

Who knows what and who has the rights to know it?

Knowledge and reality construction in interaction.

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Abstract

Knowledge has been at the centre of philosophical and scientific enquiry for centuries. It remains a topic of central importance in psychology. The current thesis examined how knowledge was managed and treated as relevant by speakers in social interaction in situ. Complaint calls to a dispute resolution telephone helpline service were studied using discursive psychology and conversation analysis as theoretical and methodological frameworks. The thesis focused on how knowledge was implicated in the accomplishment of the institutional task of jointly establishing the facts of the complaint. In particular, the research examined how the issues of ‘who knows what’ and ‘who has the rights to know it’ were demonstrably relevant for speakers in these interactions. The empirical work focused on two types of question-answer sequences. In cases where some requested information was not forthcoming or not immediately provided, callers’ conduct displayed their orientations to a normative expectation that they knew what was asked for and that they had an obligation to provide it. A second set of cases was a collection of declarative requests for confirmation. The different types of responses to such questions were described. It was proposed that the responses could be placed along a continuum, by the extent to which they asserted a caller’s epistemic rights to knowledge about the relevant information. The thesis contributed to existing research by drawing together recent conversation analytic work on epistemics as a domain of organization in social interaction, and more established discursive psychological work on reality construction. The thesis highlighted the practical nature of knowledge, as it was relevant for accomplishing a key institutional task, and other actions, in telephone-mediated dispute resolution.

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Introduction and Literature Review

“Socrates: Herein lies the difficulty which I can never solve to my satisfaction- What is knowledge? Can we answer that question?”- *Theaetetus*, Plato, 360BC (2001).

Socrates pondered the nature of knowledge; a question that continued to puzzle philosophers over the ensuing centuries. Epistemology, or the study of knowledge, has sought to explore what we know, and how we know it. Philosophical questions have become topics of empirical enquiry. Such was the case with the present thesis, which examined how speakers made knowledge relevant for practical purposes in social interaction. The philosopher Descartes viewed the mind as a self-enclosed internal entity operating separately from the body (*Cartesian dualism*; Descartes, 1637/1957). Cognitive psychology later extended upon Cartesian dualism to investigate the internal psychological processes of the mind, especially in regard to knowledge (Prilleltensky, 1994). Knowledge has been defined in psychology as an internal cognitive representation of some ‘thing’ and remains a topic of central importance (Grimm, 2014).

A different way of studying knowledge emerged, and has continued, with the research approach of *situated cognition*. This approach acknowledges that it is not possible to look inside the head and observe these internal representations and, as such, it is more productive to examine how cognitive matters such as knowledge are distributed within and across settings (Grimm, 2014; Hutchins, 1995). Situated cognition conceptualizes knowledge in three distinct ways (Robbins & Aydede, 2009). First, the cognitive is embodied. That is, matters such as knowledge are constituted through our physical actions. Cognitive matters are also embedded within our situated environment and are relevant through our interaction with

the environment. Finally, cognitive matters are extended out of the confines of our mind and into the wider world (Robbins & Aydede, 2009). The approach of situated cognition acknowledges that matters such as knowledge are implicated in and through our interactions and behaviour in socially situated environments.

A prime example of a ‘socially situated’ activity is social interaction between people in the form of *talk-in-interaction* (Schegloff, 1987). Talk-in-interaction is a term that recognises that talk occurs in interaction with other semiotic modalities to accomplish intersubjective understanding and communication (Schegloff, 2007)¹. The current research drew inspiration from situated cognition and examined how knowledge was made relevant and oriented to by speakers in situated talk-in-interaction (i.e. *in situ*). The thesis adopted the theoretical and methodological frameworks of discursive psychology and conversation analysis and examined knowledge as a psychological topic in talk-in-interaction. The following sections describe discursive psychology and conversation analysis in more detail and situates the research within these approaches.

Theoretical and methodological framework

Discursive psychology

Discursive psychology originated from the early work of Potter and Wetherell (1987) in their book *Discourse and Social Psychology*, which presented a distinctively qualitative approach to the study of social psychology. *Discourse and Social Psychology* was part of the ‘discursive turn’, a wider intellectual movement in psychology that promoted an alternative to traditional social and cognitive theorising of internal psychological processes to instead examine psychological matters in talk and texts (Potter, 2012). Discursive psychology was initially a methodological approach itself, examining talk and texts as objects of study in their

¹ Semiotic modalities are the various means through which we communicate in interaction. These include, but are not limited to, talk, gesture, gaze and body orientation (Goodwin, 2007).

own right. However, over time, it has evolved in different ways, one of which has been as a broader framework for the psychological study of social interaction.

Discursive psychology studies how speakers orient to and make psychological matters and topics relevant in talk-in-interaction (Wiggins & Potter, 2008). Psychological matters are examined in three ways in discursive psychology. First, traditional psychological topics are respecified for how they are accomplished in interaction (Edwards & Potter, 2005). For example, Potter (1998) respecified attitudes as the stances speakers displayed in their talk toward some person or 'thing'. Discursive psychology can also investigate how psychological terms, such as "want" (Childs, 2012) and "know" (Weatherall, 2011) are used for particular interactional purposes. Finally, discursive psychology can investigate the implicit ways that psychological issues figure in social interaction (Edwards & Potter, 2005).

Within discursive psychology, language, and especially talk, is considered to be the primary vehicle for action and understanding in human social life (Wiggins & Potter, 2008). Edwards and Potter (2001) outlined three core assumptions of talk in discursive psychology. First, talk is situated within sequences of interaction and generates its meaning in relation to these sequences. Talk also accomplishes action. It achieves things in interaction as mundane as requesting and complimenting. Finally, talk is constructed from specific linguistic units and is constructive of particular versions of reality.

Discursive psychology is a distinctive approach to studying human behaviour through its focus on action and an increasing use of conversation analysis to study social interaction in situ. Discursive psychology using conversation analysis examines audio and/or video recordings of everyday and institutional interaction as they would naturally occur (Wiggins & Potter, 2008).

A unique characteristic of discursive psychology using conversation analysis is that it takes talk itself as its object of study. Discursive psychology brackets off what goes on in

speakers' heads and instead respecifies cognitive and psychological matters as how they are displayed or managed by participants in interaction (Wiggins & Potter, 2008). Psychology has typically viewed talk as reflecting what people actually know or think. For example, the use of "I don't know" in talk could be assumed to indicate a person's lack of knowledge. However, in line with a discursive psychological framework, Weatherall (2011) examined a particular type of "I don't know" in talk-in-interaction. Weatherall showed that it was used for specific actions, including to mark a speaker's displayed lack of commitment to what came next in a turn. Thus, the focus in discursive psychology is on how psychological matters, such as knowledge (or lack thereof), are implicated in practical actions in talk-in-interaction; for example, to avoid committing to an assessment (Weatherall, 2011).

The present thesis drew upon discursive psychology as an established framework from which to examine the different ways that knowledge could be displayed and managed by speakers in talk-in-interaction. In particular, the thesis examined talk-in-interaction in situ and respecified knowledge for how it was used for, and implicated in, speakers' practical actions.

Conversation analysis

Conversation analysis is a methodology that originated in sociology from the work of Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson. It is now used across disciplines as diverse as anthropology (Clemente, 2014), linguistics (Fox, Thompson, Ford, & Couper-Kuhlen, 2014) as well as psychology (Potter & Edwards, 2014). Conversation analysis is widely considered to be the most rigorously empirical approach for studying talk-in-interaction (Potter & Te Molder, 2005).

The work of the sociologists Erving Goffman and Harold Garfinkel provided conversation analysis with some of its foundational assumptions. Goffman's work contributed to the assumption that social interaction exhibits order and is thus a legitimate

object of study (Heritage & Clayman, 2010). Garfinkel's work was important for the conversation analytic focus on the everyday practices that participants use to accomplish shared meaning making (Heritage, 1984b).

A key assumption in conversation analysis is that everyday conversation represents the “primordial site of human sociality” and social order (Schegloff, 1987, p.101). Thus, conversation analysis places central importance on everyday interaction. Institutional talk is also examined in conversation analysis, with the assumption that everyday conversation provides the foundations for how institutional interaction is accomplished (Heritage, 2005)². Conversation analytic research has discovered *generic domains of organization* in social interaction, which are orderly collections of practices and rules that organize a certain aspect of talk-in-interaction (Schegloff, 1999). These domains of organization and other interactional principles are outlined below because they are relevant for the empirical work of the thesis.

Organization of talk-in-interaction. In social interaction, talk normatively progresses sound-by-sound, unit-by-unit, turn-by-turn and sequence-by-sequence, which is the principle of *progressivity* (Schegloff, 2007). Progressivity is a fundamental feature of conversation. It concerns the temporally continuous nature of talk and how talk and sequences of action progress forward to completion (Schegloff, 2007). Progressivity underpins two domains of organization that structure basic features of social interaction; turn-taking and sequence organization³.

Turn-taking organization. The turn-taking model for everyday conversation described by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) documented the practices and rules

² The conversation analytic approach to institutional interaction is described in chapter two.

³ Repair is another domain of organization that concerns the practices and rules speakers use to manage problems of understanding and production of talk in conversation. Repair is not discussed in this section as it was not relevant to the analysis.

speakers use in conversation to construct and take turns of talk and to speak at the right time. Turns of talk are constructed from various turn constructional units (TCUs). These include words (*lexical* TCUs), phrases (*phrasal* TCUs) and sentences (*sentential* TCUs). At or near the end of each TCU is a transition-relevant place, where speakership change becomes potentially relevant. There are three ways that speakership change can be accomplished in conversation; a current speaker can select a next speaker, a current speaker can continue speaking, or a next speaker can self-select and begin talking (Sacks et al., 1974).

The smooth progression of an interaction occurs when turns of talk proceed and speakership change happens without disruption, that is, with no substantial silences or overlapping talk (Sacks et al., 1974). In contrast, the progressivity of an interaction can be disrupted when turns at talk cease or speakership change is problematic or non-forthcoming (Schegloff, 2007). Such breaches can be oriented to as potentially meaningful for speakers.

Sequence organization. A basic unit of sequence is the *adjacency pair*; two consecutive turns of talk by different speakers where the first turn launches an action and the second turn provides a response (Schegloff, 2007). These first turns are referred to as *first-pair-parts* and their answers as *second-pair-parts*. Adjacency pair sequences are the basic building blocks for accomplishing social actions in talk, such as invitations and requests (Schegloff, 2007)⁴.

Conditional relevance is a concept crucial to sequence organisation and progressivity. It refers to how first-pair-parts make second-pair-parts relevant in order to complete a sequence of action (Schegloff, 2007). The failure to provide a conditionally relevant second-pair-part can be a noticeable and accountable matter for speakers, especially recipients, in interaction (Schegloff, 2007). Therefore, *sequential progressivity* occurs when a

⁴Sequences can be expanded beyond these base adjacency pairs using various expansion practices (see Schegloff, 2007).

conditionally relevant second-pair-part is provided. The progression of a sequence can be disrupted when a response is not immediately forthcoming or not provided at all. Sequential progressivity and the smooth progression of an interaction can be interdependent. For example, in the data examined in this thesis, the progression of an interaction could be disrupted when some relevant information (a second-pair-part) was not provided.

The progression of talk, sequences and the interaction as a whole is the normative state of affairs in conversation (Schegloff, 2007). Research has established that there is a *preference* for progressivity in interaction (e.g. Stivers & Robinson, 2006). Preference is discussed in detail later, but for now it is sufficient to note that the conversation analytic concept of preference does not refer to the psychological preference of speakers. Rather, preference is an aspect of the structural and sequential organization of conversation (Schegloff, 2007). The preference for progressivity is shown through speakers being mutually oriented to it as a normative principle in interaction. For example, silences and overlapping talk that breach the preference for progressivity are inspected by speakers in interaction for what they might mean (Schegloff, 2007).

Epistemics in conversation analysis

Epistemics is a recently established domain of organization structuring talk-in-interaction. Conversation analytic research on epistemics has focused on how speakers display, claim and manage matters of knowledge in conversation (Heritage, 2014). A central notion in this research is that of *territories of knowledge*; the idea that certain speakers have superior access and rights to certain domains of knowledge (Kamio, 1997). Therefore, a speaker can treat another as having the *primary rights and entitlements* to know particular ‘things’ because this information is within the latter’s *epistemic domain* (Heritage & Raymond, 2005). For example, Edwards (2007a) noted that in the context of telephone helpline services, institutional representatives were treated by callers as having primary rights

to know the various institutional policies and procedures. Relatedly, callers were treated as having primary rights to their own personal feelings, thoughts and experiences. Research on epistemics has also aimed to document the various practices used by speakers to manage these territories of knowledge in talk (Heritage, 2014).

In a landmark study on the ways that epistemic matters are treated as relevant in talk, Heritage and Raymond (2005) examined how speakers managed the rights to make an assessment. For example, managing who had the right to assess a child's behaviour. A speaker who made a first assessment, because of the nature of its positioning, displayed some rights to be able assess the matter at hand. However, sometimes in conversation a speaker may not have the primary rights to some matter because the information is from another person's epistemic domain (Heritage, 2014). Heritage and Raymond (2005) documented the various practices that respondents who had primary rights to an assessed matter, such as a child's mother, used to re-establish their rights and entitlements despite producing a second assessment. Assessments are just one of many actions in conversation where speakers treat the issues of 'who knows what' and 'who has the rights to know it' as relevant. Questioning in talk-in-interaction has received perhaps the greatest attention from conversation analytic research on epistemics (Heritage, 2012b). Such research has highlighted the importance of the concepts of *epistemic status* and *stance*.

Epistemic status refers to the pre-existing rights of a speaker, as oriented to by others, in relation to a particular domain of knowledge (Heritage, 2012a). For example, doctors are treated as having primary rights to medical knowledge (Lindström & Weatherall, 2015). Epistemic stance relates to how speakers display and claim knowledge in their turns of talk (Heritage 2012a). In this thesis, speakers claiming or displaying a higher epistemic stance or status are referred to as *K+* speakers (i.e. 'more knowledgeable'). Whereas those claiming or displaying a lower epistemic stance or status are referred to as *K-* speakers. In this thesis,

question-answer sequences were studied for how speakers managed epistemic matters and because of this the relevant concepts are reviewed below.

Questions in conversation

Questions are formatted in many ways in conversation. Polar questions are those that project either “yes” or “no” as a response. They can be formatted as declaratives, as shown in 1.1 below^{5,6}.

(1.1)
EGCC2015-002
CON: and the account's in your name?

Polar questions can also be formatted as interrogatives, which involve the grammatical inversion of the subject and auxiliary/verb (Jespersen, 1964), as demonstrated in 1.2 below⁷.

(1.2)
EGCC2015-001
CON: have you got you:r um cus:tomer number with bluetower

Finally, questions can also be formatted as content or “wh-” questions, as shown below.

(1.3)
EGCC2015-017
CON: .hh and whe:n: did the invoice come.

