

TEXT was founded as an international and truly interdisciplinary forum for the publication of papers on discourse (texts, conversation, messages, communicative events, etc.). An editorial board and a board of advisors, composed of leading specialists in the respective subdomains or disciplines of discourse studies, assists the editor.

TEXT aims to promote the development of the new cross-discipline of discourse studies and to establish practical research contacts among scholars from different disciplines. Preference will be given to genuinely interdisciplinary topics and problems. Papers should be of general interest and not be limited to phenomena which are only relevant to a specific discipline. Special stress will be given to interdisciplinary theory formation and the development of methods of analysis. Descriptions of discourse genres or of specific properties of discourse should have an explicit theoretical basis, be systematic, non-*ad hoc*, and satisfy the usual methodological requirements. Those papers are particularly welcome which adequately deal with the most pressing social issues of our time and for which discourse analysis is shown to be a relevant approach.

TEXT invites authors to submit their manuscripts (in three copies; for style see inside back cover) to the Editor: Teun A. van Dijk

Department of General Literary Studies, Section of Discourse Studies
University of Amsterdam, Spuistraat 210
1012 VT Amsterdam, The Netherlands

TEXT is published in one volume of four issues per year (approximately 600 pages):

Subscription rates for **Volume 12 (1992)**:

Institutions/libraries	DM 288.00 (plus postage)
Individuals (prepaid only*)	DM 113.80 (includes postage)
Single issues	DM 80.00

Prices in US\$ for subscriptions in North America only:

Institutions/libraries	US\$ 180.00 (plus postage)
Individuals (prepaid only*)	US\$ 59.90 (includes postage)

*Subscriptions at the individual rate are for personal use only and must be prepaid and ordered directly from the publisher. Prepayment may be made by check or by credit card: MasterCard (Access), EuroCard, American Express [Amex may not be used in North America]. Orders placed for institutions will be invoiced at the institutional rate. The individual rate is not available in the FRG, Switzerland, or Austria.

Institutional subscriptions and single or back issues can be ordered from your local bookseller or subscription agent or directly from MOUTON DE GRUYTER (a division of Walter de Gruyter) at the following addresses:

For North America: Walter de Gruyter Inc. 200 Saw Mill River Road Hawthorne, NY 10532 USA	For all other countries: Walter de Gruyter & Co. Postfach 110240 D-1000 Berlin 11 Federal Republic of Germany
---	---

A subscription order form is included at the end of the issue.

TEXT accepts paid advertising. Please address all inquiries concerning advertising to the Berlin office.

Attention before copying: Authorization to copy items for internal or personal use, or for the internal or personal use by specific clients is granted by Walter de Gruyter, for libraries and other users registered with the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) Transactional Reporting Services, provided that the base fee of US\$ 2.00 per copy is paid to CCC, 27 Congress St., Salem, MA 01970, USA 0165-4888/92.

© 1992 by Walter de Gruyter & Co., D-1000 Berlin 30

All rights reserved, including those of translation into foreign languages. No part of this journal may be reproduced in any form – by photoprint, microfilm or any other means – or transmitted or translated into machine language without written permission from the publisher. (The quotation of registered names, trade marks, etc. in this journal does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from laws and regulations protecting trade marks, etc. and therefore free for general use.)

TEXT is covered in *Sociological Abstracts*, *Language Teaching*, and *Linguistics Abstracts*.

Typeset in Great Britain by H. Charlesworth & Co. Ltd., Huddersfield
Printed in The Netherlands by Krips Repro, Meppel

TEXT

**an interdisciplinary journal
for
the study of discourse**

Editor TEUN A. VAN DIJK
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Editorial Assistant LEILA CHERRIBI

Co-editors MALCOLM COULTHARD
Birmingham, UK

DEBORAH TANNEN
Washington, D.C., USA

SANDRA THOMPSON
Santa Barbara, CA, USA

RUTH WODAK
Vienna, Austria

Honorary Board WALLACE CHAFE (Santa Barbara, CA, USA)
AARON CICOUREL (La Jolla, CA, USA)
UMBERTO ECO (Bologna, Italy)
SUSAN ERVIN-TRIPP (Berkeley, CA, USA)
M.A.K. HALLIDAY (Sydney, Australia)
DELL H. HYMES (Charlottesville, VA, USA)
BOHUMIL PALEK (Prague, Czechoslovakia)
JANOS PETŐFI (Macerata, Italy)

Advisory Board

Janet Beavin Bavelas (Victoria, BC, Canada)
 Robert de Beaugrande (Gainesville, FL, USA)
 Chen Ping (Hong Kong)
 Paul Drew (York, UK)
 Frans H. van Eemeren (Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
 T. Givón (Eugene, OR, USA)
 Elisabeth Gülich (Bielefeld, FRG)
 Marjorie Harness Goodwin (Columbia, SC, USA)
 Yoshihiko Ikegami (Tokyo, Japan)
 Asa Kasher (Tel Aviv, Israel)
 Walter Kintsch (Boulder, CO, USA)
 Geoffrey Leech (Lancaster, UK)
 Jean M. Mandler (San Diego, CA, USA)
 Luiz Antonio Marcuschi (Recife, Pe, Brazil)
 Senko K. Maynard (Princeton, NJ, USA)
 Margaret L. McLaughlin (Los Angeles, CA, USA)
 Claudia Mitchell-Kernan (Los Angeles, CA, USA)
 Elinor Ochs (Los Angeles, CA, USA)
 Livia Polanyi (Houston, TX, USA)
 Anita Pomerantz (Philadelphia, PN, USA)
 Tanya Reinhart (Tel Aviv, Israel)
 Barbara Sandig (Saarbrücken, FRG)
 Bambi Schieffelin (New York, USA)
 Deborah Schiffrin (Georgetown, USA)
 Catherine Snow (Cambridge, MA, USA)
 Nancy Stein (Chicago, IL, USA)
 Tzvetan Todorov (Paris, France)
 Karen Tracy (Philadelphia, PN, USA)
 Tran Ngoc Them (Hanoi, Vietnam)
 Jan Ulijn (Eindhoven, The Netherlands)
 Patrizia Violi (Bologna, Italy)
 S. K. Verma (Hyderabad, India)
 Jef Verschueren (Antwerpen, Belgium)

CELSO ALVAREZ-CACCAMO and HUBERT KNOBLAUCH 'I was calling you': Communicative patterns in leaving a message on an answering machine	473
HARUKO MINEGISHI COOK Meanings of non-referential indexes: A case study of the Japanese sentence-final particle <i>ne</i>	507
ANTHONY LIDDICOAT, ANNIE BROWN, SUSANNE DÖPKE and KRISTINA LOVE The effect of the institution: Openings in talkback radio	541
SENKO K. MAYNARD Cognitive and pragmatic messages of a syntactic choice: The case of the Japanese commentary predicate <i>n(o) da</i>	563
Index of articles in Volume 12	615

'I was calling you': Communicative patterns in leaving a message on an answering machine

CELSO ALVAREZ-CACCAMO and HUBERT KNOBLAUCH

Abstract

The analysis of over 300 messages from nine different telephone answering machines yields communicative patterns aimed at solving the three main problems posed by this particular medium: one-sidedness, mediacy, and orality. Specific patterns for opening and closing messages are identified which differ from those of interactive telephone conversations and stress the assessment of social relationships between caller and callee. Dialogicity in messages is accomplished through various prosodic and non-lexical devices which help to enact copresence. Messages left on answering machines constitute a minimal genre. The core of the message consists of 'because' and 'in order to' motives linking talk anaphorically and/or cataphorically to previous or subsequent actions by callers and/or callees. In a certain way, a given corpus of messages thus 'documents' the callee's social networks. It is suggested that communicative patterns may vary according to differing networks, activities and contexts in which the answering machines are located.

Keywords: telephone messages, mediated communication, genre analysis.

1. Introduction

For many people, their first encounter with a telephone answering machine is a disorienting experience. They expect to encounter a voice willing to talk back to them on the other end of the line, but they instead find that the person they were calling (the *callee*) or someone else greets the caller, prompts for information, and closes the exchange all by himself or herself, without allowing for any possibility of a real dialogue.

While the literature on telephone conversations is abundant, it is somewhat puzzling to observe that the communicative activity of leaving messages on answering machines has hardly been investigated.¹ It could

be argued that this is due to the 'triviality' of this device — the answering machine. We would like to suggest, however, that messages constitute a very specific form of communication, which contrasts in more than anecdotal aspects with what we will call *interactive telephone conversations* and with written forms of communication. We will argue that answering-machine messages can be characterized by a typical communicative structure which, rather than being accidental, reflects certain peculiarities of this type of communication, i.e., the medium, the contexts of its use, and the social background of users (cf. also Murray, 1988).

