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Pauses in face-to-face and telephone conversations

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0. Introduction¹

In ordinary face-to-face interactions, the attention allocated by participants to talk and the activities which are peripheral to it can vary according to social constraints (Goffman 1967). Participants in telephone conversations are subject to more stringent interactive obligations. Unlike face-to-face interactions wherein conversation can be interleaved among other, nonverbal activities, interactions by telephone require at least the semblance of participants' complete attention, lest disruptions to the social order occur:

Caller: So:, uh,
(7.0)
Caller: Sam?
Recipient: Yeah?
Caller: Whaddya doin'?
Recipient: I'm correcting papers.
Caller: Oh, gee, thanks a lot.

But in general, on the telephone, spoken interaction between the two participants remains the sole activity, circumscribed in time, and isolated from other engagements. Indeed, the entire burden of the conversational work rests on the two participants in a telephone conversation.²

1. Pauses

Pauses have been studied for their cognitive and interactional functions. With regard to their cognitive functions, a connection is made between a momentary break in conversation and the preparation of the utterance by the speaker or its processing by the listener. Thus pauses have been perceived as indications of the predictability of the utterance (O'Connell, Kowal, and Hörmann 1969), as related to its complexity or abstractness (Goldman-Eisler 1968), and facilitating comprehension (Reich 1975). Another focus has been on the assignment of interactional functions to pauses *vis-à-vis* their sequential locations. The more structuralist view of conversational analysts withholds the attribution of *a priori* significance to pauses, merely noting that they represent either a delay preceding the onset of the next speaker's turn or a suspension of the turn-taking rules (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974). Nevertheless, correlations have been made between their occurrence and the content of certain types of responses (Levinson 1983). In an investigation which focuses explicitly on the meanings and functions of pauses, Tannen (1990) has shown how they are used to manage conflicts in literary dialogue.

Pauses in telephone conversations in particular have also been examined, but mostly in passing. Supporting Sacks *et al's* view of sequential phenomena, Hopper (1992) has demonstrated that pauses in telephone conversations are categorized by participants for their transition relevance, and that turns which begin after a gap are disagreements or repairs. Levinson (1983) has pointed out the social

significance of pauses in both face-to-face and in telephone conversations.

Schegloff (1979) has claimed that "the talk people do on the telephone is not fundamentally different from the other talk they do". We would expect though that the linearity of the telephone interaction constrains the context against which the meaning of pauses is interpreted. Thus the meaning and function of pauses ought to display an overwhelming dependence on sequentiality. Indeed, Butterworth, Hine, and Brady (1977) have shown that pauses occur with less frequency and duration in telephone conversations than in face-to-face conversation. Their findings suggest that the occurrence of pauses in the course of a telephone conversation is more marked than in face-to-face interactions, and therefore bears a social significance which does not necessarily hold in face-to-face conversations. Within face-to-face interactions however, pauses can also locate the intersection between sequentiality of talk and extralinguistic aspects of the interaction. The communicative context literally takes on another dimension to include the mutual experience of the other's presence. It is this potential departure from sequentiality which bears on the significance of pauses in face-to-face and telephone interactions.

2. Data

The data to be analyzed include a five minute excerpt of a face-to-face conversation and a ten minute excerpt of a telephone conversation between a male UCB graduate student, David, and his younger cousin, Emily, an undergraduate at a liberal arts college in Chicago. The face-to-face conversation takes place in Berkeley, in late August, just before Emily is to return to Chicago. David is preparing dinner for Emily. The telephone conversation takes place during the fall semester while both are at school. Emily has called David to talk about her old boyfriend.

Pauses lasting longer than .5 second were timed to the nearest tenth of a second. In the face-to-face interaction, talk consisted of a variety of topics, subtopics, and nontopics, each of which was set off by pauses. On the other hand, a single topic of conversation comprised most, if not all, of the telephone conversation. In the data analysis, the telephone conversation was treated as a unit for analysis while stretches of conversation within the face-to-face interaction were analyzed separately, according to topic.