In all of the above extracts, the question was asked from a K- position. However, different question formats can display different epistemic stances of questioners relative to respondents, as shown in figure 1.1 below. In the content and interrogative questions, the questioner was positioned as claiming relatively little knowledge. In contrast, the declarative question positioned the questioner as claiming more knowledge than the “wh-” and

⁵ Throughout the thesis, the turns of interest in the extracts are indicated in boldface.

⁶ The formatting used for the extracts in this thesis is described in Appendix A. The transcription conventions used in the extracts are presented in Appendix B. Shorter examples, as in (1.1), are presented without line numbers.

⁷ It is important to note that polar questions do not invariably make a simple “yes” or “no” relevant as responses. For example, in example 1.2, the projected “yes” response would be incomplete as it would not provide the information being requested.

interrogative format questions. Heritage (2012a) also noted that a question's design and epistemic stance display different *epistemic gradients*.

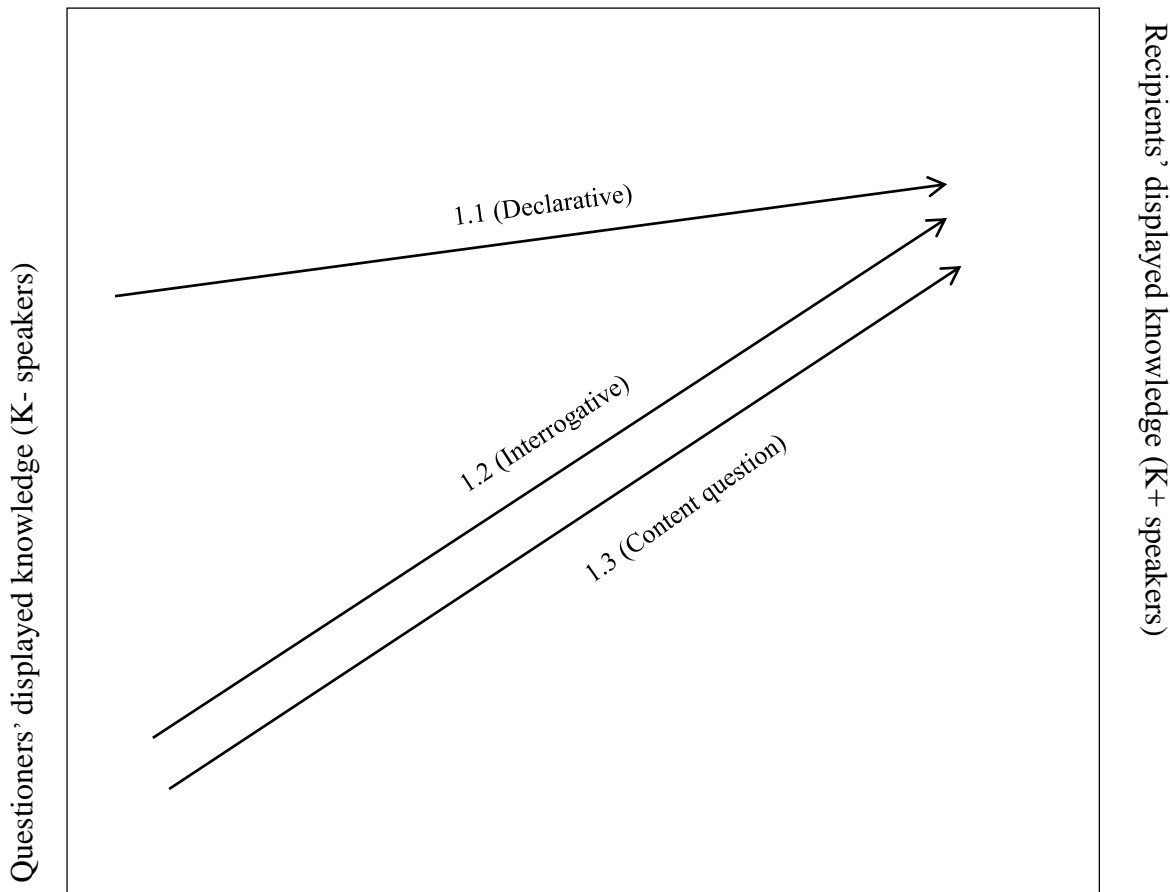


Figure 1.1. The different epistemic gradients of different question formats (Adapted from Heritage & Raymond, 2012).

The figure above showed the different epistemic gradients of the different question formats. The declarative positioned the questioner as having a relatively equal epistemic stance to the recipient, and thus having some degree of rights to the matter at hand. Conceptually, the question inferred a relatively shallow epistemic gradient between speakers. As such, the declarative question displayed a relative *epistemic symmetry* between speakers. In contrast, the other formats positioned the questioners as having lower epistemic stances to the recipients and set up steep epistemic gradients between them. Therefore, the other

questions inferred a relative *epistemic asymmetry* between questioners and recipients. In sum, a declarative question presents a description of some matter as shared knowledge, albeit within a recipient's epistemic domain, and confirmation is relevant as a response (Sidnell, 2012).

Questions also contain assumptions (Hayano, 2014). Consider the declarative request for confirmation below.

Extract 1.1:

EGCC2015-009:

01 CON: (and/ehm) [for fifteen]months you=
 02 CAL: [U::m]
 03 CON: =were o::n (.) low user

The question displayed the assumption that the recipient was on an electricity plan for a certain length of time, “fifteen months” and that it was a “low user” plan. Responses to questions accept and/or contest these assumptions, in addition to other constraints and preferences imposed on them.

Preference and responses in conversation

A response has multiple constraints and preferences imposed upon it by a prior question (Lee, 2014). In the earlier description of preference, it was noted that the concept is not a psychological one but a structural one (Schegloff, 2007). Although preferences exist in relation to a range of conversational phenomena, the current discussion is restricted to the preference organization of responses. First-pair-parts make second-pair-parts relevant, but speakers display that some types of responses are prioritised over others (Potter, 1996). A preferred response furthers the progression of, or aligns with, the action implemented by a first-pair-part (Schegloff, 2007). Examples of preferred responses include accepting an invitation and providing information when requested. In contrast, dispreferred responses block the realisation of, or do not progress, the actions implemented by first-pair-parts (Schegloff, 2007). Dispreferred responses include declining an invitation or not providing

some requested information. Preferred responses are usually delivered immediately or shortly after a first-pair-part and are simple and to the point, whereas dispreferred responses are often characterised by delayed provision, perturbations, accounts and other features that display a speaker's orientation to their dispreferred status (Schegloff, 2007).

The various preferences and constraints imposed on a response are primarily the result of a question's design. A first level of preference relates to questions making certain types of responses relevant (Schegloff, 2007). Responses should match the action of a first-pair-part. For example, a request for information makes provision of information relevant as a response rather than a greeting. A second level of preference is for a response to conform to the format made relevant by the question's design (Raymond, 2003). For example, a "where" question makes a location relevant as an answer and polar questions usually make a simple "yes" or "no" relevant as responses.

Another level of preference that is crucial to the thesis is that polar questions are also often designed in such a way that projects the expectation of either "yes" or "no" as a response (Raymond, 2003). A positively formulated question prefers "yes" as a response. A negatively formulated question, such as "you didn't...", prefers a "no" response. Crucially, a response to a polar question that matches the grammatical form projected by the first-pair-part is termed a *type-conforming* response. Type-conforming responses accept the design, action and assumptions of questions and do not treat them as problematic (Raymond, 2003). A response that departs from the form projected by the question is termed a *non-type-conforming* response (Raymond, 2003). A common example of a non-type-conforming response is "I don't know", which does not directly answer a question (i.e. a *non-answer*) but also provides a displayed lack of knowledge as an account for why the relevant response was not given (Beach & Metzger, 1997; Schegloff, 2007).

A final preference operating on a response is for the answer to agree with the claim contained in the question (Sacks, 1987). The discussion of response formats and preferences is necessary to situate the analysis in chapter five. Specifically, it is important to highlight that a declarative request for confirmation makes confirmation, in the form of either “yes” or “no” as a type-conforming response, relevant as a second-pair-part.

A non-type-conforming response contests the design, action and assumptions (i.e. different aspects) of a polar question. Previous research has referred to such responses as “pushing back” on, or “resisting” parts of questions. However, in this thesis, these responses are referred to as *adjusting* aspects of questions. As an example, Stivers and Hayashi (2010) identified the practice of *transformative answers* as a way of adjusting the design of a prior question. A transformative answer was a non-type-conforming response that transformed a prior question in some way. For example, in one of their cases, a speaker asked “is Boston close from New York”, to which a recipient answered, “...it’s about four hours by car” (extract five, p.5.). Stivers and Hayashi argued that such an answer retrospectively transformed the question as asking about absolute distance between the cities rather than relative closeness.

Conversation analytic research has shown that epistemic matters are relevant for speakers in question-answer sequences. Such research has not usually focused on responses to specific types of questions. Rather, it has examined how responses to a range of questions manage epistemic matters (e.g. Stivers, 2005; Stivers & Hayashi, 2010). A relative gap exists in the literature as to how epistemic matters are managed in declarative question-answer sequences, where speakers’ epistemic stances are relatively equal. Discursive psychology has approached knowledge and epistemic matters in a different manner, focusing on how speakers construct versions of reality in talk.

Reality construction in discursive psychology

One way that discursive psychology has studied epistemic matters is through *reality construction*. Potter's (1996) work documented the different ways that descriptions were used by speakers to construct various versions of reality in talk-in-interaction. Descriptions are used in the service of actions, such as to construct some matter as a complaint. One way that speakers do this is by using extreme case formulations; descriptions such as "never" or "always" that construct the extreme nature of something (Pomerantz, 1986). Extreme case formulations can describe a matter in 'extreme' negative terms and thus work some issue up as legitimate enough to complain about (Pomerantz, 1986). Epistemic matters are implicated in descriptions and reality construction in several ways, including who is entitled to particular types of knowledge.

One notion from discursive psychology is that of *category entitlements*; the idea that speakers treat others as being entitled to know certain information, feel certain emotions and have access to certain experiences, based on their memberships of particular social categories (Potter, 1996). The notion of category entitlements closely parallels the conversation analytic concepts of territories of knowledge and epistemic status. Speakers can invoke or infer these entitlements in conversation as a way of legitimising their descriptions as 'true'.

Discursive psychology has also examined the rhetorical practices speakers use to construct a version of reality as factual or objective (Edwards, 2007b). For example, a speaker can present corroborating evidence from another person in order to work up the objectivity of a complaint (Potter, 1996). Furthermore, discursive psychology has documented the ways that speakers construct particularly 'interested' versions of reality. In other words, research has focused on how speakers display or manage their subjective stances towards some matter (Edwards, 2005). With regards to complaining, Drew (1998) noted that speakers could explicitly describe their 'negative affect' in order to work up the significance

and complainability of another person's conduct toward them. By displaying a negative stance toward the matter, speakers make their versions of reality recognizable as complaints.

Reality construction is central to complaining as an action in conversation.

Complaining in talk-in-interaction is a moral action involving a speaker displaying a negative stance toward some complaint object, which can be a human or other entity (Edwards, 2005; Heinemann & Traverso, 2009). At its core, complaining involves speakers describing and constructing their complaints as negative versions of reality. Complaining was an action central to the interactions examined in this thesis.

The present thesis

The empirical work of the thesis drew upon conversation analysis and discursive psychology and examined how knowledge was managed and oriented to by speakers in calls to a dispute resolution helpline service. These calls involved members of the public (*callers*) contacting institutional representatives (*conciliators*) to complain about their electricity and gas service provision. Callers and conciliators displayed their orientations to the purpose of these calls as being to complain and seek a resolution.

In order to complain, callers described and constructed a negative version of reality to conciliators. A caller had the epistemic rights to, or K+ status over, the details of their problem⁸. The conciliator questioned the caller to establish the facts of the matter that were relevant for dispute resolution purposes. As such, the conciliator had K+ status over a different domain; the institutional requirements that had to be satisfied in order for the problem to be treated as a legitimate complaint. In questioning callers over some matters and

⁸ Throughout this thesis, 'they', 'their' and 'them' are used rather than 'his', 'her' or 'his/her' to refer to speakers of either sex in the singular or plural. Specifically, these terms are used when referring to singular specific callers (or conciliators), as well as singular callers in general (or conciliators). This stylistic decision was made to be consistent with the conversation analytic assumption that identities, such as gender, are only relevant if speakers orient to them as such. In contrast, in the interactions examined in this thesis, the identities of caller and conciliator were demonstrably relevant to the speakers (Heritage, 2005).

not others, conciliators further shaped and constructed an ‘official’ version of reality. Agreement from the caller about the official version of the complaint was needed for the process of dispute resolution to progress. Thus, these interactions involved a jointly accomplished construction of reality.

The analytic work reported in this thesis focused on two types of question-answer sequences where the facts of the complaint were jointly established and constructed as an official version of reality. Some normative dimensions of knowledge were found by examining request for information sequences. In declarative request for confirmation sequences, I documented the response formats used by callers and what they made visible about the epistemic rights of, and gradients between, speakers. In sum, the thesis showed that knowledge was central to the form of social interaction examined. Further, the research identified the various practices that callers and conciliators used to display and manage epistemic matters in their interactions in two specific types of question-answer sequences.

Thesis overview

The present chapter has outlined the theoretical and methodological frameworks of discursive psychology and conversation analysis. It has also reviewed how knowledge has been studied in these approaches, by highlighting research on epistemics and reality construction. The next chapter describes the interactional setting from where the data came. It also describes the conversation analytic approach to institutional interaction. Chapter three presents the methodology. Chapters four and five present the empirical work and findings of the thesis. The thesis concludes with a discussion of how the findings contribute to wider research.

The Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner Scheme and Institutional Talk

The research examined audio recordings of calls to the Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner Scheme (EGCC), which is a telephone-mediated dispute resolution helpline service. This chapter describes the setting and the approach of institutional conversation analysis. Relevant research on telephone-mediated helpline services and dispute resolution is also briefly reviewed.

The Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner Scheme

The EGCC was established in 2001 as an independent and neutral dispute resolution service that the New Zealand public can freely access to resolve disputes with their electricity and gas providers (Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner Scheme [EGCC], 2014). The EGCC is independent because it is a separate entity from the electricity industry and neutral, as it does not advocate directly for either customers or providers (EGCC, 2014). Every electricity and gas provider in New Zealand is legally required to register as a member of the scheme. A board of directors oversees the organization and the Commissioner. The latter oversees the employees of the Commission, including conciliators (EGCC, 2014). The primary way that the public access the EGCC is through its telephone helpline service.