At a first glance, communication in telephone messages seems to be a derivative form of telephone calls (Dingwall, 1992). We would like to detail, however, why and in what sense this is not exactly so. Like telephone conversations, leaving messages on answering machines can be characterized as a *mediated form of communication*. Instead of the 'fullness' of face-to-face-interaction (Schütz and Luckmann, 1991), the channel restricts communication merely to acoustic signs which are transmitted by technical devices. Despite this mediacy, some analysts maintain that telephone communication does not differ in principle from face-to-face exchanges.² In what concerns answering machine messages in particular, at least some important features should be stressed. A telephone call is a reciprocal (which does not presuppose 'equal') form of social action. This action is not only addressed to another person, but is also oriented towards him or her in its course, as, for instance, through synchronization, or turn coordination. In contrast, in telephone messages the recipient is absent.³ Messages are intentional 'projects' by one actor addressed to and oriented toward another who, aside from the prerecorded outgoing message, is not directly intervening in the course of action. Thus, the course of the action does not depend on coordination and synchronization of reciprocal actions. In this sense, messages can be regarded as *one-sided social action*.⁴ We may consequently ask, first, what happens to the interactional dimension of phone conversations when a speaker leaves an apparently monologic message and, second, how the message is affected by the fact that speakers are talking to a machine.

Messages transcend not only space (Reid, 1977: 386), but also time. This feature — the technological solution to the problem of availability which is characteristic of telephone interaction (Schegloff, 1972: 370–371) — has led to some discussion on the interactive functions of answering machines. The 'technical facility' position argues that this solution frees communication from prior restrictions. The callers' problems are solved, as they have access to the callee any time (cf. Fielding and Hartley, 1987: 131). On the other hand, the callees' permanent availability may colonize their private lives, and the 'answering machine' may become an 'irresist-

ible intruder' (McLuhan, 1965: 271), the representative of public life even in one's absence. Finally, the callee may use the answering machine as a 'barrier', a buffer to regulate his or her communicative involvement (Roth and Lepionka, 1973).

These problems resemble those posed by other mediated and one-sided forms of communication, such as, for example, letters, memoranda or electronic mail.⁵ However, despite the superficial similarity between phone messages and, for instance, computer-mediated communication (Murray, 1988: 357), messages present a third, distinctive feature: they are an *oral* form of communication. Research on telephone conversation hardly accounted for the importance of prosodical elements and non-lexical tokens which become more salient as the technical device exerts a kind of microphone effect — one which is frequently manipulated by speakers. We shall refer to this issue as the question of *voicing* the various parts of a message so as to segment it, topicalize information, construct or sustain social relationships, and signal alliances, orientations, intimacy, or distance, all accomplished through the tactical manipulation of voice quality, prosody, pausing, intonation, and breathing, to name a few devices. We shall argue that answering-machine messages compensate for missing communicative channels (such as kinesics, facial expression, gazes, etc.) by means of the paralinguistic repertoire.

The almost unique cooccurrence of mediacy (of time and space), one-sidedness, and orality gives rise to a very specific communicative task or interactional 'problem'. Callers are faced with the communicative problem of supplying by themselves the dialogicity of interaction; and they do so by bestowing on the 'message' (which is recorded in life-time) the character of the immediacy of the voice. Many messages present traces of dialogicity, that is, evidences of a transformation to cope with, and a tendency to avoid an abhorrent verbal activity: a pseudo-dialogue with the copresent aural representation of an absent party — indeed a dialogue with no one. We shall argue that callers respond to this task by producing certain communicative patterns.

One starting assumption for this research was that cultural conventions help to solve the action problems of mediacy, one-sidedness and orality.⁶ We have gathered almost 300 messages left on nine different private answering machines in the US by speakers of seven different languages (English, German, Italian, Spanish, Galician, Chinese, and French). It would certainly be worthwhile to examine in detail the specific cues applied by speakers of different communicative cultures, particularly in relation to the social distribution of and familiarity with answering machine technologies in various societies.⁷ This, however, will not be the object of our work. For one thing, we have found the similarities in form,

length, and content across the languages (and independently from instructions given in the outgoing messages) to be much more striking than the differences.⁸ While we shall occasionally make reference to some of these differences, what we want to show are the overall communicative patterns that apply regardless of the callers' language, their society's familiarity with answering machines,⁹ and their specific cultural conventions.¹⁰ This observation can probably be accounted for only if we assume that talking to an answering machine poses special requirements which are best described by the three peculiarities of the type of communicative action mentioned above.

As Mayer (1977: 240) suggests, telephones may give rise to a 'code language'. In fact, the folk notion 'message' indicates that the similarities can be found on the level of the 'form of talk'. Contrary to greetings or outgoing messages, leaving a message does not constitute a 'gesprochenes Sprachwerk'; typically, it is not a product of a reflective creation, but rather a spontaneous communicative act. Still, messages do exhibit 'patterns of listening to and talking to answering machines' (cf. Gutenberg, 1987: 14–15). The patterning of communicative actions has been investigated under different labels, such as 'frames', 'scenarios', or 'scripts'.¹¹ As Hanks (1989) points out, patterned texts can be regarded as generic forms. In other words, the notion of genre implies that the production of texts in social contexts is subject to typical restrictions regarding structural elements such as code, addressee, content, length, voice, etc. Luckmann (1989) has specified this notion by focusing more concretely on social practice. According to Luckmann, communicative genres are pre-cut communicative patterns which provide solutions for recurrent communicative problems. That is, whenever certain communicative tasks are something more than individual problems (be it the declaration of war or of love), communicative actions tend to become patterned in routine forms. Patterning can affect only certain aspects of the 'internal structure' (e.g., code selection, turn preselection, prosodical features, rhetorical elements, formulas, etc.), or it can affect the 'outer structure' (e.g., selections of participants, available communicative roles, social settings, milieus, etc.). Within this framework, we want to propose that the patterning of messages is a practical solution to the action problems inherent in talking to an answering machine: one-sidedness, mediacy, and orality.

In fact, the only investigation in this field (Wojcik 1987–1988) demonstrates that answering machine greetings (outgoing messages) are structured in very typical patterns which show features of 'minor genres'. Wojcik describes typical elements such as 1) a preface (e.g., music, noise

etc.); 2) a traditional salutation; 3) an identification; 4) an explanation or apology for the inability to answer the telephone; 5) a verbalized request for the caller to leave a message; 6) information that the beep will announce when the caller can leave a message; 7) a promise to return the call; 8) a closing expression; etc. Likewise, the generic status of 'incoming' messages is evident. Messages, as we shall simply call them, have recognizable beginnings, endings, and something in between which we shall call the core of the message. Like in 'While-you-were-out' notes or 'Memoranda of calls', there are additional elements such as time of the call, phone numbers, etc. which may be triggered by the outgoing message. As these can occur at different places and hardly constitute the core of the message, we shall call them optional elements.¹²

2. Opening the message

At first sight, one may gain the impression that answering-machine messages are monological speech events. In a crucial sense, however, this is not true. Let us start by examining the opening section.

Answering machines react when the phone starts ringing, setting in after a number of rings. Then the outgoing message starts. As described above, outgoing messages vary in accordance with a typical scheme.¹³ Then an unambiguous signal announcing a sort of 'turn-taking' takes place: the 'tone' or 'beep'. Even in the absence of an outgoing message, the caller can identify the tone as the preceding marker of the sequential 'slot' to start his or her message.

Callers' refusals to leave a message (either due to the caller's surprise or to a planned refusal to take the turn) also parallel face-to-face turn-taking organization: the caller's silence and the click when hanging up are followed by a sort of 'same-speaker self-selection' (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974). Thus, even before the caller can start the message there is an interactive sequence provided by the machine. It is no surprise that this sequence fits the structure described by Schegloff: the summoning ring is followed by a move by the callee, which then gives way to the caller's turn. The summons–answer sequence opens the slot for a third turn, and this consists of the message-to-be (some machines even provide a taped closing section.)

This similarity between answering machine openings and interactive openings is complemented by some minute but nevertheless important differences which may become clear if we have a look at some openings by callers.

- (1) Hi Ricki it's Carina
- (2) Ciao Ricki = (son) Marcella?
(Hi Ricki = (it's) Marcella?)
- (3) Ciao Ricki, Mario;
- (4) Bon soir Ricki, c'est Michel,
(Good evening Ricki, it's Michael)
- (5) Hallo Michel = hier ist Theo.
(Hello Mike = Theo speaking)
- (6) .h.h Eh Carlos, soy Margarita.
(hh Carlos, it's Margarita)

The elements of the opening may consist of [*greeting*], [self-identification], and/or [terms of address]/[summons] (1–4). Some openings also include what Schegloff calls a 'frame' such as 'this is', 'sono', 'c'est', 'hier ist' or 'soy'. The term of address may also be left out, as in the following examples:

- (7) Ciao, that's Marie.
- (8) Hi. My name is Parabanja, and I ...
- (9) Hola, soy Anatolio.

Self-identification and term of address may be switched:

- (10) Hi eh. This is Philipp; Ricki,

As the callee's identification is usually already accomplished by the outgoing message, it seems of importance for the caller to produce a self-identification at the very beginning. This seems to be a peculiarity of telephone messages vis-a-vis what Schegloff (1979: 45) observed for interactive telephone openings, namely, that 'self identification is not much done in the caller's first turn'. In messages the greeting section exhibits observable peculiarities. Not only are there fewer ways to open a telephone message but one-sidedness of the latter also bestows a different character on the greeting section. The very format of the self-identification and terms of address contextualizes the assessed social relationship between caller and callee.