3. Analysis

3.1 Face-to-face conversation

Among the basic units of conversational organization which drive the turn-taking mechanism is the adjacency pair, where a first utterance creates an expectation for a relevant second (Schegloff 1972). Indeed, Goffman (1976) has suggested that the adjacency pair is the fundamental unit of conversation. The face-to-face conversation examined here reveals that adjacency pairs (and their attendant insertion sequences) do organize a good portion of the conversation, and that they are delimited by pauses which serve as topic breaks. That is, topics are exhausted with the satisfaction of the conversational constraint imposed by a first utterance, usually a question. Furthermore, deviations from the pause-adjacency pair-pause pattern which involve abrupt topic shifts or utterances which are not interactive demonstrate how the physical context of the face-to-face interaction interferes with the spoken interaction. Yet, the occurrence of pauses in interactionally nonsensitive

locations within a sequence, i.e., following seconds of adjacency pairs, also reveals at what point participants become unwilling to let other activities supersede talk.

3.1.1 The pause-adjacency pair-pause pattern

The following exchange exemplifies a segment of talk which is structured by a question/answer adjacency pair. David and Emily are discussing whether the quantity of food being prepared by David will be sufficient for both.

- > (0) (3.8)
- (1) David: Well, do you think this is enough for us?
- (2) Emily: Yes.
- > (3) (2.8)
- (4) David: Really?
- (5) Emily: Yeah, why not?
- (6) David: Okay. It'll fill us up. Well if it isn't we won't have eaten
- (7) too much. And [that'll] be good.
- (8) Emily: [Good.] Yes. For once.
- > (9) (1.1)

The discussion is initiated by David's question in (1) ("Well, do you think this will be enough for us?"). Notice that questions here, as in the rest of the conversation, always receive immediate responses, irrespective of later reorientations to those responses. Pauses never disrupt, and frequently bracket, the question/answer adjacency pairs within talk surrounding a given topic. The first adjacency pair, David's question in (1) and Emily's reply in (2) ("Yes"), is delimited by pauses in (0) and (3).

David's request for elaboration in (4) begins yet another series of utterances whose content is relevant but subordinate to Emily's reply in (2). These utterances are also set off by pauses ((3) and (9)). Notice that in (3), David withholds his turn in an (unsuccessful) attempt to elicit more than the simple affirmative offered by Emily, i.e., reassurance that he is not going to be remiss in his duty as host if she is still hungry. The pause in (3) therefore serves both a structural and a communicative function.

Although space limitation precludes a thoroughgoing analysis, much of the remainder of the excerpt comprises discussions initiated by questions which project a sequence of several utterances. These are followed by lapses into silence, and reactivation of talk with more questions.

3.1.2 Deviations from the pause-adjacency pair-pause pattern

3.1.2.1 Abrupt topic shift

Interruptions were few, but when they happened, they marked topic shifts in the direction of greater immediacy. That is, interruptive talk always had to do with the activity at hand in contrast to the interrupted talk which revolved around an issue not relevant to the current setting.

In the following exchange, Emily and David are considering the possibility that David's neighbor, Andrew, will move to another apartment. Emily introduces the topic by prefacing her utterance with "so", which, in this instance, marks the transition to a new topic and starts up the conversation by presenting a comment for

David to evaluate (cf. Schiffrin 1987).

- (25) (5.6)
 (26) Emily: So Andrew is thinking of moving into Wayne Heiser's place.
 [*discussion of details on Andrew's possible living situation and reasons for moving*]
 (37) Emily: Yeah, he doesn't like his view.
 (38) David: Well I don't know if I'd like being across from the construction.
 (39) Emily: Yeah.
 (40) (3.4)
 (41) David: That's true.
 (42) Emily: He doesn't like his vie:w,
 (43) David: (He doesn't like the person who lives in number two.)
 (44) Emily: hhh.h [/?/]
 -> (45) David: [See] now I- I think we can drink that much even though that's all
 (46) we have. It's that much each.