Callers first contact the helpline service with their complaints or enquiries. An issue that the conciliator call-takers must establish in these initial calls is whether the complaint qualifies as a dispute to be investigated. A complaint must satisfy a variety of requirements in order to qualify for EGCC jurisdiction and then be able to be investigated by a conciliator. One requirement is that a caller first needs to have attempted to resolve the complaint with their provider. If 20 working days have passed since a caller's initial contact with their

provider and the complaint has not been resolved, then the EGCC can investigate the issue further (EGCC, 2014). Another practical task that must be jointly accomplished by speakers is to establish the facts of the complaint. Once it has been established that the complaint qualifies for EGCC jurisdiction, conciliators investigate the issue further. The investigation process includes, amongst other things, contacting and gathering further details from the caller's electricity provider. Resolution of the complaint is then attempted through various forms of dispute resolution between the interested parties. If no resolution is reached, the Commissioner can make a recommendation, which can be accepted by the disputants or taken to another legislative service such as the district court (EGCC, 2014).

Institutional talk in conversation analysis

The EGCC is an organization that offers a service and its conciliators have specific responsibilities and must complete certain institutional tasks. As such, it can be viewed as a particular institutional setting. Conversation analysis takes a distinctive approach to studying institutions, by viewing them as produced and oriented to by speakers in interaction (Schegloff, 1997b). In other words, the conversation analytic perspective is that institutions are 'talked into being' by speakers (Heritage & Clayman, 2010).

Institutional conversation analysis involves the application of findings and knowledge from research on ordinary conversation to understand institutional interaction and how it may differ from its mundane counterpart (Drew & Heritage, 1992)⁹. Heritage and Clayman (2010) noted three features that distinguish institutional talk from everyday conversation. First, speakers enact various institutional identities that are oriented towards achieving particular interactional goals. For example, speakers enacted the identity of conciliator by working towards accomplishing specific tasks, such as establishing whether a complaint satisfied

⁹ However, this link is also reciprocal, as research on institutional talk also contributes to an understanding of everyday conversation.

institutional jurisdiction. Second, in institutional interaction there are limits on what speakers can do in the interaction. In these interactions, only a conciliator could, and did, explicitly inform a caller of the institution's various functions and guidelines. Third, the interaction makes sense for participants because it occurs within an inferential framework that is tied to the particular setting. For example, callers and conciliators interacted within an inferential framework that allowed them to understand the calls as serving the purpose of complaining and attempting to gain some form of resolution.

Telephone-mediated helpline services and dispute resolution

The calls examined in this thesis were a form of technologically *mediated* interaction (i.e. occurring over the telephone). Callers and conciliators were engaged in telephone-mediated interaction, a uni-modal form of communication because only talk was involved (Hopper, 1992). In contrast to other forms of talk-in-interaction, in telephone calls both speakers are not together in the same situated environment and thus do not have visual access to one another (*non-co-present* interaction).

Telephone helplines are an important medium for people to do business and access customer services (Baker, Emmison, & Firth, 2005). Discursive psychology and conversation analysis have examined helplines offering services as diverse as counselling (Emmison & Danby, 2007) and birthing advice (Shaw & Kitzinger, 2007). Such research has provided a systematic understanding of many matters, including how various institutional tasks are accomplished, and how representatives enact the principles and policies of their particular institution in interaction (Edwards, 2007a).

Discursive psychology and conversation analysis have also provided an extensive understanding of how epistemic matters are relevant for speakers in helpline interactions. The tasks and activities done in helpline interactions can require callers to provide call-takers with descriptions of versions of reality. These are often consequential for institutional tasks to be

successfully accomplished. For example, Whalen and Zimmerman (1990) showed that the way descriptions were used to construct a version of an ‘emergency’ were crucial for the effective provision of lifesaving assistance in calls to emergency services. The current research also documented how speakers managed epistemic matters, descriptions and reality construction in their interactions.

Telephone helpline interactions can be characterized by an epistemic asymmetry, whereby each speaker is treated as having different rights and entitlements to different domains of knowledge (Edwards, 2007a). Institutional call-takers are treated as K+ speakers vis-à-vis the processes and guidelines of their particular institutions. Callers are treated as having primary rights over their own experiences and issues. As with the institutional setting, this epistemic asymmetry is not a pre-existing entity that affects the interaction. Rather, speakers orient to it as relevant in and for their interaction (Heritage & Clayman, 2010). Speakers can use various practices to manage this epistemic asymmetry in helpline interactions. For example, call-takers at a child helpline packaged advice in a question format, such as through “do you think you could talk to Maria?” (Butler, Potter, Danby, Emmison, & Hepburn, 2010). The question format managed the call-takers’ rights to provide advice whilst still displaying their orientation to the callers’ rights to their own issues and experiences. Understanding the ways that speakers negotiated their rights and responsibilities to knowledge was a key component of the empirical work of this thesis.

Telephone-mediated dispute resolution services, such as the EGCC, have only recently been studied despite their importance and frequent usage¹⁰. In calls to a helpline service for neighbour disputes, Stokoe (2009) investigated how callers used identity categories, such as age, in order to upgrade the complainability of their disputes. Similarly, this thesis also documented the practices that callers used to work up the complainability of

¹⁰ As an example, the EGCC handled 4,401 enquiries in 2014-2015 (EGCC, 2015).

their issues. Weatherall and Stubbe (2015) investigated the display and management of emotion in dispute resolution helpline services. It was found that when callers displayed emotion in the interactions, conciliators did not respond to the emotional aspects of the talk and instead moved to introduce other relevant institutional tasks. Weatherall (2015) examined the various ways that a dispute resolution helpline service's policy of neutrality was produced in interaction. One way this was done was through conciliators reading a pre-prepared statement of the organization's function in response to parts of callers' complaints that sought an affiliative response¹¹. Previous research approaches have focused on theoretical models of what occurs in dispute resolution interactions (Glenn & Kuttner, 2013). In contrast, the research outlined above has focused on how dispute resolution is done in situ.

Chapter overview

The current chapter has described the institutional setting examined in the thesis. Further, this chapter has situated the thesis within existing research on telephone helpline services and dispute resolution. The analytic work contributed to the emerging literature base on telephone-mediated dispute resolution and extended upon it by demonstrating how epistemic matters and reality construction were implicated in practical actions in telephone-mediated dispute resolution. The following chapter describes how the methodological approach was carried out in practice.

¹¹ An affiliative response is one that supports the stance of a prior turn (Stivers, 2008).

3

Methodology

The introductory chapter situated the thesis within discursive psychology and conversation analysis. The current chapter extends that discussion and describes how conversation analytic research is carried out in practice. It also provides details about the data and outlines how the analytic work was done.

Conversation analysis in practice

Data and transcription

Conversation analysis studies audio and video recordings of social interaction in situ. The use of recordings is a fundamental methodological feature of conversation analysis. It provides a physical record of the interaction that can be reinspected and replayed (Sacks, 1992), which alongside the sharing of the recordings amongst other researchers means that the validity of analytic claims can be checked against the raw data (Peräkylä, 2011).

Once the recorded interactions have been obtained, they are then transcribed using the Jeffersonian transcription system (Jefferson, 2004), which is considerably more detailed than the orthographic style typically used in interview research. Conversation analytic transcription is premised on the assumption that any level of detail is potentially consequential for how talk-in-interaction is accomplished (Mondada, 2007). Accordingly, conversation analytic transcripts capture the minutiae of talk including silences, pace and overlapping talk. Such a level of detail is not incidental. Rather, it reflects what participants may orient to as relevant (Mondada, 2007). For example, it has been shown that speakers that launch an invitation can orient to silences as short as two-tenths of a second as projecting a possible declination (Schegloff, 2007). Conversation analysis views the recorded interactions as the data and the transcripts as representations aiding in the analytic process (Mondada,

2007). Transcription is the first step in the analytic process and it is where potential phenomena are initially observed.

Analytic process

Conversation analysis is an inductive methodological approach that avoids the formulation of *a priori* research questions and hypotheses (Heritage & Clayman, 2010). The aim is to study talk-in-interaction through an “unmotivated examination” of the data (Schegloff, 1996, p. 172). The analytic process initially takes the form of repeated listening to, and viewings of, individual recordings alongside a close reading of the accompanying transcripts. Analysts undertake this process alone as well as in group data sessions with other researchers. During this process, an analyst identifies what participants are doing with their talk (Sidnell, 2014), with the goal being to establish the practices used to accomplish various social actions.

Participant orientations. Conversation analysis aims to identify, describe and make qualitative claims about normative interactional practices (Sidnell, 2014). As a result, conversation analytic research has tended to avoid the use of quantification and coding. This rejection of quantification and coding is based on the argument that it results in the aggregation of complex conversational practices to discrete categories and the loss of the rich interactional detail provided by a close conversational analysis (e.g. Schegloff, 1993). However, Stivers (2015) has argued that quantification and coding are appropriate, if used in adherence to the inductive principles of conversation analysis. Coding was avoided in this research and quantification was only used to calculate the number of cases in particular collections.

Conversation analysis has a participant-driven focus; studying what participants display as relevant in their talk (Heritage & Clayman, 2010). This grounded and participant-driven focus sets conversation analysis apart from some types of qualitative analysis that can

involve an analyst's interpretation of what is occurring and the imposition onto the data of a priori categories generated by the researcher (Schegloff, 1997b).

The *next turn proof procedure* is a methodological tool that allows analysts to identify what speakers orient to as relevant. It enables the analyst to make claims about “why that now?” (Schegloff, 1980, p. 147). In any episode of talk-in-interaction, speakers establish an understanding of why something is being done at a particular point in the interaction (i.e. why is that occurring now?). The next turn proof procedure is premised on the observation that in their responses (i.e. the next turn), speakers display what they understand the action of a prior turn to be (Sacks et al., 1974). The extract below is taken from one of the calls collected for the thesis and is used to show how the next turn proof procedure can be utilised in conversation analysis.

Extract 3.1:

EGCC2015-001:

01 CON: mch .hh have you got you:r um cus:tomers
02 number with blue[tower]
03 CAL: [.hhhh]
04 (0.8)
05 CAL: uh yes I can ge:t that

The conciliator's turn at line one was a question. However, the relevant action was a request. The evidence that the conciliator was making a request (as opposed to asking a question) was shown in the next turn, when the caller displayed their understanding of the turn as a request. The next turn proof procedure provides data internal evidence for any analytic claims that are made. Furthermore, it allows an analyst to ground those claims in participants' displayed understandings in situ.

Collection building. Conversation analysts utilise two primary methods to do their research and generate findings; single case analysis and building collections of phenomena. The present research employed the latter approach. Collections are assembled from corpora of recorded interactions. As each interaction in a corpus is examined, analysts may begin to

notice certain features and practices that recur across interactions. For example, Schegloff (1996) noticed that speakers would agree with another by repeating a prior turn.

Alternatively, analysts may become interested in how certain actions, such as complimenting, are accomplished in interaction. With either approach, researchers collect as many cases as possible that appear to resemble the phenomenon of interest (Schegloff, 1996). During this process, researchers formulate a general description of what constitutes a candidate case of the phenomenon (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). The description should take into account the phenomenon's positioning (within a turn or sequence), its linguistic composition and the action it accomplishes. As an example, the practice collected by Schegloff (1996) was described as a second turn in a sequence (the positioning), and that this turn was a verbatim repeat of the first (the composition). It was shown that one action accomplished by this practice was to confirm something that had been alluded to previously.

An aim of collection building is to ensure the generalizability of the phenomenon by showing that it occurs across a number of interactions in a corpus and across different forms of talk-in-interaction (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). In other words, the goal of this process is to show that the phenomenon is not unique to a speaker or an interactional setting.

Assembling a collection involves the analyst constantly comparing cases to each other, to see if they fit the description of a candidate case. Boundary cases are those that appear to be similar to the phenomenon of interest yet differ in some way (Schegloff, 1997a). These cases are important in delimiting the definition of what constitutes a candidate case and are ultimately excluded from the collection.

Some candidate cases that are included in the collection might depart in some way from the general functions of others in the collection (Peräkylä, 2011). These are *deviant cases* and are important for the analysis in two ways. First, these cases can provide support for the normative function of a phenomenon by showing instances of where this is violated

(Peräkylä, 2011). A clear example would be in a question-answer sequence, when the requisite answer is not provided and the question is repeated in the pursuit of a response (Schegloff, 2007). The pursuit of the response would provide further support for the claim about the normative preference for an answer to a question. Second, deviant cases can force a re-think of an analytic argument. In a classic example, Schegloff (1968) collected around 500 cases of telephone call openings and formed the initial argument that the “answerer speaks first” (p.1076). However, a single deviant case was found where a caller spoke first and thus the initial argument was reformulated to show how the summons-answer sequence governed call openings. Deviant case analysis provides a valuable way for researchers to establish the validity of their findings (Peräkylä, 2011).

The final product of this process is a collection of cases of an interactional practice accomplishing some social action with a detailed description of its composition, position and other relevant features (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). Conversation analysis uses collections to build a solid empirical knowledge base of how social interaction is structured and accomplished. The following section outlines the research undertaken for this thesis. The collections that formed the basis of the empirical work are also described.

Research procedure

Ethics and preliminary consultations

Ethical approval to undertake the research was granted by the Victoria University of Wellington School of Psychology Human Ethics Committee. Following this approval, preliminary consultations were undertaken with the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of the EGCC, in which their concerns and the practicalities of the research were addressed. Upon the EGCC granting approval, conciliators were informed of the project. Any conciliator who wished to participate in the study signed a consent form (attached in Appendix C). Participation was voluntary and conciliators could leave the study

at any point. Two brief site visits were undertaken prior to data collection, to gain a basic understanding of the function of the EGCC and the dispute resolution process.

Data

A corpus of 21 calls was collected for the thesis. The corpus included incoming calls to the helpline and outgoing calls made by conciliators. The corpus totalled 325 minutes of recorded interaction, with an average call lasting around 15 minutes. The size of the corpus was large enough to ensure that any single phenomenon of interest would recur frequently enough across interactions. Furthermore, the number of calls resulted in a manageable amount of transcription.

The thesis also utilised existing data that was collected for previous studies. The existing data was collected under the ethical approval of prior research and access was provided by my supervisor. The first existing corpus was comprised of 42 calls to the EGCC that were recorded in 2008 and were collected by Weatherall and Stubbe (2015). A corpus of 120 calls collected in 2011 from a similar Australian institution, the Electricity and Water Ombudsman of Victoria (EWOV), was also accessed. EWOV is the dispute resolution service for the energy and water industries in the Australian state of Victoria (see Dewar, 2011 for a full description). Both organizations are broadly comparable in their function and the types of issues they have jurisdiction over.

Recording calls

During the data collection period, a conciliator's workstation consisted of a desk, personal computer and desktop phone with an attached headset through which calls were taken. All participating conciliators were provided with telephone-recording adaptors to record their calls. The free online software programme Audacity was loaded onto conciliators' computers to create audio recordings of the calls. Calls were recorded from conciliators' telephones through the adaptor and into an audio file on the computer.

Conciliators were asked to record incoming and outgoing calls. The conciliators had to obtain verbal consent from callers for their calls to be recorded at the beginning or end of the conversation. If consent was obtained, the conciliator continued recording and saved the call as a digital file onto the computer. However, if consent was not obtained, the conciliator stopped recording and deleted any trace of the call from the computer. Calls were collected from the organization on a regular basis using a secure portable storage device. Recordings were stored in password-protected folders on a secure network server at Victoria University of Wellington.