In a number of calls from institutions, for instance, self-identification typically involves the caller's social and institutional location. Four elements (first name, last name, title, and organization). are ordered in the following ways (square brackets indicate optional elements);

- (a) First name + organization
- (11) Hey Ricki this is Lou
at the Einstein Institute.
- (b) [Title] + [first name] + last name + [organization]:
- (12) Hello = Michael = this is Billy (Ki : d)
at. New York Fiat.
- (13) Grüß Gott hier spricht Lolita Film;
(Hello this is Lolita Pictures speaking);
Bavaria Film Studios München.
(Bavarian Studios, Munich.)
- (14) Hello this is Professor Campos,
I received a call from you,
- (c) Organization + [first name] + [last name]:
- (15) This is Fracture Insurance; the Skiing department;
you have called yesterday ...
- (16) This is the banking help service
Mary Good
I am calling for Doctor (er) Ricko,

Institutional identification, e.g., by organization, permits the caller's specific social location, which the callee is not necessarily assumed to know. Therefore these templates may, at first sight, appear to be formal, in that they provide for the caller's specific institutional location (Atkinson, 1982). Schegloff (1979) suggests that at least two forms of identifications can be expected: categorial identifications on the one hand, recognitionals on the other. In fact, callers may use another format of self-identification which also appears more 'formal' than, for example, first names:

- (18) (Hello:-) Hello? Eh:: Ricki this is Herb Hancock
- (19) Hi Vicki. This is John, Bird.

And you answered my a:d in the Weekly.
R- it was part of lonely son, doing fine. (-)

- (20) Hi, I'm calling for Michael.
My name is (Alfons Peron).
Eh Italo Calvino said ...

- (21) Hi Michael. It's Charlene Spretnak.

The forms selected for identification do not radically differ in cases of second calls.

- (22) Hi Ricki, Milvia returning your call again.

Second calls may feature a certain economy of information, apparent in lexical ellipses (such as 'Einstein [Institute]') which thus allude anaphorically to the previous call as one link in an ongoing chain of verbal activities or exchanges between caller and callee.¹⁴

- (23) Hi Ricki; this is Lou at Einstein again;

What must be foregrounded is that such forms differ significantly from the cases of first names cited above. Continuing with Schegloff's distinction between categoricals and recognitionals, in the opening section we also find recognitionals with no explicit self-identifications:

- (24) [singsong] Oh Ricki:: Dove sei:::
(Oh Ricki::: Where you are:::)

- (25) Ciao Ricki, sono io;;
(Hi Ricki, it's me:;)

- (26) Hi:::; it's eh::: (-) four::: o'clock..

- (27) Micha? Gruess de.
(Mike? Greetings.)

- (28) Hola Marga. Estas ahi?
(Hi Marga. Are you there?)

In the above cases, self-identification is conveyed by the deployment of a 'voice probe' presumably under the assumption that other-identification

will operate on the basis of voice recognition alone. As Sacks and Schegloff (1979) suggest, there is a preference for minimization with respect to recipient design. Callers may use greetings and/or terms of address, but they tend to avoid any lexical means of self-identification. They employ instead what has been called the 'intimacy plot' (Schegloff, 1972: 353), based in this case on voice recognition. This tactic logically presupposes that recognizability is at least assumed by the caller.

The previous observations contradict Gold's view (1991: 247) that 'the speaker must state the obvious', i.e., names, since 'no background knowledge is shared'. In fact, numerous examples such as the ones above could be used to demonstrate that background knowledge is already at work in the greeting section. The use of voice-probes (as well as first names, first and last names, institutional location plus first and/or last name and second-call ellipses) can be accounted for if we assume that speakers do not just apply different forms of identification; the very selection of forms presupposes that callers assess their relationship to the callee, and on the basis of this estimation they chose one of the described forms of address.

Note that callers use these forms independently of their language community and of how familiar they are with answering machines, and that all forms occur on all answering machines.¹⁵ This, again, is evidence for our assertion that cultural differences play a very small role in the pattern of messages; it also backs our thesis that the answering machine poses, by its very form, particular demands on callers.

Instead of distinguishing only two forms, i.e., categorial and recognitional, the greeting sections exhibit a whole array of distinct forms, ranging from voice samples only; voice samples including the greeting of the callee (which may have idiosyncratic features, e.g., the dialectal version of the name 'Michele' instead of Michael); self-identification with first name; with first name and second name; first name and institutional location; first and last name and institutional location; to institutional location without any names at all. These distinct forms do not identify someone as the caller. In fact, the use of a voice probe, for instance, presupposes the caller's assumption that the callee will recognize the voice. That is, the one-sidedness of messages demands that the callers 'measure' their relationship to the callees by means of the address terms. Callers not only present themselves. They present themselves in a way which expresses their social relation to the callee.

This relational self-identification becomes explicit in problematic cases. Instead of the caller directly addressing the callee (e.g., by selecting among different possible recipients),¹⁶ callers may use a 'switchboard',¹⁷ or an explicit 'other-identification probe' ('Jane? Is this Jane? This is a message for Jane (Doe)'), which may exhibit certain propositional anomalies:

- (29) If this is Carol Minsky's phone,
this is May Flynn,
and I'm returning your ca:ll?

This proposition would imply that 'If that is not Carol Minsky's phone, then this is not May Flynn.' As an other-identification probe, the sequence can be rather understood as, 'If you are not the person I'm calling for, my identity and my message are irrelevant.' Thus, callers not only check the callee's identity; they also establish their own identity as only relevant in relation to that of the latter. The observation of a relational identity is additionally backed by the frequent references to a common 'prehistory', e.g., through allusions (in the opening section) to a prior call ('I am returning your call') or to any other prior common ground. Since this is not a feature specific to the opening section, we will return to this point later.

To conclude, the message is not just information to be handed over to a machine; in fact, the first work the caller does is aimed at defining his or her rapport with the callee in terms of their mutual social relation.

3. Voicing and the enactment of copresence

The role that voice quality, prosody, and paralinguistics play in messages is not restricted to the opening section. Instead, it turns out to be one of the most relevant and distinctive characteristics of messages — and, for that matter, of telephone-mediated communication. This role, however, has hardly been appreciated by students of telephone conversation. Only recently has Auer (1990) shown the relevance of prosodic features in telephone closings. He convincingly shows how speakers establish a common rhythm and tempo in order to synchronize their talk and to coordinate the termination of their actions.

The importance of prosody for understanding everyday talk has been demonstrated by Gumperz (1982). Gumperz's argument seems particularly pertinent in what concerns message design. Prosody enables 'the conversationalists to chunk the stream of talk into the basic message units which both underlie interpretation and control the turn taking or speaker change strategies that are essential to the maintenance of conversational involvement' (1982: 107). In telephone systems, the voice seems to play an even more important role.¹⁸ The phone and the machine themselves, by amplifying sounds, bring to the forefront certain paralinguistic cues that may be out of range in face-to-face communication. Speakers seem to be aware of these features and make use of them

systematically by mimicking and exaggerating the practices which can be found in private face-to-face encounters.

In our data, we have found the deployment of a number of devices. Prosodic devices, including intonational features (final junctures, accenting, pitch fluctuations and pitch obtrusions, and overall contours), and 'phrasing' properties of talk (such as tempo, rhythm, and volume) are the categories which in face-to-face conversation have been proven to contribute to information management and to the segmentation of activity types.¹⁹ Vocal devices refer to voice quality in single words or longer stretches of talk. Since technical terminology for phenomena such as 'purring' (e.g., a vibrating or voiced enunciation), for an 'intimate', 'seductive' or 'whiskey' voice, or for 'whispering' is lacking, for the purpose of our investigation we have elicited these folk categories by playing back selected messages to native informants.²⁰ Non-lexical segmentation devices include 'clicks', 'inspired clicks', 'smacks', 'in-breaths' and 'out-breaths'. The surprisingly frequent and systematic occurrence of these devices happens mainly during pauses, especially after 'non-filled pauses' which facilitate turn management in interactive communication (Clark and French, 1981).

Our focus, however, has not been classificatory, but interpretive. It should be stressed that speakers of different language communities use different voicing devices, and that the various devices mentioned above serve overlapping functions. Voicing devices allow the caller (1) to segment parts of talk (opening, message, closing) and to set apart the different activities (informational units, requests etc.), thus guiding the listeners' interpretation of talk; and (2) to establish the assessed relationship to the callee; i.e., to 'relate' by alluding to shared knowledge, by choosing a certain recipient design (e.g., through kissing sounds, smacks, singing or humming). One might expect messages to be monotonous enactments of memo-like pieces of information. On the contrary, voicing devices (3) help to enact copresence, that is, they organize the message quasi-interactively (almost as if the interlocutor were present), through pauses left at certain slots, final rising junctures which signal non-completion (and, hence, possible completion by the interlocutor), etc. Thus, voicing devices confer a character of dialogicity upon the messages. Along with the relational identification discussed above, these procedures manage to mask the very fact that callers are talking to a machine — and yet, doing work which seems to reflect the callee's responses.

