greg: [Make it more like, (.) yeah, cuz the [se,
 |
 ((Greg creates a straight angle motion to
 the right side of his cut))
- 9 Alli: [Okay. =
 |
 ((Allison lightly nods repetitively))

- 10 Greg: =over here sticks out.
 └──────────────────┘
 ((Greg picks at the strands on the right side of his cut))
 | |
 ((Allison returns her gaze from Greg to somewhere off camera, and holds out the hand-held mirror toward Greg)) ((Greg shifts his gaze from the mirror to Allison, while Allison continues to look at something else))
- 11 (0.4) ((Greg looks back at the large mirror, while Allison continues to gaze elsewhere))
- 12 Alli: Okay, (.) let me show you the back.
 └──────────────────┘
 ((Allison moves the mirror closer toward Greg))
- 13 Greg: °Okay.°
 |
 ((Greg takes the mirror))
- 14 Alli: (Why don't you see if it's okay (.) in the back?)
 └──────────────────────────────────┘
 ((Allison walks behind Greg, touching the chair he's sitting on))
- 15 (5.0) ((Allison turns the chair back 180 degrees, during which Greg raises the hand-held mirror in front of his face))
- 16 (10.0) ((Greg examines the back of his cut by looking into the hand-held mirror, moving it from side to side; Allison stands by him but looks away toward her right, and then toward the lounge))
- 17 Greg: ((repetitively nods)) °That's good.°
 └──────────────────┘
 ((Greg looks directly at Allison, holding out the hand-held mirror, while Allison continues to look toward the lounge))
- 18 Alli: Okay, it's alright, so some more on the sides.
 └──────────────────────────────────┘
 ((Allison receives the mirror and turns the chair back forwards while continually looking away toward the lounge))
- 19 Greg: I guess, yeah, I mean=
 └──────────────────┘
 ((Greg momentarily feels through his hair))
- 20 Alli: =That's okay, no, pro, ble, m.
 └──────────────────┘
 ((Allison walks off camera to put away the hand-held mirror))

- 21 Greg: [Maybe. (.) Hhaahh [hhh.
 (Greg fixes the sides of his hair))
- 22 Alli: [Okay.
- 23 ((Allison walks back to Greg and receives the comb back
 from Greg, then wets the sides of Greg's hair
 with a spray bottle for another cutting session))

As Greg starts making his suggestion, Allison shows her understanding by completing Greg's sentence with a question tone (lines 5–7). Greg then provides explanations to indicate what he would like Allison to revise (line 8 and line 10), but Allison does not seem to expect this communicative work from Greg. In fact, she tends to close the sequence with a minimal acknowledgment and repetitive nodding (line 9) as soon as Greg provides an affirmative response (line 8) to Allison's question. Furthermore, Allison treats Greg's explanations as unnecessary: while Greg continues explaining, she shifts her gaze from Greg to somewhere else, and extends the mirror she has been holding in her hand out toward Greg (line 10). At this point, Greg shifts his gaze to Allison, which is not attended to by Allison (Figure 4). It could be that Allison is passing up the opportunity to accept Greg's request here because Greg is not yet finished with the inspection process; she may be waiting to provide a full acceptance response until after Greg inspects the back of the cut as well, which she does later in line 18.⁷ What is noteworthy, however, is that Allison also passes up the opportunity to demonstrate her status as hair expert. In the earlier examples, stylists overtly agreed with a customer's request (presenting the role of the service provider that satisfies customer needs) as well as demonstrating that they also *thought* that way (maintaining their status as a hair expert). Greg's expanded, explanatory comments in lines 8 and 10 provide Allison with the opportunity to perform this type of interactional work: agreeing with her client and/or elaborating on his comments to demonstrate her expertise. But what happens here is that Allison, continually looking away, treats Greg's utterance not as an assessment that requires her dis/agreement, but as a delivery of information that requires her acknowledgment only, as seen in her "okay" (line 12). Consequently, despite Greg's attempts to convert his request into a mutual decision, Allison leaves it alone, as Greg's solo decision.

Before they begin another cutting session, Greg examines the back of his haircut with a handheld mirror (line 16). Here, Allison again disengages from the process of physical inspection, looking in various directions. She continues to

⁷ I thank Referee C for this observation.



Figure 4: Unmet gaze

look toward the lounge throughout the rest of the sequence, even when Greg makes an assessment and shifts his gaze from the mirror to look directly at her (line 17). Because this salon does not have a receptionist, the stylists often have to pay attention to customers walking in and out, which may be causing Allison's inattentive behavior toward Greg. However, she could do so in a less obvious way, or such behavior from the stylist can violate a customer's need for pampering and so risk the customer's dissatisfaction. Given these risks, what drives Allison to present herself in such a way?

Allison's choice of actions may reflect the kind of different role orientation that is employed at some salons. Kang (2003) found diverse meanings of "emotional labor" (Hochschild 1983) existing among various nail salons, including a salon that required less emotional attention from service providers, which was compensated by cheap and efficient work. The same professional orientation may dominate the hair salon that Allison works for. In other words, Allison may minimize the degree of pampering because it would take more time in terms of talk and physical labor and so would hinder their selling point: cheap and speedy service.⁸ For example, if she treated Greg's suggestion for fixing as an agreeable/disagreeable statement (like other stylists in the previous examples), she would have to devote some time to the task of responding: shaping her turn appropriately for (dis)agreeing, and/or elaborating on her response, for instance.

⁸ The salon's official website also guarantees the best value on their services, and many online customer reviews of the salon mention their quick and efficient service.