A discussion follows concerning Andrew's living situation and his reasons for moving. The talk around this topic winds down as Emily begins to formulate a list of reasons. She repeats in (42) ("He doesn't like his vie:w,") what she has already mentioned in (37) ("Yeah, he doesn't like his view."). Since she doesn't offer any new information, David interjects a comment using a third person self-reference in (43) ("the person who lives in number two"). Emily reacts with silent laughter and begins to formulate an utterance, when David's imperative "See" overlaps, to call her attention to the quantity of wine. Emily's immediate withdrawal from speakership allows David to do some of the conversational work. At the same time, David's redirection of the current topic to one which is more immediate, that is, within the physical setting, evinces the deteriorating salience of the current topic of conversation. This pattern occurs throughout the interaction, reinforced by gender differences in conversational styles (Zimmerman and West 1975). Emily's concern is with keeping the conversation alive with the introduction of topics, typically with questions; while David's preoccupation is with both his activity within the physical setting and in the spoken interaction. In this instance, discussion of the topic was not structured with an adjacency pair. Hence, closing the topic could not be done by issuing a second, at the end of which David could attend to his activities until Emily drummed up another topic. Without the neat structure of the adjacency pair, David's activity, which forms the undercurrent of the interaction, makes its way abruptly into the spoken interaction. The verbal realization of David's dinner preparation corresponds with the location and function of pauses which mark topic shifts within the sequence of talk.

3.1.2.2 Noninteractive utterances

In a couple of instances during the conversation, turn-taking was apparently inoperative between the termination of one topic and the beginning of another. In such instances, utterances neither initiate talk nor are coherent with the surrounding exchanges. The following is an example:

- (20) (3.2)
 -> (21) David: (Sevodnya vecherom.)
 -> (22) (4.5)
 -> (23) David: Canola oil, high in polyunsaturated [(2.5)] oil
 -> (24) Emily: [(hhh.h)]

transitions in turn-taking is tolerated as a result of each participant's bearing mutual witness to the management of tasks other than the verbal interaction. Moreover, spoken interaction never takes a backseat to other activities when speakers are expected to produce seconds to adjacency pairs.

3.2 Pauses in telephone conversation

In face-to-face interactions, participants are obliged to acknowledge each other's presence out of positive politeness, and therefore must continue talking (Lakoff, p.c.). By contrast, in telephone conversations, participants interact only for as long as either of them has something to say. The frequent occurrence of pauses in interactionally nonsensitive locations is thus improbable because each pause would signal to the participants that it was time to hang up. Thus, unlike face-to-face interactions where participants stay in contiguity with each other, in telephone conversations there is no obligation to keep the conversation going at all costs.

The structure of the telephone conversation can be seen as equivalent to a single instance of the pause-talk-pause pattern found within face-to-face interactions. Callers resemble those who initiate talk in face-to-face interactions. Both have reasons in mind for initiating an interaction, even if it is just to engage in chitchat. Talk proceeds until the task is felt to be accomplished. Pauses which occur within such stretches of talk are therefore more likely to serve a communicative function than simply to structure the interaction.

The analysis begins just after the greetings exchange.

- (1) Emily: h:: OH I wa- I wanna tell you what I did, s- see if you think this is really stupid.
- (2) David: All right. What.

It was mentioned previously that telephone calls were motivated by the objective of the caller. Emily's pre-announcement ("OH I wa- I wanna tell you what I did,") is appropriate because it supplies a motivation for the phone call. The second part of her utterance, "See if you think this is stupid", is an indirect request for an evaluation of her action. Her bid to tell a story seeks ratification from David to suspend the turn taking rules, to which he agrees in (2) ("All right.").

3.2.1 First opportunity

Emily, the caller, has been having trouble with her boyfriend. She describes the background events. When she reaches campus, she decides against her original plan to pile her old boyfriend's clothes at his office door, and to permanently affix a note to his door. The following exchange ensues.