Some regularities observed in the deployment of voicing devices are quite predictable. For instance, since final junctures are connected to turn-taking and announce transition relevance places, certain patterns in the distribution of rising, sustained, and falling junctures in answering-

machine messages parallel quite closely those of telephone conversations.²¹ Likewise, rhythm and accenting in the delivery of phone numbers largely matches what one finds in dyadic conversations.²² These kinds of regularity, however, do not imply that a strict or mechanical correlation exists between a given voicing device and particular interaction or segmentation functions. For instance, although non-lexical elements such as ‘clicks’ or ‘smacks’ predominantly function to segment parts of the message, they can also simultaneously signal the relationship between caller and callee. In line 8 of the following case (30), the pause after the hesitation marker ‘Ehm’ is filled with seven ‘smacks’ (+) which, as part of playful or unmonitored talk, can only be produced without risk of losing face in intimate interactions:

- (30)
- 1 Hola muchacho; [click] (.) Eh:::

(Hi you guy Ehm)
 - 2 Sto telefonando per sapere::

(I’m calling to know if you)
 - 3 se domani ci sarei:: in ufficio?

(will be in your office tomorrow?)
 - 4 (o)perche magari vengO::nel pomeriggio

((or) cause I’ll come in the morning)
 - 5 (.) hh a battere un puo di lettere

(to get some letters done)
 - 6 (.) [click] e fare le fotocopie, (.)

(and make the copies)
 - 7 Okay?
 - 8 Ehm + + + +, + + +

Uhm, + + + +, + + +
 - 9 [ac] Ti telefono domani mattina (.)

(I’ll call you tomorrow morning)
 - 10 a vedere cosa succede;

(to see what’s happening)
 - 11 e se non ci sarei de la sua parte,

(and if you can’t make it)
 - 12 [ac] perche non mi telefoni domani mattina.

(why don’t you call me tomorrow morning)
 - 13 OKAY? hhh Allora: ciao,

(Okay so bye)

Thus, there is a mimicking of face-to-face interaction, in which non-lexical markers play a major role. Dialogicity is most evident in the use

of final junctures, which mark a given utterance function as a question or a statement (or mark the ‘backward’ or ‘forward’ projection which will be discussed in section 4). An ‘Okay?’ with a rising juncture, preceding a closing section, constitutes a request for confirmation. And it does so both because of its placement and because of its prosodics. Significantly, these ‘Okay?’s are often followed by a short unfilled pause, that is, by an interactive trace of a possible reply that would occupy the same slot in conversation (see line 7):

- (31)
- 1 Lucio and Carolyn,
 - 2 this is Javier.

I was calling you.
 - 4 .h.h.h u::h
 - 5 (.)
 - 6 .h I’ll call you later.
 - 7 Okay? (.)
 - 8 Bye

Similarly, regular rising junctures in the opening ‘Hello’ (or equivalent), sometimes highly modulated in a rise–fall–rise contour, open a space for the callee’s acceptance of the eventuality that ‘something more is to come’:²³

o
e o
h ll o

‘First parts’ are thus set apart from ‘second parts’ on the basis of final junctures, as in the question–answer pairs in lines 4–5 and 6–7 in the following example:

- (32)
- 1 ... It. Is. Bill, Michael Jackson ehm.
 - 2 Who you probably thought has gone dead ehm.
 - 3 For months.
 - 4 Eh my new number?
 - 5 Nine nine nine. nine nine nine. Nine nine nine nine.
 - 6 (.) My new address?
 - 7 Well you have to call me. To get that...

Bill has used here a dialogic couplet (cf. also Gold, 1991), that is, an attempt to make a non-responsive listener part of the apparent monologic

talk. However, it is only at the prosodic, not textual level that dialogicity can be identified as a constitutive feature of messages, since the use of such terms of audience address are rare exceptions. Dialogicity in messages is produced, rather, by the use of different voices — ‘voices’ not to be understood in a metaphorical sense. Speakers can produce an astonishing variety of different voices in the course of a single message:

- (33)
- 1 sono le dieci e::::
(it’s about ten a::::nd)
 - 2 ti ho cercato
(I’ve been looking for you)
 - 3 nell ufficio non ci sei,
(in the office you hadn’t been,)
 - 4 (-) quindi: dove = sei? [Click]
(so; where = are = you? [Click])
 - 5 Eh::::m STASERA eh:::
(Eh::::m TONIGHT eh:::)
 - 6 (noi) andiamo vedere ...
((we) are going to see ...)

After stating the time of her call, Marina produces an accelerated reporting phrase in a flat intonational contour (lines 2–3), which is set apart by the previous lengthened ‘e::::’. Her expressive question to the callee (line 4) is again bounded on the one hand by a short pause, and on the other hand by a ‘click’ which opens her indirect proposition for an appointment. The form of address she uses resembles not so much a rhetorical question, more a ‘fishing device’ (Pomerantz, 1981) usually used in conversations to trigger off some justification by a coparticipant.

This example offers an introduction to the variety and clarity with which voicing devices (‘clicks’, pauses, sound lengthening, etc.) are deployed. Thus, certain means Marina uses, such as aspirating, in- and outbreathing, ‘clicks’ and especially ‘purring’, reflect the kind of relation to the caller, in this case intimacy.

Case (33) also illustrates how voicing devices are manipulated in ways which seem oriented toward compensating for the lack of interactive turn-taking. Indeed, Marina (33) seems to segment the relevant units of talk by these means: in the temporal orientation sequence (line 1) we find sound lengthening; in the reportive passage (lines 2–3), it is the prosodic contour that contextualizes the discourse task in progress; in the ‘callee’s location question’ (4), we find a pause and click; and in the indirect, future-oriented proposal (line 5), we again find vowel lengthening.

In the following example clicks serve unambiguously to segment parts of the message: a request for future action (line 7); an intention (line 10); and the closing section (line 13):

- (34)
- 1 Helloho:: [clearing throat] hi Milka
 - 2 this is (here) Sabra,
 - 3 =(And) I am calling right now
 - 4 but I am calling from f- rom (a friend’s) house,
 - 5 ‘ha ha ha ha” in a ‘ha ha ha’ is in ()
 - 6 what if I know th- she wants to leave on Monday morning.
 - 7 [click] so please I will try to call toni:ght,
 - 8 or call her tomorrow morning (too)
 - 9 you = know = bring (did you) record the music already?
 - 10 [click] But I want let you know you know what’s going on;
 - 11 I hope you () leave Wednesday maybe you know;
 - 12 (permis-) no problem can come Monday morning anyway.
 - 13 hh [click] so::, take care (of yourself) (.) Bye = bye.

Each voicing device may fulfill different functions. Tempo and rhythm may serve to segment elements of talk, to foreground information, or to indicate a changing activity. In other cases, it is the accumulation of devices (particularly clicks, outbreaths, and purring) that simultaneously segments talk and produces an overall effect of communicative engagement or ‘intimacy’. Speakers do not always deploy clicks, smacks, or pauses. But the occurrence of these devices shows that their deployment is not accidental either.²⁴ The following case shows how they are used to segment talk and to cue into the interactive functions of single utterances:

- (35)
- 1 Hi. Much more preferred to have an interactive conversation
 - 2 with you Milka = but. This s- seems to be: the- uh pattern of
 - 3 our co(h)mmunication (of) weeks).
 - 4 hh I will once again leave a message on the machine?
 - 5 for you. Uhm. Uh [click]
 - 6 Sorry I missed you today when you called; I was at work
 - 7 (.) I’ve got back to work. (A few bunches- I’ve decided to
 - 8 interview three people); after all.
 - 9 So uhm. That’s [purrs:] why I was not at home, hh uhm,
 - 10 [click] I’m going out tonight, and I probably won’t be in
 - 11 till late; but you can call me tomorrow morning if you want.

- 12 You know I'm () I'll [purrs:] you from there.
 13 [purrs:] 'cause I have () I wanna be out late tonight.
 14 hhh ehm (..) and if I don't hear from you I'll have to try
 15 again. A:nd I hope everything is OKAY, (hh) uh I love you too,
 16 a:nd I'll talk to you later. Bye bye [whisper].

The metalinguistic comments of lines 1–5 (see below, section 4) are set apart from the excuse of absence (lines 6–9) by two hesitation markers ('Uhm. Uh') and a click (line 5). Another click (line 10) opens a 'forward-projection' sequence (lines 10–11). In turn, within the excuse of absence itself, two distinct sequences are bounded by purring (line 9): first, a straightforward explanation ('Sorry I missed you ...', lines 6–8), and a reiteration ('That's [purrs:] ...', line 9) which, in setting a more intimate tone, constitutes a sort of recontextualizing code-switching (cf. Gumperz, 1982: 78–79). A similar sort of reiteration occurs in lines 10–11, on the one hand, and line 13, on the other: the straightforward explanation in lines 10–11, introduced without purring ('I'm going out ...'), contrasts in tone and footing with the personal positioning in line 13 which is preceded by purring and marked with a verb of volition ('want ...'). Finally, two additional sequences signalling interpersonal involvement are likewise marked by non-lexical devices: 'I love you too' is preceded by inbreath, and the leavetaking 'Bye bye' is produced in a whispering voice.

