Constructing reason-for-the-call turns in everyday telephone conversation*

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June 2001

In recognition of the enthusiasm he has brought to all aspects of the study of spoken verbal interaction, we dedicate this series to Professor Dr. Aldo di Luzio, University of Konstanz.

1   Introduction

One of the central concerns in the linguistic study of talk-in-interaction is to treat language as a set of resources (among others) molded by and deployed in the service of tasks incumbent upon interlocutors engaged in a speech encounter. That is to say, beyond any specific research issue in the field of interaction and grammar (Ochs, Schegloff and Thompson 1996) or interaction and prosody (Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 1996) lies a more general question: What problems must be resolved in order for speakers to succeed in interacting verbally with one another? How are specific linguistic forms helpful in addressing these problems?

As it happens, some of the tasks facing participants in an interactional encounter derive from the very nature of the communicative mode at hand. In telephone communication, for instance, where an occasion for talk must be generated at a distance, a warrant from the caller for initiating the occasion becomes relevant. This warrant is typically announced to the called party in the form of what has come to be termed a *reason for the call* (Sacks 1992a, 1992b; Schegloff & Sacks 1973, Schegloff 1986).[*] Classifying something as a reason for the call not only provides an account for a particular occasion of talk, it also has consequences for subsequent talk, in that the identities and relevancies it establishes condition appropriate ways of responding (Sacks 1992a: 773-76). Recipients of reason-for-the-call announcements may thus choose to respond accordingly or not.[†] Given the fact that callers must formulate a reason for calling and that called parties must recognize - among the various things that get said by the caller - some one thing as being the warrant for the call and respond to it relevantly - it is of considerable linguistic interest to inquire into the nature of the practices used to accomplish this task so endemic to telephone conversation.

The present study engages in just such an inquiry, expanding an earlier investigation of reason-for-the-call turns in telephone calls to an American radio phone-in program (Couper-Kuhlen 2001). It looks, however, at private, everyday telephone calls – ones made to family, friends and acquaintances. The data for the study come from the Holt corpus, a relatively large collection of informal telephone calls made several years ago from and to the telephone of one British family

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[*] In an early discussion of telephone calls as accountable actions (Lecture 10, Fall 1964-Spring 1965), Sacks formulates it as follows: „…by and large on the first opportunity to talk after greetings, the person who's called gives an account of how they happened to make the call" (1992a: 73).

[†] In Sacks' words: „…reason-for-call status is a kind of contingent status that one can claim and that can be accepted or denied" (1992b: 170). And somewhat earlier in the same lecture: „It's perfectly possible to produce what you figure is a reason-for-a-call item, and for the one you're talking to to respond to it as not a reason for a call. And that is a specific issue in a conversation, and there are ways of proving that you recognize and accept its status" (1992b: 169).

located in southern England.[‡] Most of these calls have been meticulously transcribed by Gail Jefferson and to the extent possible her transcriptions have been retained.[§] Where no prior transcription was available for the call in question, I have transcribed the talk myself.[**]

The focus in this study – as in its predecessor - has been on one particular sequential position in telephone calls, namely on so-called *anchor position*. This is Schegloff's term for the slot immediately following four standard sequences in the opening: summons/answer, identification, exchange of greetings and exchange of *how-are-you*s, assuming the latter are relevant for the kind of talk involved (1986:116). It will be argued here that participants have several tasks to face at this particular juncture in everyday telephone calls. Callers must address the issue of warranting their call here, i.e. they must formulate – or begin to formulate - a reason for the call. Called parties in turn must recognize this move for what it is, viz. a formulation of the reason for the call. Moreover, they must be sensitive to the fact that the formulation task may require more than a single turn-constructional unit (TCU) and must therefore be able to distinguish a partial, incomplete formulation of the reason for the call from a full and complete one. For the accomplishment of these tasks, linguistic forms serve as resources not only because they permit the construction of a turn-at-talk, but because through their selection and combination they create a context-sensitive or ‚recipient' design for the turn in question which cues inferences concerning its status as a single- or multi-unit production. It will be shown that the construction of TCUs at anchor position in private British telephone calls depends crucially on an interplay of verbal and non-verbal, specifically prosodic, devices and that it is with reference to these devices that its status in interaction is negotiated.