Transcription and analysis

Calls were transcribed in Microsoft Word documents using the Jeffersonian conventions standard in conversation analytic research. Any identifying information uttered by speakers was removed from the audio recordings and replaced with white noise. Furthermore, pseudonyms were used in the transcripts for the purposes of anonymization.

In line with the inductive approach of conversation analysis, no specific research questions or hypotheses were formulated for this project. However, it would be naïve to state that the analysis was not influenced by my pre-existing knowledge of discursive psychology and conversation analysis. I attempted instead to approach the data with an open analytic mindset and was not interested beforehand in examining a particular feature of interaction.

The analytic process closely reflected what has been described throughout this chapter. I made extensive analytic notes whilst listening to the recordings, with an aim to identify phenomena that recurred across calls. Group data sessions with other researchers were also undertaken and were valuable for further developing and refining my analysis. The following section describes the collections that were built from these initial analytic observations.

Analytic focus

I compiled four collections of different phenomena based on my extensive analytic notes. However, only two of these collections are the focus of the forthcoming analysis. Cases were first collected from the corpora of EGCC calls. However, some cases from the EWOV corpus were also collected in order to increase the size of the collections and to further establish the generalizability of the phenomena.

Collection One: Disruptions to progressivity

On the whole, the calls examined progressed smoothly. However, sometimes observable disruptions to the progression of an interaction occurred. In some instances, callers used expressions such as “wait a second” and “hold on a minute” and accountings or informings, such as “I’ll get this out”, to anticipate some breach in the progression of the interaction. The first collection was formed from cases of these disruptions.

56 cases were initially collected and analysed. It was found that half of the cases occurred in response to requests for information initiated by the conciliator. An analysis of these cases is presented in chapter four.

Collection Two: Declarative request for confirmation sequences

A fundamental institutional task was for speakers to establish a joint understanding of the facts of the complaint. These facts could include details as diverse as a caller’s personal details and what actions had already been taken towards resolving the problem. One way the facts were established was through question-answer sequences. A key way that conciliators questioned callers was by using declarative requests for confirmation.

Declarative questions were formulated as grammatically complete statements. These questions presented some assumed, inferred or previously provided information for callers to

The response adjusted the approximation of a power bill's size in the prior question by further specifying its amount. Such responses were termed *adjusting answers* and were defined as those that adjusted some aspect of the prior question (e.g. the design or the assumptions). Adjusting answers were non-type-conforming responses to declarative requests for confirmation. As such, adjusting answers did not conform to the "yes" or "no" format projected by the question (Raymond, 2003). Non-answers such as "I don't know" and "I don't remember" were not included, along with any response that included a type-conforming token ("yes" or "no").

Chapter overview

The present chapter described the methodological approach of conversation analysis. It also explained how the data was collected and outlined the process that resulted in the collections that are analysed in the following chapters. The cases presented in the analytic chapters were selected as the clearest examples and because they were representative of the other instances in the collection.

Expectations and obligations: Normative dimensions of knowledge.

A crucial institutional task in the calls examined was for callers and conciliators to jointly establish the facts of the complaint for dispute resolution purposes. The current chapter examines request for information sequences as one place in the calls where this task was accomplished. These sequences involved conciliators requesting some information about the complaint from callers.

In requesting information, conciliators displayed their entitlement to ask such a question and displayed an expectation that callers would answer the question (Heritage & Raymond, 2012). The questions placed a normative pressure on callers to provide the requested information. On the whole, callers provided the information expected from them. When this occurred, the question-answer sequence and the interaction progressed. In contrast, the present chapter focuses on cases where some requested information was not immediately provided by callers. As a result, the relevance of a response was not satisfied and the progression of the interaction was disrupted.

The following analysis is structured around the different ways that callers worked to find and retrieve the information. The cases demonstrate that callers treated it as their normative obligation to provide information when it was requested.

Analysis

One way that callers found and retrieved some requested information was through what Levinson (1983) termed a *temporary interactional exit*. These involved callers temporarily leaving the interaction, to find some information, and then resuming it shortly after. In these cases, expressions such as “hold on a second” anticipated a disruption to the

progressivity of the interaction. They also functioned to initiate the temporary interactional exit.

Extract 4.1 shows the typical sequential environment where such expressions were used; after the conciliator asked for some specific information. In this case, the caller first displayed some uncertainty as to whether they had the requested information, before moving to find it.

Extract 4.1:

EWOV-242010:

```
01 CON: okay. .hh so on that bill is there an
02       actual supply:, (.) period?
03       (1.5)
04 CAL: u::m (0.5) I don't (0.2) thi:nk so °uh° can I check=
05       =can you [bear with me for a (    ) (please)]
06 CON:           [    sure                yeah    yep.    ]
07       (1.4)
08       ((receiver possibly down))
09       ((52.5 seconds of rustling, noise from television in
10       background, interspersed typing and possible
11       interference with receiver))
12 CAL: hhhello?
13 CON: yes:.
14 CAL: .hhh u::::m: well- (#mmghm# um) twenty second (of)
15       October two thousand and eight?
```

The question at line one requested confirmation that the information was on the bill. In conversation analysis, what a turn of talk is doing is established by the next turn proof procedure, where evidence of the action is found in what a speaker does in the next turn (Sidnell, 2014). In this case, the subsequent talk, “can I check?”, demonstrated that the caller treated the question as a request for information.

The first part of the response, “I don’t think so”, was a non-answer because it responded to, but did not answer, the question. The non-answer marked a displayed lack of certainty from the caller. Further, it accounted for the caller not having immediately provided the requested information (Heritage, 1984b). The talk positioned the caller as having a lower epistemic stance, relatively K-, than was anticipated by the question.

The displayed lack of certainty breached a normative expectation within the question, that the caller should know or have the requested information. Heritage (2012a) noted that the epistemic stance displayed in a turn of talk often matched, or was *congruent* with, a speaker's epistemic status. In this case, the opposite occurred, in an example of *epistemic incongruency*, whereby the caller's relatively low epistemic stance did not match their higher epistemic status over the matter (Heritage, 2012a).

The request, "can I check", displayed that the caller was going to move to find the requested information and that their previous answer was being treated as insufficient. In moving to find the "actual supply period", the caller displayed an orientation to a normative dimension of the question; that they were obligated to provide the information.

The turn, "can you bear with me for a...", was formatted as a request for permission. Curl and Drew (2008) studied the format of requests in relation to the entitlements to make them, and the contingencies associated with them being granted. It was found that requests formatted as "can/could you...", such as above, displayed that speakers were entitled to make the request and that it was expected to be granted. In this case, the caller's entitlement to make the request can be understood as arising from their obligation to provide the information. Furthermore, the "bear with..." portion, displayed that the caller was treating the temporary interactional exit as a possible inconvenience to the conciliator. The request marked an upcoming disruption to the conversation and initiated the temporary interactional exit.

By initiating a temporary interactional exit, the caller displayed that physically finding the "supply period" was being treated as incompatible with, and taking priority over, their continued verbal engagement in the call. Furthermore, it was understandable to the conciliator that the caller was going to some length to provide the requested information.

The interaction was suspended for around 52 seconds as the caller presumably made the effort to retrieve the information. Verbal engagement in the conversation was jointly re-established (lines 12 and 13). Despite almost a minute having passed, the date provided (lines 13 and 14) was understood by the conciliator as representing the “actual supply period” requested in the initial question. As the requested information had been provided, the interaction was able to be further progressed (not shown in extract).

The next case is presented as an example of a caller treating confirmation of having some information as making relevant their obligation to provide it.

Extract 4.2

EGCC2015-010:

01 CON: and is there another contact (.) phone number for
 02 you?
 03 (0.5)
 04 CAL: (.hh) u:::m it's: my: (u:h) mobile phone
 05 number? [.hh u:h]
 06 CON: [okay ()]
 07 (0.3)
08 CAL: ju:st one second. hh=
 09 CON: =[sure thing.]
 10 [((receiver]down))
 11 (13.9)
 12 ((receiver[up])]
 13 CAL: [oh 'three'] it's u:h o:h three five?
 14 (0.4)
 15 CON: oh three five,
 16 (0.3)
 17 CAL: oh six two
 18 (0.4)
 19 CON: oh six two
 20 (0.4)
 21 CAL: three (.) six (.) nine (.) two.
 22 CON: three six nine two. thank you

The question was understood by the caller as a request for an alternative contact number (lines one-two). The response inferentially confirmed the presence of the requested information, “it’s”, and specified what type of phone number it was, “my mobile phone number”. The turn, “just one second” displayed that the caller was going to temporarily leave the interaction. In moving to find the information, the caller displayed an understanding that

it was not sufficient to simply state the type of phone number it was; they were also obligated to provide it.

A joint understanding of the upcoming temporary interactional exit was established at lines seven and eight. It was not made explicit that the caller would be retrieving the requested information. Rather, the purpose of the temporary interactional exit could be inferred by the conciliator because of conditional relevance, as the caller had yet to provide the required response to the question.

The call was suspended for nearly fourteen seconds and was resumed with the caller explicitly tying their talk as an answer to the question, through “it’s...” Owing to the non-co-presence of speakers, the conciliator could not be sure as to what the caller physically did to find their mobile phone number. However, it was understandable from the provision of the information that the caller had done some work to find it. In making an effort to provide the relevant response, the caller displayed that furthering the progression of the sequence and the interaction was a practical concern.

In extract 4.3, the caller provided an account for why some requested information was not immediately forthcoming before leaving the interaction to find it.

Extract 4.3:

EGCC2015-008:

01 CON: [you] ↑said that you had email? can i get your
02 email address?
03 CAL: no:w (0.2) i’m not- (0.2) °i can nev-° i’ve only had
04 it for about .hhh (.) three or four months but i’ll
05 get my: ((.hh/rustling)) uh hh °because°
06 sometimes (0.4) on my (.hhh) (hhh) ((background
07 noise)) uh hh
08 (0.9)
09 CAL: (i’ve been)
10 (0.7)
11 CAL: °u:::h hm° °.hhh° (owh ch) i’ll put the ↑phone down
12 [please just (one/a) moment]
13 CON: [↑sure no (problem)] no problem.
14 ((receiver down))
15 ((CAL away for 27.7 seconds))
16 ((Receiver up))

17 CAL: oh (i'm) sorry.=I have it in my diary [here: .hh]=
 18 CON: [oh ↑great.]
 19 CAL: so- because my children have uh done this
 20 for me [originally] put it in. .hh[hh it's]
 21 CON: [↑good ((echoes))] [↑m(h)m]
 22 (0.3)
 23 CAL: Meg, .hh eh no capitals

In this case, the question explicitly requested some information, an email address, that the caller had referred to previously (lines one-two). The word selection in the request suggested that the conciliator was claiming an entitlement to ask the question. Curl and Drew (2008) found that when requests included “can” or “could”, as opposed to “I wonder if...”, it displayed a speaker’s entitlement to make the request.

The initial response, “now...I’m not”, did not provide the email address. However, the following talk, “I’ve only had it for...”, inferentially confirmed that the caller did have, and knew, the information. The talk between lines three and four described the length of time that the caller had their email address, which also accounted for it not being provided. Seemingly for the caller, three to four months was a time period insufficient to know an email address by heart. At line 11, it was announced that the caller would “put the phone down” and thus leave the interaction.

“Please just (one/a) moment”, displayed that the caller was treating the upcoming disruption as a breach. Evidence for this claim can be found in the word selection of the turn and in the following talk that is analysed below. “Just” has been found to have a minimizing function in conversation (Lindemann & Mauranen, 2001). Thus, alongside the “please” and the minimal time reference “a moment”, the use of “just” attempted to minimize an upcoming breach.

The call was put on hold for nearly 28 seconds (lines 14-16). In this case, the prior fragments of talk “I’ll get my...” and “sometimes on my...” alluded to the email address being located on some item. Therefore, the conciliator could have inferred that the caller was

working to satisfy their obligation to provide the information. The call was resumed with the caller apologising for the temporary interactional exit. The apology provided further evidence that the disruption was being treated by the caller as some kind of breach. In this case, the disruption was treated as a matter that needed to be both minimized (line 12) and apologised for. An informing, “I have it in my diary here”, displayed that the caller had physically located the requested information during the break in the interaction. The caller began to provide their email address at line 23.

Another way that callers found and retrieved the requested information was while remaining verbally engaged with conciliators. In other words, the callers treated the two activities as compatible, whereas in the previous cases they were treated as incompatible. In these cases, expressions such “wait a minute” anticipated a disruption to the progression of the interaction.

In extract 4.4, the caller made an effort to retrieve the information while still continuing to talk to the conciliator. The case below is presented to show that the caller still oriented to the obligation to provide the information, even when the expectation that they knew it was relaxed.

Extract 4.4:

EGCC2008-MARY4Q:

01 CON: [okay. and before that when >was the] last< time=
 02 CAL: [((rustling)) ughh]
 03 CON: =it was read before [that? do you know?]
 04 CAL: [((rustling))]
 05 CAL: **ah yes: °hold on I'll just get this° ou:t °.hh° .snih**
 06 (0.9)
 07 CON: °I just [(wonder-)°]
 08 CAL: [ac- actual read, h u::m
 09 (2.7)
 10 CAL: °(o:wh) it doesn't have° (.) actual read °here (does)°
 11 it? °.hh° (0.2) should do, ((rustling)) u::m=
 12 =((rustling continued))
 13 CON: ↑whi[ch]
 14 CAL: [the] o:ne before thau::t actual reading °.hh°
 15 uh was (.) April?

A feature of the request for information in this case was that it had a tag question, “do you know”. As a “wh-” question, the request for information initially inferred a steep epistemic gradient between the speakers. Specifically, the conciliator was positioned as the K- speaker not knowing when the meter was last read, and the caller was positioned as the K+ speaker who knew the requested information. The tag question served two functions. First, it attenuated the epistemic gradient (i.e. became shallow) because it positioned the caller as having a lower epistemic stance than the “wh-” question (by displaying that they may not know the information). It can also be understood as having relaxed the normative expectation that the caller knew the information, by orienting to the possibility that they did not.

The “yes” confirmed the caller knew the information. The turn, “hold on...”, anticipated that the interaction would be disrupted, and “I’ll just get this out”, described what the caller was doing. An available inference was that the caller was moving to find out the “last time” the meter was read. Thus, the talk at line five displayed the caller working to fulfil their obligation to provide the requested information.

The conciliator did not have visual access to the caller because it was a telephone-mediated interaction. The non-co-presence meant that the conciliator would not have known what the caller was doing. However, the talk between lines five and twelve overcame this problem, by making the caller’s physical activity hearable and thus accessible to the conciliator. When combined with the aural resource of rustling, the caller’s talk made the work that was being done to find the requested information understandable to the conciliator. At line 14, this date was provided and was accepted by the conciliator (not included in extract).