Instead, she attended to Greg's actions as a delivery of information, for which acknowledgement was an appropriate response that could be done via an economical, uncomplicated verbal practice (e.g., "okay"). Then, at the time of sequence closure, while Greg's verbal action provides Allison with another opportunity to make the decision a collaborative one, she once again passes it up by simply permitting Greg's request for a revision instead of supporting and agreeing with Greg's decision (line 20). However, these "uncaring" actions allow the participants to keep advancing the activity, which shall be the primary objective in this type of "quick and cheap" salon. Likewise, refraining from participating in a mutual decision about fixing the cut may be an example of the kinds of professionalized communication skills appropriate for this type of workplace.

6 Conclusion

This paper has looked at stylists' and customers' communicative practices at one of the most challenging moments of the service assessment sequence: revision (or proposal for revising) of a haircut. The first set of cases revealed the efforts made by the participants to ensure that fixing a cut was a mutual decision between them. In doing so, they coordinated their verbal and embodied actions to achieve what Hochschild (1983) calls "deep acting" (as opposed to "surface acting"), that is, not only aligning and/or sympathizing with someone else, but feeling the same, specific emotions as each other. By demonstrating genuine agreement with each other's thinking, the participants in these examples saved and preserved their own roles. For instance, stylists Nita (example [1]) and Adel (example [2]) successfully executed their roles as beauty experts, while the customer Kira (example [3]) played the role of a client/patron who presented her own opinion before simply accepting the stylist's offer. In spite of the sensitivity surrounding the nature of revisions, these participants sought to harmonize an expert's responsibility with the client's right to have an opinion on the need to fix their haircut. The participants needed to manage (at least) two different relationships with each other: that of expert and novice, and that of service provider and client. They demonstrated their communication skills by not allowing either of these relationships to dominate, managing instead to merge them nicely. Successful role negotiation was achieved with their strategic manipulation of various verbal/vocal and nonvocal practices associated with the process of a haircut revision.

We have also considered a contrasting case in which the stylist allowed one set of roles (service provider and client) to override the other (expert and

novice). In example (4), the stylist, Allison, neglected several opportunities to work with the customer to transform his revision request into a mutual decision, allowing her role as a service provider to override her role as a hair expert. Here, we saw an example of alternative role orientations: Allison tailored her communicative work to accommodate the distinctiveness of the service provided at the salon in which she works. Thus, her seemingly “incompetent” actions may have come from an exercise of her own view of (and training in) professionalism. Still, the problem with this case is that Allison’s orientations might not have matched the expectations held by her client. Recall that Greg organized his actions so that Allison could easily agree with his comments or even supersede them by acting as an expert. Despite his efforts, Allison’s disaffiliated actions ultimately led Greg to make the decision independently.

While revisions were made in all four examples, the negotiation of expected roles may have been more successful in the first three examples. In the fourth example, the customer continuously tried to involve the stylist in the decision-making process, but his expectations of roles did not seem to be fulfilled. In that regard, the way in which participants go about managing roles and expectations could be an important factor in determining the success of a revision that can be remembered and retold. Indeed, the disparity in the definition of expected roles between stylists and customers may be a reason behind the low occurrence (and fear) of revision requests. Among the corpus of data collected in the United States, there were not many cases in which customers requested that their haircuts be fixed. Despite the low number of such cases, we often hear complaints about new haircuts in everyday life, and at times I heard such complaints while collecting data for this study. In one of the video-recorded sessions, the participants successfully finished the haircutting activity with a smooth service assessment sequence and no revision requests. As soon as the customer left the salon, however, she spoke of her profound disappointment with the new haircut to the videographer. Thus, it is doubtful that the low number of cases of clients making revision or modification requests can always be attributed to the client’s genuine satisfaction with the quality of the service.

On top of the general conversation rule that requesting is treated as dispreferred (e.g., Schegloff 2007: 81–96), the context of beauty salon interactions makes the action of requesting revision difficult for customers to perform: a customer’s request may imply dissatisfaction with the stylist’s service and/or skills, which may threaten the stylist’s expert identity. In addition, a revision request could potentially conflict with the stylist’s schedule, especially when he or she has a subsequent appointment or other clients waiting their turn. Nevertheless, the service assessment sequence is where customers are allowed to provide their own straightforward opinion on the cut and styling and to ask

for additional labor, if necessary. Similarly, the stylist can elevate the customer's degree of satisfaction by fixing the cut. The revision of a cut or styling can only improve the quality of the service at a beauty salon, but a client's courage to ask for a revision and a stylist's openness with regard to criticism and additional work may not be enough for its successful negotiation. What is essential is their shared understanding of, and diagnostic skills in looking for, each other's view of what constitutes their respective roles moment by moment, and fluidity in their actions accordingly. This could be one way to secure the customer's enduring consensus, beyond the mere consensus of a ritualized service assessment sequence.

Appendix: transcript notation

The glossary of transcript symbols given below has been adopted from the descriptions provided by ten Have (1999: 213–214).

[The point of overlap onset
=	No “gap” between the two lines, often called <i>latching</i>
(0.0)	Elapsed time in silence by tenth of seconds
(.)	A tiny “gap” within or between utterances
<u>word</u>	Form of stress, via pitch and/or amplitude
::	Prolongation of the immediately prior sound
.	A stopping fall in tone
,	A continuing intonation
?	A rising intonation
↑↓	Marked shifts into higher or lower pitch in the utterance part immediately following the arrow
◦	Relatively quieter utterances than the surrounding talk
> <	Speeding up
w(h)ord	Breathiness, as in laughter, crying, etc.
(word)	Especially dubious hearings
(())	Transcriber's descriptions rather than, or in addition to, transcriptions

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Bionote

Sae Oshima

Sae Oshima received her PhD in Communication Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, and is currently Assistant Professor at the Department of Business Communication at Aarhus University, Denmark. She explores the meanings of professional communication through microanalysis of workplace interactions, including client–professional encounters and internal strategy meetings.