What the click in line 5 above accomplishes (i.e., concluding the opening section and announcing an informational sequence within the core of the message) can be conveyed by other devices, such as pitch obtrusion in (36):

(36)

- 1 Hallo Michele = hier isch Karin.
 (Hello Mikey = this is Karin.)
 2 Ga:nz dringend; SOS Ruf. Nach Uebersee.
 (Ve:ry urgent. SOS call. To overseas.)
 3 [hi] Könntesch Du mich irgendwann
 (Would you please, if you have time?)
 4 [hi:]wann's dir reipasst zruueckrufe?
 (call me back)
 5 Dank Dir. Tschüss Du.
 (Thanks a lot. See you.)

Karin's flat intonational contour of the greeting and metacommunicative comments of lines 1–2 contrast with the high pitch and final singsong contour of her request (line 3), which constitutes the core of her message.

In the closing section (line 4), the pitch again returns to its default, flat register.

In short, the devices discussed (vowel lengthening, pauses, inbreaths, outbreaths, clicks, smacks, whisperings, pitch obtrusions, rhythm, tempo, and melodic contours) simultaneously serve structural, textual functions, indicate communicative intentions, and express the assumed relation between caller and callee. No doubt these devices are qualitatively very different in terms of acoustics and articulation. However, a merely typological classification of these contextualizing cues (cf. Gumperz, 1982: 130–152) would both mask their situational meanings, and defeat our purpose of unveiling communicative patterns. Voice management accomplishes dialogicity, thus allowing for the illusion of not talking to a machine but to a person. And, as the above cases already show, as different as the voicing devices may be, they demonstrably fulfill functions in constructing different segments of the message so as to guide the callee's interpretation.

4. Closing and the elements of messages

In principle, messages could consist of anything. People could tell jokes, they could threaten, bill, fine, recount fairy tales, and so on. But in fact, there is a limited range of things callers do when leaving a message. For one thing, the limited time available exerts strong restrictions on what is part of a message.

Messages feature some standardized elements: callers leave their phone numbers as part of the self-identification, or they repeat the number called in order to avoid a wrong call, they state the time of calling, they say when they will be available, and so on. Some of these elements are optional and can occur at any point in the message: the time of the call or the caller's phone number may be stated in the opening section, as a parenthesis within the core of the message, or even in the pre- and post-closing position.

(37)

- 10 hh she can- eh- (-) sh- the number I gave you
 11 is temporary she can leave a message at nine nine nine,
 12 nine nine nine, nine nine. nine nine. That's permanent.
 13 'Thanks a lot.' (-) Bye.
 14 = The number is nine nine nine, nine nine nine,
 15 nine nine nine nine.
 16 'Bye.'

- (38)
 5 Happy New Year and my number is
 6 nine nine nine nine nine nine;
 7 give me a call. (.) Bye.
 8 It's Sunday.
 9 'Bye.'

These standardized elements of technical coordination, in fact, point to the ritualization of communicative behavior when talking to a machine, and sometimes they may be triggered by the explicit demands in the outgoing message. Thus, they show a great similarity with written 'While-you-were-out' message pads, or 'Call memoranda' which prescribe a tripartite structure.²⁵ Such parallels with written forms, also stressed in the literature (Murray 1988: 357), however, only affect the optional elements. This also holds true for another element: one would expect that the fact of talking to a machine is accounted for by the callers. Indeed, some callers focus on the outgoing message, by somehow evaluating or commenting upon the greeting

- (39) Eh. Great message. Ehm. My name is Paul ...

- (40) (I) cannot understand your message.
 You need to:; speak clearly
 and lower the music

or upon the very fact of talking to a machine itself (cf. example 35). Such focus on the greeting or the machine, however, occupies only a short part of the message — mostly, but not necessarily, in the opening section. Like the standardized elements mentioned above, metacommunicative talk may or may not take place; but, with the exception of 'deviant cases', these constitute additional 'optional elements' to the core of the message (as, for instance, when leaving one's number is the essential information).

We have not yet addressed the question, what is 'the message'? In strictly sequential terms, the core of the message can be said to be the part that is between the opening and closing sections. There is an enormous variety of possible messages; but on the other hand, they all have something in common: they always do something, they perform an activity. An obvious account for and a reflex of the fact that messages are doing something can be seen in the closing section, especially by way of the termination particles, such as 'Okay', 'Thank you', and equivalents:

- (41)
 So:, eh: let me know (either) way.
 [singsong] Okay:::, thanks. Bye

The repetition of termination particles is not at all exceptional. Despite the linguistic and cultural differences in our data (as well as differences with respect to the callers' cultures' familiarity with answering machines), we find comparable uses of termination particles.²⁶ For example, at first sight one could assume that the lack of an interactive 'saying goodbye' could be the reason for such replications of particles.²⁷ Upon further inspection, however, one finds that there is an intimate connection between what specific particles are used and the 'activities' performed. Even more: the activity (i.e. what is being done in the message) is reflected in the termination particle:

- (42)
 1 Hey Ricki this is Lou from the Einstein Institute.
 2 hh I was wondering if you ha:ve;
 3 a copy of the Relativity Theory Congress video
 4 the forty five minute one?
 5 hh if so: = I was wondering if I could get it back from you
 6 tomorrow, ehm
 7 I had promised to lend it to J- Jeff Euphrat's:::; (.)
 8 colleague (.) a:nd; (.) he needs it seen.
 9 = So:; if you can give me a call
 10 = I'd really appreciate it.
 11 Nine nine nine, nine nine, nine, nine. hh
 12 [hi] Thank you

Lou's call is institutional; in explaining her assumptions, she asks Ricki for a favor, namely to give her a video. The closing section reflects this demand through the abrupt 'Thank you'. This is not a peculiarity of institutional calls (see e.g. [34]); neither does it exclude the use of a 'Goodbye' formula also. A switchboard caller asking to be called back by the person referred to may end his call by 'Thanks a lot. (-) bye;' (51). But this closing differs significantly from only an 'Okay'. 'Okays' channel a request for understanding or agreement. Leaving an address (as in [1] above) or offering a favor (as in [43]) are typical candidates for 'Okays'. In addition, callers may use just 'see you then', 'ci vediamo', 'bis später', announcing a subsequent meeting or call. Instead of listing all possible particles, we shall instead examine what these particles accomplish. Let us turn to the following example:

- (43)
 1 Peter th'is = Chantale.
 2 I did with a court.

- 3 So eh::m tonight at six
 4 but it's at Wala; eh North eh North Farling. (hh)
 5 So eh:::: let me know if=eh if you want to play;
 6 () or I can meet you:: eh: (.)
 7 at my house or whatever.
 8 [ac] But anyway=yeah I just
 9 I didn't- I couldn't get another court because I- I- c-
 10 [ac] I didn't (go to Jim) yesterday I was
 11 really::; (.) busy.
 12 So:, eh:: let me know (either) way.
 13 [singsong] Okay:::, [/] - thanks. [.] Bye: [']

The terminating particles are not set randomly. 'Okay' with a rising contour (line 13) can readily be heard as a tag-question on the preceding request 'let me know (either) way' (line 12). 'Thanks' is plurifunctional: it could be understood both as directly related to 'let me know ...', and as referring to the previous self-justification ('I couldn't get another court ...', lines 9–11). Finally, the 'Bye' closes the whole message. There is no infallible correspondence between requests and 'Okay's, but the connection is quite constant.

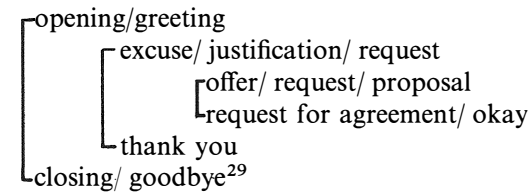
A request for confirmation, in the form of a tag-question to a previous request or a plan proposal, are clearly reflected in termination particles when they occur in preclosings:

- (44)
 [after the greeting section]
 1 And ah we're meeting ah::
 2 Pau::l, we're hh meeting with Paul
 3 tomorrow at three right?
 4 Well give me a call in the morning (uh) before noon.
 5 At around noon or so. Uhm::; (.)
 6 To. See if:: (we meet) or not,
 7 Okay? Ciao.
 8 And we have to talk about the tickets too
 9 ...
 10 Ciao. Bye.

The first closing (line 7) is preceded by an 'Okay?', which is, in turn, followed by an additional, less direct request (line 8). But this second request ('we have to talk ...') is presented without an 'Okay?' Thus, 'okaying' may be used to prompt the called person to make a decision, but this is not necessarily so. In general, the more concrete the request

(that is, the more specific with regards to time, place or action to be taken), and the more direct, the more likely speakers are to 'tag' the request.²⁸

Such differences between activities in the closing section suggest that a distinction between a 'termination' view and a 'leave-taking' view of good-bye exchanges as proposed by Clark and French (1981) cannot be drawn with rigidity — at least not in the case of messages. Terminating particles give a clue as to what is being done in the message. This clue is organized quite frequently in the form of embedded sequences: a greeting forms a bracket with a goodbye, an excuse or justification with a thank you, an offer or request with an okay. We would illustrate this structure as follows:



One should stress that the closing 'Goodbye' does not only end the message. The 'Goodbye' at the same time constitutes a contact termination. As obvious as this point may be, structurally it is worth stressing. As we have tried to show, the opening section's ritual enactment serves not only the technical function of opening and self-identification but also the social function of assessing the relation between caller and callee. This dual function is expressed in the 'Goodbye' as well.