In the extract below, the caller made a sustained effort, with some difficulty, to retrieve the customer number designated to them by their electricity provider. The sustained

effort is presented as clear evidence of the caller's orientation to their obligation to provide the requested information.

Extract 4.5:

EGCC2015-001:

01 CON: .hhh and uh:::::::::: .hh what's y:our (0.6)
02 mch .hh have you got you:r um cus:tomers
03 number with blue[tower]
04 CAL: [.hhhh]
05 (0.8)
06 CAL: uh yes I can ge:t that (.) [(on again)]
07 CON: [thank you]
08 (0.2)
09 CAL: **ha::ng on a seco:nd (.) let me deal with this**
10 **he::re for <a se:co::nd> u::::h (oh I hope- I**
11 **have-) (.) (uh) just hang (on) a s(h)ec(h)ond**
12 .hhhh (0.2) (°just hang a sec let me- I'll
13 jus get that°) (° °)
14 (2.0)
15 CAL?: °.hhhhh° ((rustling))
16 CAL: I'll get that bluetower bill. (°hang on°)
17 (1.1)
18 CAL: .hh (I'm on) (I'm after) () jus tryna get
19 onli:ne and it's (frozen)=yeah (that's what I
20 needed today) (literally/let me just) .hhh (.) (hh)
21 u::hm
22 (1.2)
23 CAL: () °this is not good is it° °hang on°
24 () (oh we) just have to reboot this
25 again (.) give me a bit of ti::me to come up back
26 up again
27 (0.8)
28 CAL?: .hhhhhhh
29 (0.5)
30 CAL: (eh) um- hh
31 ((backgroundnoise))
32 (1.1)
33 CAL: °let me just° °um° (1.4) °see whats goin on here°
34 (2.0)
35 ((2.8 seconds with some faint noise))
36 CAL: in meantime while this: going do
37 you [want the the (eye vee/eye pee)]
38 CON: [.hh that that's okay]
39 (0.5)
40 CAL: [>d'ya wan-<] >d'ya want< the eye pee- (.) <eye=
41 CON: [()]
42 CAL: =see [pee> number]
43 CON: [yes. if you] give me the eye see pee that
44 would be very helpful.

The conciliator's turn at line one was initially formatted as a content question, "what's your...", but was abandoned and re-formulated to a polar interrogative, "have you...". That is, a question that was designed for a "yes" or "no" answer. The initial question assumed that the caller knew or had the requested information. In contrast, the re-formulated question displayed the possibility that the caller may not have or not know the customer number and thus relaxed the expectation for them to provide an answer.

At line six the caller confirmed having the information. The following talk, "...I can get that" displayed an explicit commitment to the caller's obligation to provide their customer number. An appreciation, "thank you", was produced by the conciliator, presumably in acknowledgement of the effort the caller was making to provide the information. The next turn, "hang on a second", anticipated a disruption to the interaction. It was followed by an informing, "let me deal with this here...", making it clear that the caller was interacting with something.

A practical problem emerged when it was stated that the bill was located on a computer ("tryna get online") and that it could take some time to access it due to technical difficulties ("it's frozen"). The continued delay was evaluated by the caller, "this is not good is it" (line 23). The negative evaluation displayed that the disruption to the interaction was being treated by the caller as a breach of their obligation to provide the information. As with the prior case, the talk between lines 10 to 33 made what was visually accessible for the caller, hearable for the conciliator.

Eventually, another piece of information was offered, "d'ya want the ICP number". A point had been reached where the requested information was clearly not forthcoming and because of the technical difficulty with the computer, may not have been provided in the immediate future. Therefore, to satisfy their obligation, the caller provided some similar

information to further progress the interaction. In providing some alternative information, the caller also positioned themselves as doing their utmost to be helpful.

The extract below occurred around a minute and fifteen seconds later in the same interaction. It is presented to demonstrate the caller's continued sense of obligation to provide an answer.

Extract 4.6:

EGCC2015-001:

```
01 CAL:      I'm just logging in 'here just hang (on a sons)' =
02 CAL:      =[I'll get] that (.) u::m I get my account number
03 CON:      =[.hhh      ]
04 CAL:      of- u:h bluetow:wer [then- (          )]
05 CON:      [no don't worry a ]bout tha:t=
06 CON:      = I do[n't (need it)      (          ) (          )]
07 CAL:      [(oh=y'don need-) (yuh) okay      o]kay=
```

The caller offered to provide the account number after apparently having found it on the computer. However, the conciliator rejected the offer, stating that it was no longer needed. In this case, it was shown that if the normative obligation to provide some requested information was not satisfied, then it could persist and still be treated as relevant after a reasonable length of time had elapsed in the interaction.

Discussion

This chapter has focused on cases where a caller used expressions such as “hold on a minute” and “wait a second” to anticipate a disruption to the interaction in order to provide some requested information. The analysis has shown some of the normative dimensions of knowledge in these sequences. That is, who was expected to know what, and who was obligated to share that knowledge. The diagram presented in figure 4.1 summarises the normative dimensions of knowledge in request for information sequences.

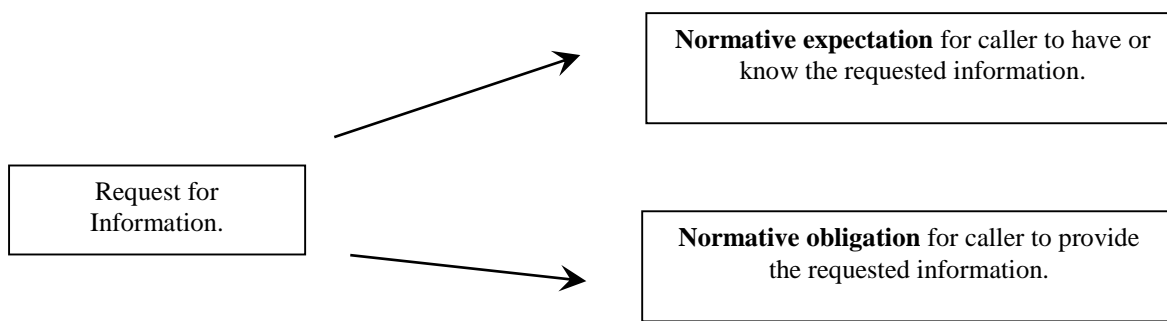


Figure 4.1. Normative dimensions of knowledge mobilised in request for information sequences in telephone-mediated dispute resolution.

The analysis noted that one norm oriented to in these sequences was an expectation that callers had or knew the requested information. Such an expectation was managed mainly through the format of the conciliators' question. Further evidence was shown through callers explicitly or inferentially confirming that they had or knew the information before moving to find it.

However, this chapter focused on demonstrating the normative obligations of callers in these sequences. The target expressions that anticipated a disruption to the interaction revealed the pervasively normative nature of requests for information. These expressions occurred after conciliators requested some information, which callers did not immediately provide. The analysis showed that callers would move to find and retrieve the information, often going to great lengths to do so. Such conduct clearly displayed callers' orientations to their normative obligations and epistemic responsibilities as recipients; to provide information when requested.

The findings provide further evidence to support a preference for progressivity in talk-in-interaction. Stivers and Robinson (2006) studied question-answer sequences in multi-party interaction, where questions that explicitly selected a next speaker were answered by a different person. In such sequences, speakers demonstrated their orientation to a preference

for progressivity by prioritising the provision of an answer over that of the obligation for a selected next speaker to respond. In this chapter, a preference for progressivity was shown through the work that callers did to find and retrieve the requested information. The preference for progressivity was clearly evident in the cases of temporary interactional exits. In these cases, callers treated providing the relevant second-pair-part, and thus satisfying sequential progressivity, as taking priority over remaining verbally engaged in the conversation.

In the cases examined here, callers went to different lengths to find the requested information. One possible reason that could explain why non-forthcoming information was treated as such an issue in these calls is that they were a form of institutional interaction. Institutional talk involves speakers producing actions and being oriented to specific goals that are constitutive of particular institutional settings (Heritage & Clayman, 2010). The sequences examined in this chapter were part of the institutional task of establishing the facts of the complaint. As a result, providing a response progressed both the request for information sequences and the broader interactional activity of which they were a part. Therefore, the normative obligation to provide a response may have been more ‘pronounced’ in these calls than it would usually be in mundane conversation because of the overarching project both speakers were engaged in accomplishing. A study of these sequences in everyday conversation would establish the generalizability of the present findings.

Chapter overview

This chapter has described some of the normative dimensions of knowledge in request for information sequences, when an answer was not immediately provided. The following chapter focuses on a different question-answer sequence, ones where a response is provided and where the question is formatted as a declarative request for confirmation. The analysis

shows how the epistemic rights and entitlements to knowledge are negotiated in those sequences.

Establishing the facts of the complaint: Epistemic rights and reality construction.

The practical problem that is the focus of this chapter is the mutual establishment of a dispute to be resolved. In particular, the analysis focuses on one aspect of this; how the two speakers jointly produced the relevant ‘facts’ of the complaint. Without agreeing on the facts of the matter, the complaint could not be further progressed through the dispute resolution process. Callers regularly presented their problems in the form of a narrative in their initial turns of talk. Subsequently, conciliators could request confirmation of some of that information. The analysis presented in this chapter focuses on declarative request for confirmation sequences as a resource for jointly constructing an ‘official’ version of reality.

Callers described some aspects of the complaint, from what was likely an infinite range of possible descriptions about their experiences. Similarly, conciliators only selected particular details to focus on for further questioning. The declarative questions positioned conciliators as having a relatively equal epistemic stance to callers, and thus having some degree of rights to the information. Thus, these questions displayed a relatively shallow epistemic gradient between speakers. An important point was that the questions concerned details that callers had primary epistemic rights and entitlements to know, because the information was within their epistemic domains.

The analysis conceptualizes the declarative questions as descriptions because they “formulate[d] some object or event as something” (Potter, 1996, p.111). As descriptions, the questions involved a detail being constructed in some way, as a particular version of reality. The questions proffered this version of reality to callers for confirmation, in order to mutually establish the official ‘fact’ of the matter. The responses could accept these descriptions.

However, the responses could also alter the descriptions and construct the matter in a different way.

The following analysis is based on a collection of 78 declarative requests for confirmation and the accompanying responses. The analysis is structured around the response formats and ways that they managed speakers' rights to knowledge. I propose that the responses can be placed along a conceptual continuum. At one end, are responses where the epistemic stance and entitlement of conciliators displayed in the declarative questions are accepted. At the other end, are responses that rejected the epistemic stance and rights of conciliators by correcting some aspect of the question. These responses strongly asserted the callers' epistemic entitlements over the matter at hand. Furthermore, the answers shifted the epistemic gradient back to one of relative asymmetry by elevating the caller's epistemic stance. The analysis also considers how the questions and answers jointly constructed the detail to be agreed upon as a version of reality.

Analysis

Simple confirmation

Simple confirmation was the most common response format in the collection, comprising 31% ($n=24$) of cases. Extracts 5.1 and 5.2 are presented below as examples of "yes"-confirming responses to declarative requests for confirmation.

Extract 5.1:

EGCC2008-CONNIE6C:

01 CON: >okay so did you< .hh (0.2) bu- n' you paid that
02 () (.) ninety?
03 (0.2)
04 CAL: yup

Extract 5.2:

EGCC2015-004:

01 CON: °.hh° okay (0.2) u::m and (.) it's been ongoing
02 since then?
03 (0.4)
04 CAL: yeah.

The questions in the extracts above were directed toward establishing some detail of the complaint; in the first case that the caller had paid a pre-existing amount of money to their electricity provider (extract 5.1) and in the second, that the complaint related to a continuing dispute (extract 5.2). They are type-conforming responses because they provided the “yes” answer that was projected by the question (Raymond, 2003). These kinds of type-conforming responses accept both the design and assumptions of the prior question (Raymond, 2003).

Extract 5.3 shows that confirmation could also be accomplished by negative responses.

Extract 5.3:

EGCC2015-002:

01 CON: = (ri::ght/fri::ght-) (yup) okay so there's
 02 no reason why it shouldn't [be r]ead. (°°.hh°°)
 03 CAL: [no.]

Negatively formulated questions, such as that above, are confirmed by “no” responses (Raymond, 2003). In the case above, “no” confirmed that there was nothing preventing the meter from being read. Extract 5.3 provided further evidence that answers doing simple confirmation accepted the design, assumptions and epistemic stances displayed in the question.

In regards to reality construction, the responses above confirmed a proffered version of reality and thus it can be seen that in these sequences, some fact of the complaint was being jointly established and agreed upon.

The three cases above have shown that type-conforming responses performed simple confirmation. In these responses, the callers accepted all aspects of the prior question. I propose that these responses represent one end of an epistemic continuum, whereby they fully accept the epistemic stances, rights and entitlements claimed in the declarative question. Thus, the shallow epistemic gradient inferred by the question format was also accepted by the type-conforming responses.

Confirmation by repetition

Responses also departed from the type-conforming format preferred by the question, to confirm the question and assert callers' primary rights to the matter. Responses formatted as full or partial repeats of the prior question comprised 6% ($n=5$) of the collected cases.

Previous research by Schegloff (1996) has documented how responses can *confirm an allusion*. Schegloff examined cases where an initial speaker's talk implied something in a first turn and another speaker's turn would then state what was alluded to in the prior turn. In the third turn, the initial speaker would produce a verbatim repeat of the other speaker's turn. This repeat would confirm the question's content and that it had been previously alluded to (rather than explicitly stated; Schegloff, 1996).

I suggest that repeat responses also functioned to confirm something that callers had previously alluded to. I further posit that these responses also displayed callers' primary epistemic rights to the information.

Extract 5.4:

EGCC2008-CONNIE6C:

01 CON: [okay so,]and [then oxyg]e- so you told
02 Oxygen you'd make a one off payment of ninety:.,=
03 CAL: =[yeh=And I] made the payment
04 CON: =[. hhh]
05 CON: okay and they <accepted tha:t>=
06 CAL: =they accepted that. °mh:°
07 CON: okay

Extract 5.5:

EGCC2008-CONNIE6C:

01 CAL: =[and then] a week or two ago goes by: (0.2) .hhh
02 and (0.5) I get a >tra:ffic fine.< (0.4) two hundred
03 dollar fine (0.8) right?
04 (0.4)
05 CAL: now (.) because I mow lawns for a living .hh if I
06 don't pay that fine ih- they can impound my vehicle
07 (0.2)
08 CAL: =[r i g h t ?]
09 CON: =[>so this is] a< fi:ne (0.3) separate
10 from [the company.]
11 CAL: [. hhh]
12 CAL: separate from the com[pany]

Both questions presented allusions of the callers' prior talk (Schegloff, 1996). For example, in extract 5.4, the caller's previous talk stated that a payment of ninety dollars was made to their power company, with the allusion being that the company accepted the payment. Both responses were repeats of parts of the prior question. As with confirming an allusion, both responses repeated in agreement with the question (Schegloff, 1996). The responses confirmed the question and that it was indeed an allusion of the previous talk.