[*Narration of background events.*]

- (19) Emily: What I did do though was um there was a poster uh on his door that he had
- (20) hung up in his apartment, and uh, um, I removed the poster from his door, he shares a
- (21) n office with some woman
- (22) David: mhm
- (23) Emily: And um, on the back of the poster I drew a skull 'n' crossbones, and then
- (24) retaped the poster on his door.
- (25) David: h:: so that the glue is firmly attached to the door.
- (26) Emily: Oh no, I didn't use th-

- (27) the glue though,
 (28) David: Well, then I don't understand. You just drew a skull and crossbones.
 (29) Emily: Yeah I drew a skull 'n' crossbones and then I just put it ba- uh uh taped the
 (30) uh the poster back on the door with the original tape.
 (31) David: Then why did you bring up the glue?
 (32) Emily: Because I had planned on um attaching the uh note with [glue.
 (33) David: [Oh with that. Okay.
 -> (34) (3.2)
 (35) Emily: So I thought oh that was a really stupid thing to do you know as I left the campus.
 (36) David: (1.4) What?
 (37) Emily: Well dr- b- drawing a skull 'n' crossbones on the back of a poster.

Several cues demonstrate that the pause in (34) is functionally related to Emily's original statement in (1) ("See if you think this is stupid."). Emily has been narrating a sequence of activities which she had engaged in and she is seeking David's opinion of her behavior. Throughout her narration ((3-18), not listed), speaker transition has been made irrelevant. Finally, in (23), Emily describes the actual act in which she engaged ("and um, on the back of the poster I drew a skull 'n' crossbones, and then retaped the poster on his door."). By taking the next turn in (25), responding first with laughter and then an utterance which displays his understanding of the story ("so that the glue is firmly attached to the door."), David conveys his awareness that the story is over, which makes relevant a display of understanding and appreciation.

However, Emily's repair in (26-27) ("Oh no I didn't use the glue though.") demonstrates that David has actually misunderstood. In the talk which follows, Emily and David work to clear up his misconstrual of the events. After displaying his achievement of understanding in (33) ("Oh with that. Okay."), evidenced by the overlap of his utterance with Emily's reply, the pause in (34) ensues (Goldman-Eisler 1968). That Emily does not resume speaking signals that her story has indeed come to an end, and also corroborates David's response in (25). Since Emily has told the story in order to elicit David's opinion of her action, the pause is the first opportunity for David to produce his opinion. Indeed, Emily then adds, as an afterthought and since David did not, an opinion of her actions within the context of the narrative in (35) ("So I thought oh that was a really stupid thing to do you know as I left the campus."), conveying the fact that the action she carried out has been fully described. However, it isn't clear to David what "that" is, and in (36), he requests elaboration ("What."). His misunderstanding is highlighted by the pause which precedes his request.

In face-to-face conversations, pauses may or may not signal interactional trouble. But given the tendency of telephone conversations to be purpose-directed, pauses are much more likely to signal a breakdown of some kind. Although the pause in (34) signals the end of Emily's story and the first opportunity for David to offer his opinion of Emily's actions, he does not do so. In (36), David reveals a problem in comprehension.

3.2.2 Second opportunity

Another pause occurs in (45), following discussion of the poster.

- (39) David: h-hh. Is it so he can see it?
 (40) Emily: He c- well he can't see it you see the thing is I I retaped the poster
 (41) David: I just wondered if there's a window or anything, to the back

- (42) Emily: Yeah there is but, it's covered, oh yeah yeah I didn't think of that but, I think
 (43) it's covered with other stuff.
 (44) David: mhm.
 -> (45) (5.2)
 (46) Emily: So'm I gonna go to hell?