Even if we cannot claim that every activity is monitored by terminating particles, the point is, rather, that the organization and sequencing of these particles hints at the fact that such activities are done and accounted for by the callers.

This interpretation is often backed by the prosodical organization. In example (43) above, the first information sequence (line 2) is set apart from the opening as well as from the request (lines 4–6). Again, in lines 8–11, the excuse (line 9) is produced in an accelerated tempo, which slows down (line 11) before it turns to the second request (12). Finally, the closing section is clearly set apart by the singsong contour.

However, there are significant differences in the use of these two types of devices — prosody, and lexical markers such as 'okay'. Rising junctures calling for completion, for instance, appear in other-identification probes:

- (45) Laurie? (...)
 Do I have you?

Or in narrative listings:

- (46) vengo de intercambio aqui a: a- Rockford?
 (I'm coming here to Rockford in an exchange (program))?
 con: esperanza de quedarme?
 (With the hope of staying?)
 ah y me gustaria hablar con Lucio?
 (Uh and I'd like to talk with Lucio?)

But, whereas prosodical features simply segment different units of talk, lexical markers like 'Okay?' are typically and visibly connected with particular utterances alluding to actions to be taken or requested by the caller (e.g., future meetings or appointments, or calls for confirmation of the caller's past actions). 'Okay's', for instance, may appear after clear informational units like telephone numbers, thus implying the future action 'call me at this number'. Indeed, this latter type of 'call me back' messages is among the clearest cases of the uses of 'Okay' (in informal calls) or 'Thank you' (in formal calls).

Subgenres and activities

There is an indefinite variety of elements in the closing section, and messages can take very different forms. Indeed, one could try to look systematically for typical 'minimal genres'. Just to exemplify the shape of such subgenres, let us have a look at the 'postcard message'. The postcard format appears in those messages (or parts of messages) that consist of highly formulaic and standardized elements. This is often the case (as a kind of postscript) in the closing section,³⁰ but it may also hold for entire messages:

- (47)
- 1 Hi now Mary this is eh David
 - 2 calling eh wishing you a Happy New Year.
 3. I am not- actually not even sure
 - 4 whether you're still living here or not.
 - 5 Uh (0.5) just wanna say Happy New Year
 - 6 and my number here is nine nine nine nine nine nine;
 - 7 Bye.

The postcard form is frequent in our data, as one of the people called was about to leave for abroad. As we see from example (47), frequently 'call-back' requests are embedded within the postcard-form.³¹

Were our goal to attempt a typological classification of messages, we would have to distinguish among a wide array of different minimal genres: information calls, appointment arrangements, calls back, love calls, and so on. A more coherent order of messages can be found if we move to a more general level.

'In order to' motives and 'because' motives

One may find formulaic elements, particularly of the postcard type, such as 'yes, things are going okay' or 'hope you're doing okay' frequently in the closing section ('take it easy', 'hope to hear from you', 'hope to talk to you soon', 'talk to you later'). But they cannot be taken to characterize the 'core of the message'. Instead of systematizing the various minimal genres, we focus on the notion of 'activity' to characterize the core of the message (Levinson, 1979). The kinds of possible activities become clear on the grounds of the prosodic features as well as the clues provided by the closing section:

- (48)
- 1 Hi Ricki it's Carina:.
 - 2 I just wanted to give you Clara's mailing address,
 - 3 it's. Ehm - Department of Chronology; - University
 - 4 of Kairos::: - Ch- Chronos, - Tempo. - Kairos, -
 - 5 nine - nine - nine - zero - nine.
 - 6 Okay? [ac] Take care = bye.

Carina leaves a piece of information for Ricki. The opening section (line 1) and the closing section (line 6) are clearly set apart from what happens in between. In line 2, Carina produces a formulation of what she is going to do, and then she delivers the information in a special register: the single numbers are set apart by truncation; the pitch contour is flat and very much resembles that of official phone announcements. The tagging 'Okay?' does not take us by surprise any more; neither does the fact that the goodbyeing is uttered in an accelerated tempo. In order to get a better understanding of what Carina is doing, let us focus on her formulation.³² She is obviously referring to a prior arrangement to provide Ricki with Clara's address and phone number. The plain informational phrases that follow remind us of Chantale's prosodic voice (43) in her recollection of how she had arranged for a court. Chantale was also proposing a project; the time-structure of her message also shows a reference to a past action, perhaps a request by the callee, or an offer by

the caller. References of this kind are explicit in expressions like ‘I just wanted to call because’. Therefore we will call these ‘because templates’ for messages.

Messages, however, not only (or always) refer explicitly to a past event. They also may project into the future (as noted, more commonly they present both elements). One of the frequent methods to accomplish a projection is an almost syllogistic format which is often wrapped up by an expression including ‘So’ (‘asi que’, ‘quindi’, ‘also’). We will call this the ‘so template’:

(49)

- 1 Hi Ricki, this is Richard, (.)
- 2 two fifteen is fine, ehh: at my house,
- 3 eh we don’t have so much work:
- 4 because eh; eh you know I’d looked at the
- 5 data carefully and we should do it in-
- 6 in an hour easily
- 7 So I see you at two fifteen.
- 8 Bye bye.

Richard obviously alludes to a prior tentative arrangement (line 2). Then he sets up the premises of his reasoning; (line 3ff.). Finally, the ‘so’ (line 7) almost sounds like a logical conclusion. (Implicit is, of course, shared knowledge about Ricki’s and/or Richard’s prior interaction and further plans.) This action projection in ‘so’ templates is not restricted to such ‘external’ action problems:

(50)

- 1 (...) ((Greeting, excuse)) [click] ehm hh
- 2 why don’t you just call me when you get in
- 3 I should be here, I’ll probably go around nine thirty or ten.
- 4 Ehm hh [click] Anyway so I think I (will) go.
- 5 [click] Ehm so::: call me then okay?
- 6 B(h)ye.

The ‘so’ structure in line 5 presents the request (‘call me’) in such a way as if it resulted from outspoken (and tacit) assumptions shared by the caller and the callee. Admittedly, such assumptions (e.g., given the callee gets in in time; given the callee knows what the caller means by ‘go’, etc.) may be as varied as any presupposition in language use. Still, the calls differ significantly with respect to this time structure of activities accom-

plished. Schütz (1962) has described such a difference in action sequences in terms of ‘because’ motives and ‘in order to’ motives. In our data, previous actions can be understood as ‘because’ motives for the call; projected actions function as ‘in-order-to’ motives of the call.³³ This dimension can be characterized on the textual level by, first, anaphoric allusions to prior dialogic experience, deictically marked by past tense (‘you wanted’), or definite articles (‘the number’); and second, by a cataphoric projection, expressed by imperatives or other directives (‘call me’), temporal deixis (‘at seven’) etc. In first-time institutional and promotional calls, the cataphoric dimension is obviously foregrounded (e.g., ‘I’d like to hear from you’, ‘We’ll be waiting for your visit’, etc.). The cataphoric or anaphoric relation which is an expression of the assumed chain of motives is present even in extreme cases when no message seems to be transmitted at all. Take for instance a message consisting of a single element: a number, an identification, a goodbye, etc. If we were not to assume a harrasing or anonymous call, we would immediately expect the caller to want something. Just a number makes us think that we ought to call back; just an identification would refer to the prior relation, just a goodbye could be a farewell, a relationship termination, or a similar activity.

The anaphoric and cataphoric structuring of messages can work on a very abstract level. It is neither accurate to say that messages merely substitute for meetings or telephone conversations in two peoples’ interactional histories; nor should one overlook that they are linking interpersonal motive chains in a retrospective or prospective way.

Thus, the ‘because’ and the ‘so’ hint at least at a structural element which characterizes all messages recorded: the backward retrospection and the forward projection of actions. In example (50) above, for instance, the ‘so’ (line 5) seems simultaneously to be a ‘backward’, information-based inference (‘I assume you will go’) and a request for a ‘forward’ action (that the recipient will call back).³⁴

Regardless of the message type, ‘I am calling you because’ and ‘I am calling you in order to (ask you)’ can be regarded as the two main structural elements of the message core.³⁵ This is probably best exemplified by phone tagging: it refers back to the prior message by the callee, and it quite often refers to an expected next action, be it a meeting, a date, an appointment, or another call. In terms of action structure, the message consists of some action orientation in the two directions.

The observation that the messages analyzed accomplish the broad activity of connecting actions must be evaluated with respect to two restrictions that apply to the data. First, the social context of the messages recorded, and secondly, the kind of messages available.

5. Conclusion: Social contexts of answering machines

Instead of being monologic, one-sided deliveries of plain information given to a machine, messages are contextualized as if callers were not talking to a machine. Messages provide for dialogicity, reciprocity (and assessment of relationships) as well as for a common background of activities. Voicing devices are not only used to segment talk in order to guide the callee's interpretation; they help to emphasize possible slots, to signal different activities, and to mark the assessed social relationship. In avoiding to appear as if speaking to a machine, callers enact a fictive copresence.