The cases above provided evidence that in using repeat responses callers were claiming primary rights to the matter. This was achieved in several ways. First, the allusions, although articulated by conciliators, were inferentially available from information provided by the callers. Presenting the allusions in declarative questions positioned conciliators as claiming relatively equal epistemic stances, and thus some rights to the information. Second, in confirming through repeating part of the question, the responses displayed that the information was in the callers' epistemic domains, and thus displayed their primary rights to the knowledge (Heritage & Raymond, 2012). In other words, callers claimed back the rights to the information by repeating the allusions.

I propose that repeat responses claimed a stronger epistemic entitlement to the information than simple confirmation. Although repeats confirmed the question, they also displayed that callers had primary epistemic rights over the matter at hand.

Confirmation and adjustment

A third confirming response format also adjusted some aspects of the question. These responses comprised 13% ($n=10$) of cases. Extract 5.6 shows one response format that confirmed and adjusted a question.

Extract 5.6:

EGCC2015-003:

01 CON: and that was the month that- that- that was
02 the important [(bit) for you]
03 CAL: [yes]
04 CON: okay
05 CAL: yes that- that was the month (>uh- de-<) with the
06 problem.

The question constructed the detail in a particular way and presented a version of reality to the caller for confirmation as an acceptable ‘fact’ of the matter. The response confirmed the question (“yes”) and then repeated “that was the month”. Following this, “that was the important bit” was changed to “with the problem”, locating the former as the problematic and adjusted aspect. In adjusting the prior description, the response slightly altered, and thus re-constructed, the fact being confirmed.

Discursive psychology has highlighted that description can be part and parcel of assessment (Potter, 1998). The question described and thus evaluated the month as “important” to the caller. The response altered this description, and assessed it negatively as a “problem”. In doing so, it displayed that the prior description was insufficient in its assessment. The adjustment upgraded “the month” from just being significant (“important”), to something that had potentially had a negative impact on the caller (“problem”). Therefore, the response also worked up the complainability of the matter by making available the negative inferences associated with a “problem”.

Although the case above was a question-answer sequence, the rights to assess the matter were also being treated as relevant. Speakers making a first assessment display some right and entitlement to be able to make such a claim (Heritage & Raymond, 2005). However, in this case, the caller had primary rights because it was their knowledge that was being assessed. The response undercut the rights claimed by the conciliator in making the first assessment by displaying that the initial assessment was insufficient. As such, the caller asserted their primary epistemic rights to assess “the month”.

Extract 5.7 shows another response format used to accomplish confirmation and adjustment. In this case, the response was grammatically fitted as a linguistic extension to the question.

Extract 5.7:

EGCC2008-CONNIE4Q:

01 CON: **okay.=and you're on a low user rate?**
02 (0.6)
03 CAL: **fo::r the water. yes.**
04 (0.7)
05 CON: oh (.) kayhh .hhh alright.

The question requested confirmation that the caller's power bill was being calculated using a low user rate¹³. Establishing this detail was crucial to the business at hand because it was consequential to the disputed issue, which was the size of the power bill. The first turn constructional unit of the response was formatted as an increment to the question. That is, it was grammatically fitted as if it were a continuation of an already complete turn (Fox, Ford, & Thompson, 2002). The increment adjusted the question by specifying that the low user rate was for the water. In this case, the type-conforming token "yes" was added to the turn. Therefore, confirmation was delayed until adjustments to the question were made.

The response asserted the caller's primary epistemic rights to the matter at hand in two ways. First, by displaying that the prior description was insufficiently specific and providing more specific information to which presumably only the caller would have access. Second, by confirming the adjustments made to the question instead of the description in the first-pair-part. In other words, the caller confirmed their description rather than the conciliator's description.

In relation to reality construction, the response made alterations to the version of reality proffered by the conciliator. The response instead displayed that the joint

¹³ Low user plans involve companies charging households who use less electricity at a lower daily rate (Consumer New Zealand, n.d.).

establishment of the matter was contingent on the adjustments made by the caller. The talk at line five provided evidence that the conciliator accepted this altered description as the ‘fact’ of the matter.

The chapter has so far analysed three different types of responses. I propose that the confirmation and adjustment cases lie further along the continuum than simple confirmation and repeat responses. I posit that these cases, in altering and adjusting the description in the question, more strongly asserted the callers’ primary epistemic rights over the matters being agreed upon.

Adjusting answers

The following section focuses on what I have termed adjusting answers. These responses comprised 27% ($n=21$) of cases in the collection. Seven cases are presented to show two functions accomplished by adjusting answers; specification and correction. The analysis demonstrates how adjusting answers managed callers’ epistemic rights and entitlements and how such responses were implicated in reality construction.

Accepting with further specification. Adjusting answers sometimes provided a more specific description of some matter housed in a question. Extract 5.8 is presented to show how specification was used to get a detail of the complaint exactly right.

Extract 5.8:

EGCC2008-MARY4Q:

```
01 CON:  =°okay° (0.2) righty oh and you’ve got a hundred and
02          thirty odd dollar [bill now.]
03 CAL:                                [ .hhh ] hundred and thirty one
04          forty one.=
05 CON:  °yeah°.=
06 CAL:  =mm:
```

The question sought confirmation that the caller’s bill was “a hundred and thirty odd dollar[s]”. The bill’s size was described approximately, displaying that an approximation was sufficient for the purposes of questioning. The response was formatted as a partial repeat of the question, replacing “thirty odd dollar” with “thirty one forty one”. It specified the exact

amount of the bill, while also confirming that the caller had the bill. Thus, what was relevant for the caller was getting the detail of the complaint just right. The response rejected approximation as a sufficient version of reality and replaced it with a more precise description, to the point of specifying the exact number of cents (“forty one”).

Drew (2003) documented how the precision of descriptions was a practical concern for speakers in institutional interactions such as courtroom cross-examinations and visits to the doctor. Drew found that when laypeople constructed an imprecise description, an institutional representative could adjust it to be more precise. In the case described above, the opposite occurred. The caller (layperson) adjusted the imprecise description of the conciliator’s question (institutional representative). The precise description displayed the caller’s primary epistemic rights to know the amount of the bill. The specification was accepted by the conciliator and as a result, the caller’s reconstructed version of reality (as more specific) was jointly established as a fact for the official record.

Extract 5.9 shows an example of how specification could also work up the legitimacy and complainability of a matter. In this case, it was accomplished through invoking a membership category and its associated inferences. Prior to the extract, the conciliator asked about the caller’s previous contact with a customer representative in a power company’s complaints department.

Extract 5.9:

EWOV-289011:

01 CON: [.h]h and she was in the customer
02 advocacy department?
03 CAL: she was in thuh- in the (.) top top pa:rt.

The conciliator asked about a person who was a member of the customer advocacy department (a particular category), presumably in order to be able to contact the individual. The response was formatted as a partial repeat of the question, “she was in the...” The turn also adjusted the prior question, replacing “customer advocacy department” with “top top

part”. The replacement confirmed the representative was in that department and further specified where. The response treated the initial premise of the question as acceptable, but displayed that it was insufficiently specific.

One function of the specification was to work up the legitimacy and complainability of the matter. Sacks (1992) noted that the membership categories used by speakers in conversation are laden with inferences. Furthermore, these categories and their associated inferences accomplish actions (Sacks, 1992). The response identified the representative as a member of the category of the “top top part” of the customer advocacy department. An inference associated with being in the upper echelons of the department was that the representative had a high level of authority. Deploying the membership category of the person involved worked up the legitimacy and complainability of the caller’s complaint because even someone with authority in the electricity company had done nothing to resolve the problem. The response also claimed and displayed the caller’s epistemic rights to the information by presenting a more precise description.

Extract 5.10 shows another example of specification working up legitimacy and complainability. In this instance, it was achieved through an upgraded specification, from “inaccurate” to “wildly inaccurate”.

Extract 5.10:

EGCC2015-007:

01 CON: =mg~~hm~~ so what you’re saying is that .hhh the
02 estimated reading was- was inaccurate?
03 (0.2)
04 CON: .hhh [did you get ()]
05 CAL: [(m:) wil:dly] inaccurate.

The question was designed to establish a detail central to the complaint. Specifically, that an estimated meter reading was “inaccurate”. The response partially repeated the question (“inaccurate”) and added “wildly”. The response confirmed and further specified by upgrading the degree of inaccuracy.

The specification worked up the legitimacy, and thus the complainability, of the matter by formulating it in more extreme terms. Pomerantz (1986) showed that extreme case formulations, such as “wildly inaccurate”, can legitimise claims in the face of possible doubt. In the case above, by describing the reading as “wildly inaccurate” the caller made it more certain that the inaccuracy of the reading was a problem and thus a complainable matter.

The question described and constructed the matter in a particular way (as “inaccurate”). However, the response adjusted that description and therefore re-constructed the detail being agreed upon as more legitimate and complainable. The response also asserted the caller’s primary epistemic rights. In epistemic terms, callers have the rights to describe and assess their own experiences (Heritage & Raymond, 2005). In this case, the response asserted these rights by providing a negative assessment of the meter’s accuracy.

The cases presented so far in this section, have been responses that adjusted some aspect of a question for being insufficiently specific. Stivers and Hayashi (2010) noted that non-type-conforming responses involving specification, similar to those presented above, treated a prior question as acceptable but with modifications required. In these cases, the basic descriptions in the questions were treated as acceptable, although unable to be more simply confirmed. However, some aspect was treated as insufficiently specific.

The responses involved precise descriptions of some detail of the complaint. Precision of a description is a matter essentially within the purview of a speaker whose epistemic domain the information comes from (Drew, 2003; Heritage & Raymond, 2005). As such, the responses asserted callers’ epistemic rights and entitlements to the information. That is, callers’ displayed themselves as K+ speakers relative to conciliators. Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that adjusting answers involving specification claimed stronger epistemic entitlement than responses involving confirmation and adjustment.

Correction. Adjusting answers also corrected aspects of a prior question. I propose that correction asserted an even stronger epistemic entitlement than specification. Specification cases treated a question as acceptable but requiring further specification. However, correction cases more strongly asserted callers' epistemic rights by displaying that some aspect of a question was wrong.

In extract 5.11, the conciliator described the caller's problem as one of an "overestimation", whereas the problem was actually an "underestimation".

Extract 5.11:

EGCC2008-LINDA1C

01 CON: **okay. so they're overestimating**
 02 **the b[ills]**
 03 CAL: **[they're] underes[timating (the) amount]**
 04 CON: **[<oh >sorry hang on the other]=**
 05 **=way<. >yih yih<.**
 06 **(0.3)**
 07 CAL: **a::nd (.) it's an ongoing problem.**
 08 **(0.3)**
 09 CON: **°okay.° h**

The question displayed an upshot of the caller's prior turns; that the power company was "overestimating" the power "bills". The response repeated the substance of the question and replaced "overestimating" with "underestimating", and "bills" with "amount". The entire description within the question was rejected and corrected. The response positioned the caller as the K+, or more knowledgeable, speaker. The caller's primary epistemic rights were strongly asserted through the response positioning the conciliator as wrong.

The response can be understood as having altered the speakers' epistemic positioning, and thus also having changed the epistemic gradient. The declarative question positioned both speakers as having relatively equal epistemic stances, and by extension equal epistemic rights. However, by correcting the prior description, the caller elevated their epistemic stance and undercut the positioning of the conciliator. In effect, this pushed the epistemic gradient from one of relative symmetry to one of relative asymmetry.

The question proffered a particular version of reality to the caller for confirmation. However, the response rejected an aspect of the version of reality and re-constructed the ‘correct’ detail. In particular, the re-constructed matter displayed that what was relevant for the caller was the excessive amount of contact with their power company. The correction to multiple conversations having occurred worked up the complainability of the issue. An increased number of complaints to the provider implied action from the caller and fault on behalf of the company, because the issue had yet to be resolved. In other words, many conversations having occurred with no action from the company made the matter more problematic for the caller.

The next case shows that correction could be done in different ways. In extract 5.13, correction was done alongside further informing.

Extract 5.13:

EGCC2015-001:

01 CON: =[a:nd] thee::::: the letter is addressed to
 02 you danny luck?
 03 (0.3)
 04 CAL: .hh the letter is addressed to:::, (.) the
 05 occupie:r enn gee ess nineteen tomato avenue
 06 terawhiti ngarua five double nine six.
 07 CON: ‘alright’ the occupier enn gee ess::
 08 (1.4)
 09 CAL: yup.

The question sought to establish whether a disconnection letter was addressed personally to the caller. The version of reality proffered was premised on a reasonable inference that if the caller received a letter it would have been addressed to them. The response replaced the name “Danny Luck” and provided the correction, “the occupier”. It also specified the exact information contained on the letter, such as the postcode. Thus, an informing was also treated as relevant by the caller.

In treating the prior description as both incorrect and insufficient, the caller strongly asserted their epistemic entitlement to the matter at hand. The correction was accepted, in an

example of exposed correction, through repetition at line seven. The epistemic gradient was conceptually adjusted to one of relative asymmetry through the caller asserting their K+ stance and reflexively rejecting the question's positioning of the conciliator as almost equally knowledgeable. However, in repeating the correction, the conciliator also displayed their newfound knowledge of the matter. Thus, the epistemic gradient can be conceptualized as having been switched back to the relative symmetry inferred by the initial question, because of the now joint knowledge of the matter.

Extract 5.14 shows correction being done by further explication of a question's premise.

Extract 5.14:

EGCC2015-016

01 CON: >suh-< so you tried to open an account with another
 02 company?
 03 (0.7)
 04 CAL: i've (been)- I've actually got a pre-exisiting, I was
 05 with Exeter down in Jerningham=I've moved from
 06 Jerningham to Utley.
 07 (0.4)
 08 CON: ok[ay]
 09 CAL: [and] i've brought my- my account with me
 10 (0.3)
 11 CON: yeah. (0.4) alrig[ht]

The question was geared towards establishing whether the caller had attempted to open an account with another power company. The response stated that the caller had “actually got a pre-existing” account with the other power company “Exeter”. The “actually” marked the following talk as counter to something that was assumed in the question (Clift, 2001). Thus, the response rejected the basic premise of the question. The response displayed that the conciliator was wrong in their description. The rejection was followed with further description that established a different version of reality.

In displaying that the previous description was wrong, the response undercut the relatively equal epistemic stance of the conciliator displayed in the question. The further

description also informed the conciliator of the correct details. Informings involve speakers describing matters from their epistemic domain (Heritage, 2012b). The informing positioned the conciliator as the party being informed, and thus as the K- speaker, and reflexively asserted the caller's K+ stance (as the informer). The talk at lines eight and eleven accepted the re-construction of the matter. Accordingly, the fact was established as jointly understood. Conceptually, this would mean a symmetrical epistemic gradient had been achieved.