Again, this pause is relevant to the request posed by Emily in (1), as well as to the pause in (34). David has failed to respond to her implicit request for evaluation in the pause, and is now given the opportunity once again. After a duration greater than any pause thus far in the conversation, Emily explicitly makes David's turn relevant by asking "So'm I gonna go to hell?". Notice that, unlike pauses in face-to-face communication where their interactional status is questionable, pauses in telephone conversations are construed only as interactional unless there is explicit reason for not doing so.

3.2.3 Messages and metamesages

As her friend, David would attempt to maintain her positive face, and in (47) offers a negative reply to her question.

- (47) David: I don't think you'll go to hell.
 (48) Emily: Oh-h.
 (49) (2.0)
 (50) David: No.. I don't think that that enters into it. (5.7) It's just, um, how you're
 (51) gonna feel when he sees it.

Notice that David's response contains the hedge "I don't think". Under ordinary circumstances, its presence would downgrade the degree of negation, or in conversational analytic terms, the preferred status of his response, in comparison to one containing a more directly asserted statement. (Compare "No you won't go to hell." as a more negative statement. Cf. Lakoff 1975). However, to make the statement without the hedge would be a violation of positive politeness since it is a joking response to a question that is also a joke. So either way David answers Emily's question in (1) is a breach of politeness. Additionally, the lack of smooth transition between Emily's turn in (48) and David's turn in (50) enhances the dispreferred orientation of David's response.

On the other hand, David's overt utterances demonstrate his concern for her feelings regarding the consequences of her actions, regardless of the moral value of her actions. He avoids the value judgments transmitted by the terms she has been employing ("really stupid" in (1) and "[going] to hell" in (46), using the inexplicit deictic "that" to refer to them. But he acknowledges with the pauses preceding and after the first turn construction unit in (50) that she has engaged in somewhat negative behavior. A distinction arises between the message conveyed by his utterance and the meta-message conveyed by the pauses (Tannen 1986).

The absence of pauses and resumption of smooth transitions characterizes David's talk when he is not called upon to judge her actions.

- (52) Emily: Oh(hh). He's probably gonna know who did it.
 (53) David: mhm.
 (54) Emily: Well the thing is too, I was kicking myself on the way back home
 (55) cause um, you know I couldn't decide whether or not I wanted him to see it,
 (56) David: mhm

- (57) Emily: and so I, I ended up taping the uh, poster sort of you know tilted, like one of
 (58) the corners isn't isn't um secure with tape it's just sort of um flapping
 (59) David: What, as a clue?
 (60) (1.3)
 (61) Emily: Kind of.
 (62) (3.2)
 (63) Emily: And the other bad thing is that um somebody saw me.

The pause in (60) is a cognitive pause, attributable to Emily since she has to figure out what David means by "clue". By contrast, the pause in (62) which follows Emily's response in (61) to David's request for clarification in (59) is an interactive pause. It sets off the set of utterances that are peripheral to the story (59-61) from those which are central, marking the new subtopic in (63).

3.2.4 Pauses "given" and "given off"

Apart from the message that an interlocutor intentionally and explicitly transmits, there are also messages communicated that are peripheral to its transmission. To use Goffman's terms, messages are either "given" or "given off" (Goffman 1959:2). We shall see that pauses in the telephone conversations between Emily and David are joint productions, "given" from Emily's point of view, and "given off" from David's.

Note that the utterances in (72-81) are intercalated with pauses. Not surprisingly, the exchange involves David's assessment of Emily's behavior.

- (71) David: /?/.
 -> (72) (9.5)
 -> (73) David: Well I don't know. (2.5) At least it's nonviolent.
 (74) Emily: hhh.h Yeah.
 -> (75) (4.1)
 (76) David: And if it made you feel better
 (77) Emily: I don't know I mean I felt like it was really um wimpy
 (78) David: hh. Oh.
 (79) Emily: You know like I was tryin' to take control but I did in a r- very um, feeble way.
 -> (80) (7.7)
 -> (81) David: Well (2.9) I don't know (7.5) I don't think it's (3.5) particularly bad, or anything.
 -> (82) Emily: Yeah? Well 'at's good.