Assessment of the relationships between caller and callee is achieved on various levels: from voice quality affecting the entire message to the choice of devices for self- and other-identification in the opening section (voice probes, institutional location, etc.), and in the closing section (e.g. choice of Bye-bye formulae). Taken together, messages do the work of relating. They produce the references for the call, and they locate it within the broader context of the caller's and callee's actions.

What we have called 'voicing' in messages provides means for the organization of talk that may even be more salient than in interactive conversation. But the interactive dimension of messages — one-sidedly produced by the caller — is not only channelled through voicing: it is also visible in the message. The private messages analyzed show anaphoric and cataphoric references which allude to prior or future actions by the caller and callee. Thus, instead of representing a disjunction in the verbal interactional history of any given pair of participants, telephone messages are very productively embedded in such a history of callers and callees.

Quasi-dialogicity, quasi-reciprocity, and the plurality of voices can be conceived of as solutions to the basic problems of answering machines as a medium of communication: one-sidedness, mediacy, and orality. For instance, the need for some kind of self-identification results from the mediacy of communication; the relational identification from its one-sidedness, and the productivity of voicing from its orality; the episodal nature of the communicative event calls for an opening and a closing section which can be heard as being a greeting and a farewell, respectively.

In previous discussions of the interactive functions of answering machines, each of the above-mentioned communicative problems have been stressed in isolation. By way of their one-sidedness, answering machines may indeed serve as a 'dictatorial robot' (Ball, 1968: 66); because of mediacy, they may, on the other hand, serve as gatekeepers to the callee, as technical 'executive secretaries', preventing the callers from imposing their time scale on the callee (Mayer, 1977: 243–244). And

their intrinsic orality, finally, produces a technological distortion of face-to-face communication by media imperatives.

The social functions of answering machines, however, have to be accounted for with respect to the contexts of their use. We should remind the reader that the messages analyzed come from private calls to mobile, young singles or childless couples. We did not have access to machines in institutions or messages left to families, who, as Mayer (1977: 231) argues, rarely need such systems to the extent that single persons do. Thus, behind this restricted data-selection, the general structural precondition for such a patterning can be seen in users' professional and local mobility, but especially in the increasing differentiation in the social distribution of time-budgets. As a matter of fact, the 'population of callers' (Ball, 1968) in our sample reflects to a large extent the various callees' social networks with respect to their short-range activities. Messages from personal friends are more frequent the closer callers and callees are, and the more often they meet.³⁶ Here the answering machine seems to function like a supportive device, expressing telephonic '(s)elective affinities' (Lange and Beck, 1989), a time-bound and subject-centered network of people who are immersed by routine action problems into the speakers' lives.

This technical facility perspective, however, meets with obvious restrictions caused by the nature of the communicative medium. Apart from the standardization of optional elements, such as time and number, messages left on private answering machines exhibit a clear structure which could be summarized as follows (square brackets [] indicate optional elements; the order of elements within each section is not fixed but somewhat constrained):

<i>Opening section</i>	<i>Typical elements used</i>
[Greeting]	'Hi'
[Summons]	Personal name
[Frames]	'This is'
Self-identification	Self-referent; voice probe
[Other-identification]	Identification probe.
<i>The core of the message</i>	
'In-order-to' Projection	'So' templates
and/or 'because'-projection	'Because' templates
<i>Closing section</i>	
[Request for other-confirmation]	'Okay?'/ 'Thank you'
[Self-confirmation]	'Okay.'

[Leave-taking]
Contact termination

‘Goodbye.’
Hanging up;
‘Goodbye.’

Even though, in principle, a variety of forms could be used, the preference for such a genre shows that the machines introduced into the communication network give rise to a ‘secondary traditionalization of technology’ (Hoerning, 1988). New technological devices, rather than distorting, instrumentalizing, or freeing communication, give rise to new communicative conventions. Despite their particularities, it appears that the messages analyzed form only one genre within a whole family of oral products which derive from the very existence of the answering machine. Other ‘spoken text works’ (e.g., time announcements, touch tone paths, or phone poetry; cf. Gutenberg, 1987), seem to be cognates to more spontaneously produced forms, such as private messages, institutional messages, introductory service messages, or telephone advertisement.

The conventions we described hold for messages on private answering machines. A cursory analysis of the institutional messages in our corpus suggests a more rigid standardization. Thus, one may assume that variations in the message patterns are related to variations in the ‘social structure’ and in the social setting in which the machine is located. For instance, messages left on a ‘message introductory service’ are patterned in specific ways: by being oriented toward constituting possibly relationships, they accomplish the activity of self-presentation rather than relating.³⁷

If and how these and other technologically prompted conventions (such as voice mail, touch tone phone paths, telephone advertisement, or electronic mail) constitute and constrain social relationships and the corresponding social-structural, class, and gender variations (cf. Hall, 1991) in message patterning remains to be explored by further research.

Notes

1. Only recently, after our work on this data, two articles on this topic have been published (Gold, 1991; Dingwall, 1992).
2. Schegloff (1979: 25), for instance, points out that ‘talk people do on the phone is not fundamentally different from the other talk they do’.
3. ‘Absent’ here means non-copresent. That is, the recipient is not participating in the phone call, even if he or she may be listening to the message.
4. On reciprocity, one-sidedness, immediacy and mediacy, cf. Schutz and Luckmann (1991).
5. Recordings of voice on tape as a substitute for letters (cf. Sayad, 1985) differ significantly

from messages, in that the tape can be edited and manipulated in various ways by the producers, thus defeating the very purpose of a tape: that of being a life-time recording.

6. One important variable is the distribution of and familiarity with answering machines. In 1986, the number of households equipped with an answering machine was 17% in the US, but only 3% in Germany; a more rapid growth rate has been observed in the US (cf. Lange and Beck, 1989).
7. There are at least 35 recorded calls to any one of the machines. Two hundred and seventy-six messages have been transcribed in some detail and these constitute the corpus for our analysis. Most of the calls were in American English, 33 in German, 17 in Italian, 14 in Spanish, 2 in Chinese, 1 in Galician, and 1 in French. In the transcriptions, we have changed all phone numbers and all names of persons, cities, and institutions, always trying to preserve the original rhythmic and syllabic structure.
8. Even in message length differences can hardly be found. On average, the messages consist of 68 words, but they range from a significant number of short messages (10–50 words, peak at 35) to a medium length (60–100 words, peak at 65) to relatively long messages of 100 words or more (up to 300 and 400 words). It must be noted that the message length does not differ significantly from that of regular telephone calls, 30% of which last less than 30 seconds, and 50% less than one minute (cf. Mayer, 1977: 228).
9. As Rammert (1990) points out, the diffusion of the telephone and its corresponding innovations shows significant differences between the USA on the one hand and Germany, Great Britain and France, on the other.
10. As an example, Americans and Italians use different voicing devices. Yet both groups use such devices to segment talk. (See section 3 below.)
11. In Schank and Abelson’s (1977) definition, a script is ‘a standard sequence of events that describes a situation’ (quoted in Brown and Yule, 1989: 243). Following this definition, scripts are less structures text than structures of action sequences as mirrored in a text which describes or reconstructs them (Shank and Abelson, 1977: 67–68).
12. The outgoing messages in our material varied but this variation did not have any significant effect on the main structure and length of the incoming messages — except for the presence of some optional elements (see below).
13. Wojcik (1987–1988: 90) also found that 74% of the messages analyzed requested callers to leave more information than just a message, e.g., the caller’s name, phone number and/or message; name, number, and time of call and/or day of the week; to state ‘the business’ or to leave an ‘embarrassing story’, etc.
14. Other ellipses may affect the frame as in
[22] Hi Ricki, Milvia, returning your call again
15. The voice-probe can be found in American English, Italian, German, and Spanish, and all different forms can be found among Americans familiar with answering machines, as well as among European overseas callers who are less acquainted with such answering machines.
16. (51) hhhh HI:; this is Herb Hancock,
I am calling for Laurie Anderson
= if she’s back in the country;; ehm ...
17. Schegloff (1979) uses the term ‘switchboards’ (in the case of interactive phone calls) if the caller assumes that they are addressing someone other than they are talking to or assume that they are talking to.
18. Note, for instance, the telephone industry’s stress on the ‘right’ voice (Barron, 1991).
19. As Gumperz (1982: 104) points out, prosodic and paralinguistic cues help ‘select ...

- among a variety of possible interpretations by directing the listener among shades of meaning inherent in the semantic range of words used'.
20. Native speakers of American English perceived a difference between a 'whiskey voice' and a seductive voice, in which vowels are more lengthened and more interspersed outbreaths are produced.
 21. In our data no message shows a rising juncture in the closing salutation, generally called here 'Bye-bye's (which include 'Good bye', 'Hasta luego', 'Adios', 'dios', 'Ciao', etc.).
 22. Numbers are typically delivered in several iambic feet, composed of pairs of shorter, unstressed (-) and longer, stressed digits (v-), preceded by shorter (/) or longer (//) pauses, and including an initial truncated foot:

my number is /9/99//99/99 (-/v-/v-/v-)
 area code /9/99//9/99//99//99 (-/v-/v-/v-/v-)

Intonational modulation varies. We have registered basically a quite flat contour, and a highly modulated, 'singsong' contour, formed by a succession of pitches and lows. These patterns, of course, may be culture-specific (cf. Sifianou, 1989: 532–533 on the differences in the delivery of phone numbers in England and Greece).

