

# Repairs



Conversations do not necessarily run smoothly:

- People can not always explain things properly. Or
- they make a mistake. Or
- the person they are talking to makes a mistake.

These minor breakdowns, if noticed, have to be ‘repaired’. So called **repairs** can give additional insights into the way in which humans comprehend one another.

# Repairs



Repairs sometimes involve **self-repair**, when a speaker spontaneously notices a problem and solves it:

- *Could you hand me a spoon? A teaspoon, that is.*
- *Marion arrived on Saturday – sorry, I mean Sunday.*

Sometimes they involve **other-repair**, when someone is not quite sure about what has been said, or suspects that the other person has made a mistake:

*A: Could you hand me a spoon?*

*B: I assume you mean a teaspoon.*

*A: Marion arrived on Saturday*

*B: Did Marion really arrive on Saturday? Wasn't it Sunday?*

# Repairs



However, humans do not usually confront one another directly, **a listener mildly queries the speaker**, who then repairs the original utterance:

- *Speaker A: Alan's taken a course in deep-sea diving.*
- *Speaker B: Alan? Has he really?*
- *Speaker A: Sorry, I don't mean Alan, I mean Alec.*

As this example suggests, **humans tend to be polite to one another**, so politeness can radically affect the structure of conversations.

# Repairs



Write an utterance that involves **self-repair**.

**A: Our exam is on Monday - oh sorry, I mean Tuesday.**

Write a dialogue that involves **other-repair**.

**A: Our party is on Thursday.**

**B: Are you sure? Isn't it on Friday?**