Explicit disconfirmation

Explicit disconfirmation was accomplished through responses formatted with disconfirmation tokens ("no") and then talk that corrected or adjusted aspects of the question. Explicit disconfirmation comprised only 6% ($n=5$) of cases in the collection. I propose that these cases involved the strongest claims and assertion of callers' epistemic rights to the relevant information.

Extract 5.15 shows the caller explicitly disconfirming and then correcting the prior question.

Extract 5.15:

EGCC2015-007

01 CON: okay let's just go over the readings again for
02 a minute. .hh [now] when Watfordshire took over
03 CAL: [mm]
04 CON: .hh thee:: (.) u:h (.) **this is two meters. two**
05 **smart meters at your property?=
06 CAL: =no no this- >this is just< one meter and this is**
07 **for the water pump.**

The question sought to confirm the number and type of meters that were the subject of the complaint¹⁴. The question was explicitly disconfirmed at the beginning of the caller's turn ("no, no"). The response rejected the prior description and provided the correct information

¹⁴ Smart meters differ from traditional electricity meters because they do not require manual readings from technicians and instead provide information about household electricity consumption to a remote source (Electricity Authority, 2013).

The declarative question displayed the conciliator claiming relatively equal epistemic rights to the knowledge. However, in explicitly disconfirming and correcting, the response displayed the caller's definitive epistemic entitlement to the information. As such, the answer elevated the caller to being the more knowledgeable speaker (K+ stance) and thus pushed back against the shallow epistemic gradient inferred by the question. The version of reality proffered by the conciliator was rejected and the response re-constructed it entirely.

Extract 5.16:

01 CON: and you've lost your mobile phone.

03 CON: oh[kay] [so-]=
04 CAL: [>I found it<] down the back seat >of the< [car?]

The adjusting answers accomplishing correction displayed that a prior description was wrong. However, the explicit disconfirmation tokens contained in these responses displayed an inherently more disaffiliative or ‘face-threatening’ action (Stivers, 2008). As a result, I propose that the explicit disconfirmation cases represented the strongest possible assertion of callers’ epistemic rights by claiming their full entitlement to the matter being agreed upon. In asserting callers’ epistemic rights, the responses also pushed back on the equal epistemic

stances of conciliators that were claimed by asking questions in a declarative format. Accordingly, the relatively shallow epistemic gradient inferred by the declarative questions could be conceptualized as having been adjusted to a steep gradient through the responses elevating callers' K+ stances.

Summary

The analysis identified and described various types of responses to declarative requests for confirmation. It showed that each response type functioned differently with respect to the epistemic entitlements they claimed. The responses ranged from those that made no claim to the callers' epistemic rights, through to those which claimed the callers' full epistemic rights and entitlements to the information referred to in the question.

Figure 5.1 summarizes the results. It shows the types of responses and their corresponding actions on a continuum. Simple confirmation sits at one end of the continuum and explicit disconfirmation is at the other. The other responses sit between those two ends and show increasingly stronger assertions of callers' primary epistemic rights and entitlements to the relevant information.

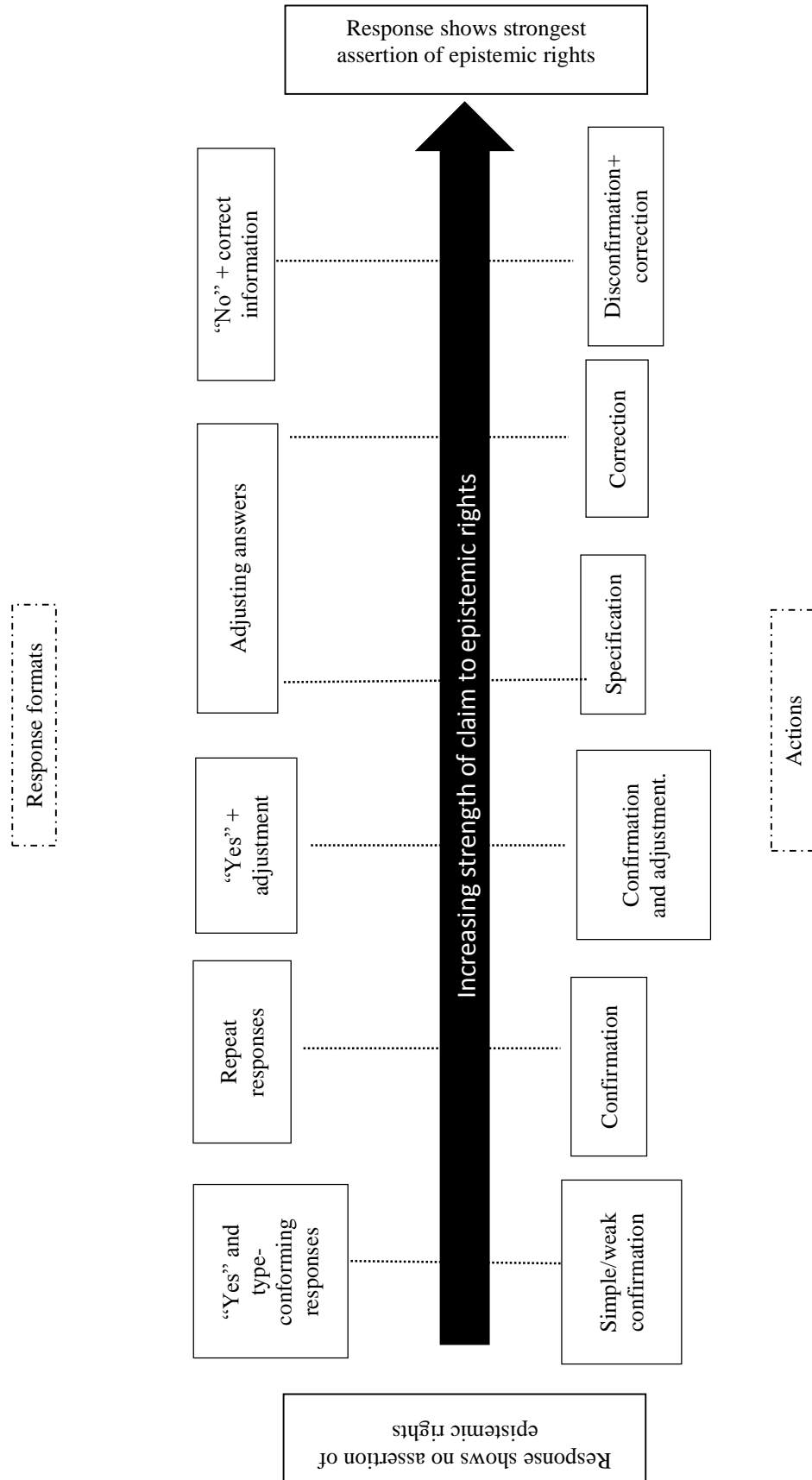


Figure 5.1. Responses to declarative requests for confirmation placed on a continuum by degree to which they asserted epistemic rights.

A key characteristic of responses that claimed epistemic entitlement was the changes made to the prior question. For example, in the cases of adjusting answers more specific or correct details were described. These adjustments were practices by which callers' primary epistemic rights were displayed and asserted. Such adjustments provided details that were within the callers' epistemic domains.

The two types of responses to the right of the continuum represented the strongest assertions of callers' epistemic entitlements. In conceptual terms, the declarative question format inferred a relatively shallow epistemic gradient between speakers, as shown in figure 5.2 by the dashed line. The responses displayed callers' greater epistemic rights to some information and therefore elevated their epistemic stance. Furthermore, these responses rejected the relatively equal epistemic positioning that conciliators claimed by formulating their questions as declaratives. As a result, the responses adjusted the epistemic gradient to one of relative asymmetry, as shown by the fixed line in figure 5.2.

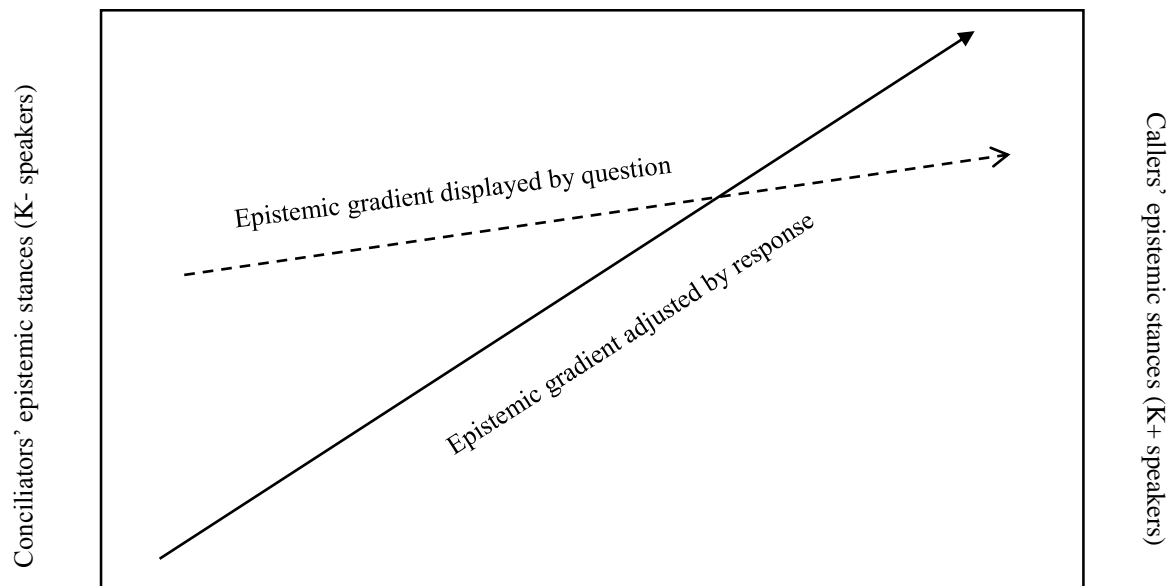


Figure 5.2. The shifting of epistemic gradients by responses that strongly asserted callers' epistemic entitlements.

In the cases of adjusting answers it was shown that conciliators produced talk that displayed their new understanding of the re-constructed matter. Thus, in these instances, the epistemic gradient can be understood as having returned to one of relative symmetry, to reflect the establishment of a joint understanding of reality.

Questions and their responses were conceptualized as descriptions that constructed some detail of the complaint as a version of reality. The descriptions in the questions constructed the details of the complaint in particular ways. Through the declarative format, these details were constructed as shared knowledge, which was achieved in part by the conciliators claiming relatively equal epistemic rights to the information. Responses could accept or modify these versions of reality. For example, those that contained adjustments *re-*constructed the proffered version of reality in another way. Furthermore, when re-constructing a version of reality, callers could also simultaneously claim their epistemic entitlements to the matter. Therefore, the analysis showed that epistemic rights and entitlements were implicated in reality construction.

In summary, the analysis of declarative requests for confirmation highlighted that the epistemic issues of ‘who knows what’ and ‘who has the rights to know it’ were observably relevant to the speakers as they worked to accomplish a joint understanding of the facts of the complaint.

Discussion and Conclusions

This thesis investigated epistemics and reality construction in social interaction, focusing on the institutional setting of telephone-mediated dispute resolution. Some normative dimensions of knowledge were empirically demonstrated by examining request for information sequences where the progression of an interaction was disrupted. It was found that callers oriented to their epistemic responsibilities when answering questions. These responsibilities were that callers were expected to know or have some information and that they were obligated to provide it when requested. The analysis also found that epistemic rights were relevant to callers and conciliators as they jointly constructed an official version of the complaint in declarative request for confirmation sequences. The findings on the normative dimensions were discussed at the end of chapter five. As such, this chapter only considers the contribution the analytic work on declarative request for confirmation sequences makes to an understanding of epistemic matters and reality construction in interaction. The research is then evaluated alongside providing directions for future research.

Epistemic matters in interaction

Epistemics is a relatively new domain of research in conversation analysis. In particular, the epistemic dynamics of question-answer and assessment sequences have been established (e.g. Heritage & Raymond, 2005; Stivers, 2005). Conversation analytic research on question-answer sequences has been broad, examining different forms of questions together (e.g. Heritage & Raymond, 2012; Stivers & Hayashi, 2010). The present research narrowed its focus by holding the type of question constant and examining how the responses managed epistemic rights. By restricting the focus to declarative request for confirmation sequences, the analysis showed the ways that speakers can accept or contest being positioned on relatively equal epistemic footings.

Previous conversation analytic research has mapped out various response formats to questions. Further, research has considered the actions that they accomplish and how epistemic matters might be implicated in these answers. Notably, Heritage and Raymond (2012) documented different types of responses to polar questions, which included minimal confirmation, repeat responses and repeats with disconfirmation. They also identified how these responses resisted or accepted aspects of prior questions. For example, it was shown that a repeat response resisted the type-conforming format preferred by a question and could also display a recipient's epistemic rights and entitlements to some information. Hakulinen (2001) also identified different response formats to polar questions in Finnish conversation, and placed these on a cline from confirming to negating a prior question.

By identifying a larger range of answers, this thesis uniquely proposed that the responses could be placed along an epistemic continuum. At one end of the continuum was simple confirmation, which involved no explicit display of a caller's epistemic rights to the relevant information. Other responses displayed increasingly stronger assertions of the callers' epistemic rights and entitlements. At the opposite end, disconfirmation and correction responses displayed a caller's full epistemic entitlement. The analysis provides further support for an established conversation analytic finding; that responses to questions are a fundamental place in talk-in-interaction where recipients can assert their primary epistemic rights to some knowledge (Heritage & Raymond, 2012).

Stivers (2005) identified the practice of *modified repeats*, which were responses where a recipient repeated all or part of a prior question and stressed or expanded a particular linguistic item. Stivers argued that these answers were a way for respondents to assert their primary rights over a claim in the previous question. The adjusting answers identified in this thesis are similar to modified repeats in two respects. Both could be formatted in the same way and adjusting answers were also a way for recipients to display their primary epistemic

rights. However, there are important differences. Adjusting answers were found in response to questions that explicitly requested confirmation. In contrast, modified repeats were produced in response to questions that did not make confirmation relevant. Furthermore, adjusting answers involved more substantial modifications to what was repeated, through replacing or inserting lexical items different to those in the question.

Some of the adjusting answers in the collection appeared to resemble what Stivers and Hayashi (2010) termed transformative answers. The latter were responses that made adjustments to a prior question and thus treated it as asking about something else. Adjusting answers and transformative answers could both accomplish further specification. In this respect, these responses treated a prior question as acceptable (though not explicitly confirmable) but insufficiently specific (Stivers & Hayashi, 2010). In contrast, adjusting answers did not clearly treat a prior question as asking about something else. Rather, they functioned to adjust aspects of descriptions within questions and to assert callers' primary epistemic rights and entitlements to knowledge.

Reality construction and discursive psychology

Discursive psychology has focused on the different ways that people construct and manage versions of reality (Potter, 1996). Research on reality construction began by studying talk, primarily in interview contexts (Wetherell & Potter, 1992) and monologic forms such as political speeches (Rapley, 1998), or in texts (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Such research also often focused on the rhetorical or argumentative function of reality construction (Edwards & Potter, 1992). For example, Potter (1996) documented the rhetorical practices that individuals could use to undermine other peoples' constructions of reality by emphasizing their personal interest, or stake, in the matter (e.g. "you would say that").