The impetus for the telephone conversation is the stated objective in (1), to which David agrees. Emily has announced that she wants to tell a story, "I wanna tell you something" and David has been selected to speak after completion of her story: "See if you think this is really stupid". As long as the objective remains unaccomplished, any silence at which a relevant utterance could be supplied could be attributable to David. Thus, as mentioned earlier, (34) signals the end of the story, at which time David could, but does not offer a response. Additionally, the form of David's utterance in (73), "Well I don't know" indicates that it is projected from a prior utterance, which occurs initially as "See if you think this is stupid" in (1), and later "So'm I gonna go to hell?" in (46). Emily's withholding of her turn in all three cases can be considered speaker-selecting devices to induce a response from David to the initial question. The sheer persistence of Emily in withholding her turn contributes to the pressure to supply an answer. Emily knows that in order for David to uphold her positive face, he must answer her question, and answer it

in a way which denies or reduces the immorality of her behavior. All of these factors contribute to her attempt to achieve her interactional objective.

While the pauses just mentioned pressured David to assume the floor in response to the utterance in (1), they were also an indication of his own reluctance to respond. Initially, he produces only short utterances to display current understanding, or to pass up speakership, simply avoiding attendance to her first in (1), as in (33) ("Oh with that. Okay.") and (44) ("mhm"). But, as the interaction proceeds and he is forced to respond, the mitigating devices and the pauses proliferate, showing just how much work it takes for David to eke out (and Emily to elicit) any sort of supportive response. Pauses in (72) and (73) signal the dispreferred nature of David's response (Levinson 1983). Following the pause in (73) is a concessive ("At least it's nonviolent"). Notice also that David initially talks about the effect of her behavior on her feelings (50, 76), or about the behavior itself (73). But when he finally offers his opinion of her actions (81) ("Well, I don't know, I don't think it's particularly bad or anything"), or more specifically, his condonement, which is what she had been seeking, his turn is replete with gaps. As mentioned above, even offering her condonement would violate her positive face. Indeed, the effect of the pauses accompanying the responses to Emily's request in (1), as well as the macro-level delay in supplying the one ultimately sought by her in (81), all reinforce the fact that condonement, although in the end expressed, was problematic for David. See Fig. 1 for an outline of pauses.

Note: Pauses "given" by Emily are marked with a lower case "e".
Pauses "given off" by David are marked with a lower case "d".

- (1) Emily: OH I wa- I wanna tell you what I did, s- see if you think this is really stupid.
.
- (33) David: Oh with that. Okay.
e,d (34) (3.2)
- (35) Emily: So I thought oh that was a really stupid thing to do you know as I left the campus.
.
- (44) David: mhm.
e, d (45) (5.2)
- (46) Emily: So'm I gonna go to hell?
.
- (50) David: No:: I don't think that that enters into it. (5.7) It's just, um, how you're gonna feel when he sees it.
.
- (72) (9.5)
e (73) David: Well I don't know. (2.5) At least it's nonviolent.
.
- (75) (4.1)
e (76) David: And if it made you feel better
.
- (80) (7.7)
e (81) David: Well (2.9) I don't know (7.5) I don't think it's (3.5) particularly bad, or anything.

Figure 1. *Outline of pauses "given" and "given off"*

4. Conclusion

The dynamics of the interaction as well as the social identities and relationships of the interlocutors supply the scaffoldings by which to give semantic shape to a particular utterance. Meaning cannot be assigned *a priori* if its creation depends on the relationship between the speaker and hearer at a given stage of an interaction within some specifiable physical, social, and psychological context. Similarly, the absence of meaning cannot be attributed to interactional products such as silences without a consideration of the surrounding social and interactional conditions.