23. These are not to be confused with the opening greetings of regular phone conversations, delivered in a constantly rising pitch and also featuring, consequently, a rising juncture:

o
 o
 ll
 e
 h

24. In the following example, it is a click, cooccurring with a singsong contour (line 4), that bounds a rhythmic, 'postcard-like' closing with rhymes in [ey]; the leave-taking section itself (line 8) is preceded by a pause:

(52)

- 1 ... if you have time to get there that would be great;
- 2 otherwise I don't know:: (.) I = don't = know:::
- 3 I'd think (we'd have) so.
- 4 [click] [singsong] Anyway:::
- 5 hope yo're doing okay::
- 6 and you had a good time yesterday,
- 7 and I look forward to seeing you later on today.
- 8 (.) Bye = bye now.

25. This structure consists of a) caller's identification (including numbers, institutional location, etc.), b) 'message' and c) what we could again call activity, mostly multiple choice boxes saying 'will call again', 'returned call', 'wants to see you' or only 'phoned'.
26. For instance: 'Allora:: [click] à bientôt. Ciao' (7), 'Okay = see you later [aspirated:] 'bye' (53), 'danke, Tschüss' (54).
27. Replications do not differ from what could occur in interactional phone calls, like '... and all that shit. hh the (trip) too. Ciao. Bye' (44).
28. The principle of tagging requests is very much in consonance with politeness rules (cf. Brown and Levinson, 1978), as the more detailed the request, the more face-threatening its potentiality is.

29. Notice how this structure disallows final sequences such as 'Bye. Thanks. Okay?', never registered in our data.
30. (55) I will assume that you are working hard and having fun. (hhhhhhh)
31. (56)
 - 1 [hi] Hi Myra and Carine it's George;
 - 2 ehm I am calling to say HI and how you guys are doing, (.)
 - 3 I hope Justine got he:r; ehm paper in (by) two. (.)
 - 4 So [hi] give me a call,
 - 5 if you guys want.
 - 5 It's Friday afternoon and I am just hanging out. (-)
 - 6 [click] So. [singsong] Take care hope you're okay Myra,
 - 7 (1.0) ehm [singsong] bye bye,
32. From the foregoing analyses we can assert that these projections are set apart from other elements in a special way. With respect to (48) one could expect that these differences could be grasped by the notion of speech act, as Carina is here formulating what she is doing. Often, however, the 'reason' or the purpose of the call is not part of a formulation but, rather, implicit or produced by means of other elements.
33. Given a high degree of intimacy between caller and callee, these elements can 'sink' down to the level of unexpressed presuppositions, just as caller-identification can be presupposed through voice display alone.
34. In a similar vein, Schiffrin (1987: 202) draws the distinction between 'knowledge-based warrants' and 'inferences', and 'action-based motives' and 'actions', by means of 'because' and 'so', respectively.
35. One should not be misled by the labels. This is a usage of 'because' which actually refers to future actions as 'in order to' does. Schütz (1962) calls it the 'non-authentic because-motive'.
36. The ratio between calls and callers varies between 45 : 19 and 28 : 24, the latter comprising a series of postcard calls in the face of the callee's upcoming journey. The composition of the callers is comparable to what has been found about phone use in general: 40 to 50% address someone living within a two-mile range: 50% calls go to five numbers only, and an average household calls about 25 numbers in one month; cf. Mayer (1977: 226–227).
37. Hall (1991) shows that there gender variation exists, particularly on the lexical level, in messages left on telephone personal ads.

References

- Atkinson, M. (1982). Understanding formality: The categorization and production of 'formal interaction'. *British Journal of Sociology* 1: 86–117.
- Auer, P. (1990). Rhythm in telephone closings. *Human Studies* 13: 361–392.
- Ball, D.W. (1968). Toward a sociology of telephones and telephone users. In *Sociology of Everyday Life*, M. Truzzi (ed.), 59–75. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Barron, J. (1991). Voices of voice mail. Mix song and software. *New York Times* 1/28.
- Brown, P. and Levinson, S. (1978). Universals in Language use: Politeness phenomena. In *Questions and Politeness*, E. Goody (ed.), 56–311. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, G. and Yule, G. (1989). *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Clark, H.W. and French, J.W. (1981). Telephone goodbyes. *Language in Society* 10: 1–19.
- Dingwall, S. (1992). Leaving telephone answering machine messages: Who's afraid of speaking to machines? *Text* 12(1): 81–101.
- Fielding, G. and Hartley, P. (1987). The telephone: A neglected medium. In *Studies in Communication*, A. Cashdan and M. Jordin (eds.), 110–124. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Forschungsgruppe Telefontelefonkommunikation (ed.) (1989). *Telefon und Gesellschaft: Beiträge zu einer Soziologie der Telefontelefonkommunikation*. Berlin: Spiess.
- Gold, R. (1991). Answering machine talk. *Discourse Processes* 4: 243–260.
- Gumperz, J. (1982). *Discourse Strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gutenberg, N. (1987). 'An alle Fernsprechteilnehmer.' Sprachwissenschaftliche Anmerkungen zum Telefonieren. In *Medienkommunikation: Vom Telefon zum Computer*, H. Geissner and R. Roesner (eds.), 11–28. Frankfurt: Scriptor.
- Hall, K. (1991). The word made flesh: Presentation of self in the personals. Unpublished ms., University of California at Berkeley, Department of Linguistics.
- Hanks, W. (1989). Text and textuality. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18: 95–127.
- Heritage, J.H. (1984). A change-of-state token and aspects of its sequential placement. In *Structures of Social Action*, J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds.), 299–345. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hoerning, K.H. (1988). Technik im Alltag und die Widersprüchlichkeit des Alltäglichen. In *technik im Alltag*, B. Joerges (ed.), 51–94. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Lange, U. and Beck, K. (1989). Mensch und Telefon. In *Telefonieren*, J. Becker (ed.), 139–154. Marburg: Jonas.
- Levinson, S.C. (1979). Activity types and language. *Linguistics* 17: 365–399.
- Luckmann, Thomas (1989). Prolegomena to a social theory of communicative genres. *Slovene Studies* 11: 159–166.
- Mayer, Martin (1977). The telephone and the uses of time. In *The Social Impact of the Telephone*, I. de S. Pool (ed.), 225–245. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- McLuhan, Marshall (1965). *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Murray, Denise E. (1988). The context of oral and written language: A framework for mode and medium switching. *Language in Society* 17: 351–373.
- Pomerantz, A. (1981). Telling my side: Limited access as a fishing device. *Sociological Inquiry* 50: 186–198.
- Rammert, W. (1990). Telefon und Kommunikationskultur. Akzeptanz und Diffusion einer Technik im Vier-Länder-Vergleich. *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 42(1): 20–40.
- Reid, A.A.L. (1977). Comparing telephone with face-to-face-contact. In *The Social Impact of the Telephone*, I. de S. Pool (ed.), 386–414. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Roth, J.A. and M.E.R. Lepionka (1973). The telephone answering service as a communication barrier: A research note. *Urban Life and Culture* 2(1): 105–112.
- Sacks, H. and Schegloff, E.A. (1979). Two preferences in the organization of reference to persons in conversation and their interactive organization. In *Everyday Language: Studies in Ethnomethodology*, G. Psathas (ed.), 15–21. New York: Irvington.
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E.A. and Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language* 50: 696–735.
- Sayad, A. (1985). Du message oral au message sur cassette, la communication avec l'absent. *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 59: 61–72.
- Schank, R. and Abelson, R. (1977). *Scripts, Plans, Goals, and Understanding: An Inquiry into Human Knowledge Structures*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1972). Sequencing in conversational openings. In *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication*, J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (eds.), 346–80. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- (1979). Identification and recognition in telephone conversation openings. In *Everyday Language: Studies in Ethnomethodology*, G. Psathas (ed.), 23–78. New York: Irvington.
- Schiffrin, D. (1987). *Discourse Markers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schütz, A. (1962). Choosing among projects of action. In *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality*, 69–72. The Hague: Nijhoff.
- Schütz, A. and Luckmann, T. (1991). *Structures of the Life World II*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Sifianou, M. (1989). On the telephone again! Differences in telephone behaviour: England versus Greece. *Language in Society* 18: 527–544.
- Wojcik, Daniel (1987–1988). 'At the sound of the beep': An analysis of the structure and traditional speech forms of answering machines. *Folklore and Mythology Studies* 11: 81–103.

Celso Alvarez-Caccamo is currently a Visiting Professor in the Department of Linguistics and Literary Theory at the University of Corunha, Galiza (Spain). He holds a Ph.D. in Sociolinguistics from the University of California, Berkeley (1991). His interests include the interpretive study of talk as a both material and symbolic space for the construction of situated authority. He has worked on the interplay between discourse, power, and ideology in political-institutional settings in bilingual Galiza.

Hubert Alfons Knoblauch is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Konstanz, FRG. His research interests center on the sociology of knowledge, religion, and on communicative action, especially genres in everyday communication.