This thesis did not examine the persuasive or rhetorical nature of reality construction. Rather, the thesis documents the interactional and sequential nature of reality construction in

talk-in-interaction. The analysis highlights the role of question-answer sequences as a place for the joint accomplishment of reality construction. For example, declarative request for confirmation sequences were crucial for jointly establishing the facts of the complaint. In some sequences involving adjusting answers, there was an inconsistency in the versions of reality produced by callers and conciliators, whereby the question constructed one version of reality to be agreed upon and the response adjusted the prior description in some way and thus re-constructed the version of reality.

Discursive psychology has long noted that knowledge is relevant to reality construction (Edwards & Potter, 1992). For example, early work in discursive psychology highlighted that people who are members of certain social categories are entitled to know certain things, and that these entitlements can be mobilised in order to legitimate or undermine versions of reality (Potter, 1996; Rapley, 1998). A contribution this thesis makes is to draw together conversation analytic work on epistemics and discursive psychological work on reality construction to show that epistemic stance, rights and entitlements can be implicated in constructing versions of reality.

Telephone-mediated helpline services

Conversation analysis and discursive psychology have provided an extensive understanding of how telephone helpline service interactions are accomplished in situ (Hepburn, Wilkinson, & Butler, 2014). In particular, such research has shown how epistemic matters are relevant for accomplishing various institutional tasks (e.g. Butler et al., 2010). The present thesis contributes to that by showing that speakers treated epistemic rights and entitlements as relevant for accomplishing the institutional task of jointly establishing the facts of a complaint.

The thesis forms part of an emerging research base on dispute resolution helpline services. It provides further evidence of some of the interactional practices used to

accomplish dispute resolution in situ (e.g. Weatherall, 2015; Weatherall & Stubbe, 2015). Previous research on interaction in dispute resolution has been broadly theoretical in focus (Glenn & Kuttner, 2013). In contrast, a valuable contribution of conversation analytic research, and by extension this thesis, is to provide an interactional lens to show how dispute resolution actually gets accomplished.

Evaluation of research and future directions

The analytic work of the thesis provided an understanding of epistemic matters at particular moments in calls to a dispute resolution helpline service. However, previous research has shown that epistemic matters are not necessarily static in conversation. For example, Mondada (2011) showed that speakers' epistemic positioning (i.e. their stances and statuses) were dynamic across a single episode of talk-in-interaction. An important conclusion from that study is that epistemic stance, status and asymmetry can be revised and re-established by speakers throughout an interaction. Therefore, the focus on a specific sequence meant that the present research did not consider the temporal nature of epistemic matters in these interactions. Future research might ask questions such as, what other actions or sequences in these interactions involve speakers contesting epistemic rights and how do callers and conciliators re-negotiate and re-establish their epistemic stances and asymmetries across an interaction?

The present thesis only investigated answers to declarative requests for confirmation, which followed the extensive research on responses that adjust or 'resist' aspects of prior questions (e.g. Stivers, 2005; Stivers & Hayashi, 2010). Focusing on the answers was beneficial because it allowed an insight into how different formats managed callers' epistemic rights in different ways, which lead to the unique analytic finding of the response continuum.

However, the emphasis on responses raises some important analytic questions about the declarative questions. For example, how did conciliators gain an understanding of the detail to be established and why were the matters in the declarative questions presented as shared knowledge? One analytic observation provides a possible answer to these questions. Specifically, “So” prefacing was a regular feature of the declarative questions in the collection, and this displayed that a question was based on an inference available from some prior talk (c.f. Heritage & Watson, 1979). This observation raises the possibility that “so” prefacing could be a systematic way for conciliators to display their limited entitlement to the knowledge claimed.

The narrow analytic focus provided a unique understanding of the sequential accomplishment of reality construction. However, the details being agreed upon in the request for confirmation sequences only constituted parts of broader complaints. In other words, examining sequences in isolation was problematic because the entire call was a process of collaboratively constructing the complaint as a version of reality. Furthermore, the calls examined in the thesis were only one part of a wider process of reality construction. An investigation of the other aspects of the reality construction process could be a fruitful direction for research. For example, another part of the process is the subsequent interactions between the conciliator and the caller’s electricity provider where further details are gathered and existing information is verified. These interactions may involve the collaborative reconstruction of the complaint through verifying or challenging the initial version of reality constructed by the caller and conciliator.

In institutional interaction, “the goals of the participants are more limited and institution-specific” compared to everyday interaction (Heritage, 2005, p. 104). As such, the actions being accomplished in institutional talk are likely more defined and specific than in mundane interaction because they are produced with an orientation to a particular

institutional framework (Heritage & Clayman, 2010). Therefore, examining this particular institutional setting allowed a clear grasp and understanding of the actions being accomplished in declarative request for confirmation sequences.

However, studying a single institution could mean that some of the findings may not be generalizable to other dispute resolution helpline services or even other institutional settings. For example, would it be the case in other dispute resolution services that declarative request for confirmation sequences are an important place where epistemic rights are contested? Also, would the response continuum found in this thesis be generalizable to other institutional settings? The presence of cases from a second related institution (EWOV) provides some initial evidence for the generalizability of the findings to other dispute resolution helpline services. The generality of the findings could be established by examining declarative request for confirmation sequences in other settings and in mundane conversation, where their functions and actions may not be so clear.

Practical applications

One question that is not addressed by the present research is what constitutes effective dispute resolution? The analytic work identified various interactional practices used to accomplish an institutional task in the interactions. However, the thesis did not explore what practical recommendations could be made to improve the dispute resolution process. Further work is needed to develop recommendations for the communication training of conciliators.

The Conversation Analytic Role-play Method (CARM) is a recently developed program for workplace communication training (Stokoe, 2014). It utilises a conversation analytic approach to provide training that is based on empirically grounded findings and materials from naturally occurring, as opposed to simulated, interaction (Stokoe, 2013a). The main aim of CARM is to identify examples of interactional problems or “roadblocks” in

institutional interaction and to provide effective practices to resolve these problems (Stokoe, 2014, p.256). For example, Stokoe (2013b) studied calls to a helpline service that offered free mediation services to the public. An interactional problem was callers not taking up the mediation services that were offered to them. Further research by Sikveland and Stokoe (2016) documented the practices speakers used to deal with this problem in situ. It was found that when call-takers asked if mediation would be “helpful”, it was less effective in eliciting uptake of services than if callers were asked whether they would be “willing” to undertake mediation. Sikveland and Stokoe recommended that call-takers be trained to use the latter practice in their calls.

At this stage, further work would be needed to identify specific roadblocks in calls to the EGCC. For example, the organization could be consulted in order to identify any interactional issues that could be dealt with more effectively. Further work would need to collect another corpus of calls, identify any interactional issues and then analyse how they are managed effectively and ineffectively. These findings would then be presented to the organization in the form of a CARM workshop (Stokoe, 2014). A CARM workshop with the EGCC would involve presenting recordings of the calls alongside the accompanying transcripts. The transcripts and recordings would be presented line by line and stopped at the first turn of the interactional trouble, at which point the employees would discuss what they would do, or what they think would happen, next (Stokoe, 2014). The next turn would then be played to show how the problem was actually dealt with. It is from these empirical findings of how the interactional problems are dealt with in situ that recommendations for training practices would be drawn and provided to the EGCC.

Future research collaborations with the EGCC are currently being considered, one option of which is the practical application of CARM following the steps described above.

Such an approach would allow the identification of effective practices that could be used to inform any future training of conciliators at the EGCC.

Concluding comments

This thesis is situated within a wider intellectual project to understand knowledge. Drawing inspiration from the approach of situated cognition and using discursive psychology and conversation analysis, this thesis took knowledge ‘out of the head’ and examined it as it was made relevant by speakers in the socially situated setting of telephone-mediated dispute resolution. The empirical work of the thesis highlighted that who was entitled and obligated to know something was an important normative dynamic in these interactions. Further, the analysis demonstrated that territories of knowledge, the issues of who knew what and who had the rights to know it, were managed and contested by speakers in situ. The thesis highlighted the practical nature of knowledge and reality construction in talk-in-interaction. It showed that knowledge and reality construction were reflexively tied to a key institutional task in telephone-mediated dispute resolution. It is clear that the search for what knowledge is, and its implications for social interaction does not end with this thesis. However, it is hoped that this research spurs further investigation into how knowledge is made relevant and deployed for practical purposes by participants in talk-in-interaction.

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Appendix A

Transcript formatting

Extracts of transcript were presented throughout the thesis. A typical example is shown below.

Extract A.1:

EGCC2015-010

01 CON: **.hh and so this is in regards to y- thee**
02 **electricity: (0.2) supply at your home?**
03 (0.5)
04 CAL: **.hh yes.**

Each extract was numbered and given a code. The code identified which corpus the transcript was taken from; the EGCC corpora collected in 2015 or 2008, or the EWOV corpus. The latter part of the code identified which file from the particular corpus the extract was taken from. Every line of the transcript was given a number for ease of reference. Each speaker was given a three letter identifier, where CON referred to the conciliator and CAL referred to the caller. The talk of each respective speaker was presented following these identifiers. The lines of interest were indicated in boldface

Appendix B

Conversation analytic transcription conventions

Conversation analysis transcribes talk-in-interaction using the notation and conventions developed by Gail Jefferson. The following table presents the transcription conventions used in the extracts throughout the thesis.

Tables B1-B3 (Adapted from Hepburn, 2004 and Jefferson, 2004):

Temporal and Sequential Notation

Notation	Description
[Overlap onset: where two (or more) speakers begin talking at once.
]	Overlap offset: the end of overlapping talk.
CON: word= CAL: =word	Equals signs indicate no pauses between speakers' turns.
CON: word=word	Equals signs within same turn indicates no silence between words, a rush-through in speech.
(.)	A micropause, less than two tenths of a second.
(0.5), (1.4)	Silences timed to tenths of a second.

Characteristics of Speech Delivery

Notation	Description
Wo:rd	Upward intonation contour, sound moves down-to-up.
W <u>o</u> :rd	Downward intonation contour, sound moves up-to-down.
Wo::::rd	Extension of prior sound. The more colons, the longer the extension.
Wor-	Sound cut-off.
.	Falling intonation.
?	Rising intonation.
,	Slight rise in intonation.
¿	Rising intonation that is in between a question mark and comma.
<u>word</u>	Emphasis or stress on part of a word.
WOrd	Capital letters indicate louder talk (louder than simple emphasis).
°word°	Words enclosed by degree signs are spoken quietly

°°word°°	Words enclosed by double degree signs are spoken even quieter.
↑	Shift to a higher pitch.
↓	Shift to a lower pitch.
£word£	Words enclosed by pound signs are spoken in a “smiling” voice
#word#	Words enclosed by hash signs are spoken with a “creaky” voice.
>word<	Indicates a portion of talk that is quicker relative to that surrounding it.
<word>	Indicates a portion of talk that is slower relative to that surrounding it.
<word	Indicates talk that is begun quicker than expected or jump-started.
.hhhhhh	Audible inhalation. The more h’s the longer the inhalation.
hhhhhh	Audible exhalation. The more h’s the longer the exhalation.
wo <i>h</i> rd	Italic h’s indicate breathiness within a word.
hah, hih and variants	Indicate laughter tokens. Each token represents a single ‘beat’ of laughter. Tokens are transcribed as they sound phonetically.
Wo(h)rd	Interpolated particles of aspiration. Laughter or plosive aspiration occurring within a word.
.snih	Sniffing.

Transcriber Descriptions

Notation	Description
(word word word)	Transcriber’s best guess as to what was said.
(word/word)	Transcriber’s provision of two potential hearings.
()	Transcriber unsure as to what was said.
((Receiver lifted))	Double brackets indicate transcriber comments or interpretation of something they hear that is not talk.

Appendix C

Information sheet and consent form provided to conciliators



Information Sheet to Conciliators

Office of the Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner Scheme

David Edmonds
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Victoria University of Wellington
Email: *david.edmonds@vuw.ac.nz*

Dr Ann Weatherall
Reader, School of Psychology

Victoria University of Wellington
Email: *ann.weatherall@vuw.ac.nz*
Phone: 4635211

What is the purpose of this research?

The aim of this project is to develop an understanding of interactions in phone calls to the Office of the Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner Scheme (The Office). A focus is the way in which the telephone service actually operates – with a view to being able to specify what kinds of practices are most effective in providing the best possible support for callers. The analyses of the recordings aim to answer questions such as:

- What are the kinds of issues or matters that callers bring up during the course of a call?
- When are issues other than complaints brought up in the calls?
- How do callers present their problems - and how do conciliators respond to them?
- How – if at all – do conciliators draw on their own experience?
- What kinds of information are offered - and how are they received?

Who is conducting the research?

- The project is for a Master's thesis through Victoria University of Wellington. This research has been approved by the School of Psychology Human Ethics Committee under delegated authority of Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Committee.

What is involved if you agree to participate?

- If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to record the calls you handle as part of your work for Office of the Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner Scheme.
- You will be required to seek permission for recording from the other participant in each conversation (see instructions).

- Recordings will continue until we have a sample of calls that seems to represent the range of matters dealt with by Office of the Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner Scheme.
- The researchers will transcribe the calls. The transcripts and the recordings are the data for the study.
- You are free to stop recording your calls at any stage of the research.
- You can decide if there are any calls you would not like included in the research.
- The researchers will ask you to confirm the calls to be included in the study when they transfer them to their storage devices.
- Your participation in this project will have no impact on job evaluation or other issues relating to your employment.

Privacy and Confidentiality

- Your consent forms and the data will be safely archived indefinitely at Victoria University of Wellington.
- Any identifying information will be removed from the transcripts.
- Any identifying information in the recordings of the calls will be removed as much as possible by editing it out.
- Your data will not be used by Office of the Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner Scheme to assess job performance.
- In accordance with the requirements of some scientific journals and professional organizations, your data may be shared with other competent researchers.
- Your data may be used in other, related studies.
- A copy of the data (with all identifying information removed) will remain in the custody of the researchers at their respective locations (i.e. Victoria University of Wellington).
- Any transcripts used for training purposes will be anonymous and not identify conciliators

What happens to the information that you provide?

- The data you provide may be included in publications to scientific journals, presentations at scientific conferences and/or used for teaching or training.

The study will result in a report that you will be given a copy of. We will also run a workshop at Office of the Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner Scheme which will give feedback about the calls.

If you have any further questions regarding this study please contact any one of us above.

Statement of consent

I have read the information about this research and any questions I wanted to ask have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research.

I understand that my calls will be recorded and that I need to gain the consent from callers before recording a call.

I understand that I can stop recording my calls at any time and I can indicate to the researchers any calls I do not want included in the research.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Copy to:

[a] participant,

[b] researcher (initial both copies below)