In the face-to-face conversation, pauses are more frequent and of longer duration than in the telephone conversation. They manage the conversation, serving as signposts to guide the listener in distinguishing what is central to the conversation from what is peripheral. They create conversational space for new topics. The pattern of their occurrence within the sequence of talk shows participants' awareness of the social implications of allowing a pause to occupy a conversational slot where an utterance is expected. Situated in interactionally "safe" locations within the sequence of utterances, pauses demonstrate the management of multiple tasks, where attention is redirected from talk to nonverbal activities and back. Discussions stray from one topic to another, strung along the interactional thread of mutual presence, and indicating that talk is an explicit manifestation of the broader interactional experience.

Telephone conversations take place within a subset of conditions under which face-to-face conversations occur, the interactive obligations being more stringent for telephone participants. So, pauses in telephone conversations can be expected to serve the same functions as in face-to-face interactions: In addition to those mentioned above, pauses signal trouble if they occur within a turn, or if they precede an expected response (Levinson 1983). As a joint production, a pause can be the realization of very different intentions. One participant's attempt to induce speech in the other conveys an unspoken message by the other in his refusal to comply. The crucial distinction however between telephone conversations and face-to-face interactions is that, unless explicitly stated otherwise, all pauses in telephone conversations are construed as communicative. Indeed, a transcript of a telephone conversation is much more likely to be mistaken for a face-to-face conversation than the reverse.

In face-to-face conversations, the setting, the ongoing activities, and the physical presence of each of the participants form part of the experience of the interaction. Interlocutors can drift in and out of the interaction without severing the social connection which an interaction establishes. In telephone conversations, the sensory experience of the interlocutor is attenuated. As a result, participants direct maximal attention to the interaction, ensuring that the interaction can proceed in spite of minimal access to the other. The absence of shared physical experiences means that the maintenance of human connection relies solely on talk. If there is silence over the wire, there is probably trouble in the interaction.

Endnotes

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comments and criticisms; and not least to Sara Rappe for helpful discussion and inspiration. I take responsibility for shortcomings.

² It has also been noted that implicit in telephone interactions is a power imbalance between the caller and her recipient (e.g., Lakoff 1990, Hopper 1992). The caller is said to be in a one-up position. She has designated the recipient and formulated the objective of the call prior to the recipient's knowledge of the caller or of the objective. The time at which she initiates the interaction forces a suspension of the recipient's flow of activities, prioritizes the caller's demands over that of the recipient. By keeping the line open, the recipient implicitly agrees to carry out the caller's intention, and to make the conversation the primary focus of his attention. The recipient's power therefore lies in his decision as to whether or not to participate in the interaction, and if he chooses not to, thereby nullifies the caller's advantage. Because the consequences are more damaging to the relationship if the recipient chooses to exercise his power, the telephone conversation favors the caller whose hegemony is built into the situated identities.

However a potential recipient can reduce or reverse the power imbalance. She can choose to remove her number from the public listings, thereby reducing the pool of potential callers. She can decide beforehand not to answer her phone at all by ignoring any calls or by pulling the plug from her telephone, although when she plugs her phone back in, she becomes beholden to the caller again. But in the end it is with the help of technology by which the potential recipient erodes the caller's advantage. The answering machine enables the recipient to do things the caller usually does. The recipient can identify the caller first if she is screening the call, and exercises the option to pick up the phone or not. Not only does the caller speak first but he speaks to a nonsentient interlocutor, without knowing whether or not the intended recipient is actually away or hovering over the machine. In general, caller privacy, and hence power, may be a thing of the past, especially with new services such as Call Trace, which registers the phone number of the last caller with the phone company, and Call Return, which allows the recipient to dial the number of the last caller.

Key to transcription symbols

[]	beginning and end of overlap
=	latched utterances
(h)	beat of silent laughter
h	beat of voiced laughter
.h	intake of breath
-	glottal stop, self-interruption
(n.x)	n.x second pause
:	length marker
,	continuing intonation
?	rising intonation
.	falling intonation
<i>italics</i>	syllables stressed by amplitude
CAPS	syllables stressed by relatively high amplitude
?!/	inaudible
[stage direction]	
->	phenomenon under discussion

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