2 Anchor position, first topics and reason-for-the-call turns

As Schegloff (1986) has pointed out, anchor position is the locus in telephone conversation where callers are routinely expected to say why they have called. This may be done overtly, e.g. by the use of formats such as *I'm calling to ask…* or *I just wanted to tell you…*. Alternatively it may be accomplished inferentially: a first topic introduced in anchor position will be inferred to be the reason for the call or related to it in some way (see also Levinson 1983). Schegloff describes the relation between a first topic and the reason for the call as follows:

[‡] I am grateful to Elizabeth Holt for permission to use these materials and to Gail Jefferson for access to the transcripts. Altogether my collection consists of 57 informal telephone calls.

[§] See Psathas & Anderson 1990 for an overview of notational conventions employed in Jefferson's transcriptions. To facilitate prosodic analysis, I have placed each new intonation phrase in these transcripts on a separate line. (Intonation phrase boundaries are generally signalled by punctuation marks in Jefferson's notation system.) All other additions to her transcripts have been made after judicious consideration of the recordings and are indicated accordingly.

> …the opening …provides a base position (I will call it the ‚anchor position') for the introduction of ‚first topic'… Ordinarily it is the caller…who, in the first instance, gets to initiate first topic, initiates it in the anchor position, and regularly uses the opportunity to introduce something overtly announced to be, or readily analyzable (by co-participant and academic analyst) as, the ‚reason for the call'… (1986:116)

Of course not all telephone calls are necessarily made with a specific reason in mind. In particular, when close family members and other intimates call each other ‚just to chat', an official reason for the call may be lacking altogether. In such calls, although there is a first topic which gets talked about, no one single issue is presented as being the particular one which has motivated the call.[††] The following study is perforce restricted to calls in which callers articulate, overtly or non-overtly, something which is analyzable as a reason for calling in the opening of their call. Extract (1) shows a prototypical instance.

```
24          Holt Sept/Oct 1988 1:9
   [Gordon, a teenager, is calling his friend Ken.]

1          Ken:  H'lo Ca'bry four eight sev'n two three?=
2          Gor:  =.p.t Hello Ken.
3          Ken:  Hello [:.
4 ->  Gor:        [.p.hhhh ↑Eh:m (.)
5 ->        ↑I jus' phone' to find out what's happening about
            tonight. [.k.hh..hhh[hhh
6          Ken:           [---(0.8)--[I haven' got a ↓clue.
```

In line 1 Ken responds to the ring of the telephone by identifying the number which the caller has reached. Gordon, the caller, manifestly recognizes Ken from his voice during this number identification, as his recognitional *hello Ken* in line 2 witnesses. Ken responds with a recognitional *hello* himself (line 3), signalling that he too has identified his interlocutor by voice. Following this exchange of *hello*s, the floor reverts to the caller. It is at this point that Gordon launches into a formulation of the reason for his call: *I jus' phone' to find out what's happening about tonight* (line 5). Note that for Gordon and his friend an exchange of *how-are-you*s does not appear to be relevant, so that anchor position in this case comes immediately after the exchange of greetings.

There are several things to observe about the turn in which Gordon announces his reason for calling. First, it is prefaced by an inbreath and a stretched *eh:m* (line 4): such ‚beginnings' (Schegloff 1996) are routinely found in reason-for-the-call turns in my materials.[‡‡] Inbreaths and

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[**] Examples 2, 7 and 13 below are my own rough transcriptions, made using the GAT notation system (Selting et al 1998).
[††] It is in cases like these that topic initial elicitors such as *what's doing, what do you know, what's up* may be used by the caller or the called party to ‚generate' a first topic of talk (Button & Casey 1984, 1985).
[‡‡] There is thus an interesting parallel to the *em*-prefaces on reason-for-the-call turns in British radio phone-ins which Rae (2000) has identified.

hesitation devices delay the actual onset of the turn and – by contrast with default next-turn timing (i.e. no gap or overlap) - mark it from the outset as having special status. Second, the high pitch on ⬆*Eh:m* and on the first syllables of the following phrase ⬆*I jus' phone' to….* These are two instances of what has been termed *high onset*: noticeably high pitch on the first accented syllable of an intonation phrase.[§§] High onset also occurs routinely on reason-for-the-call turns in the British materials. Finally note that Gordon's reason for calling is formulated succinctly in a single turn-constructional unit (Ford and Thompson 1996, Selting 1998). On completion of this TCU, his turn is response-relevant and Ken, following a brief pause, indeed provides a response in next turn.

Anchor position and with it a formulation of the reason for the call may of course be delayed in private telephone calls due to contingencies of various sorts. One occasion on which a delay occurs is seen in extract (2): here a sequence develops off the called party's response to a *how-are-you* question, postponing the slot where the caller can be expected to announce the reason for calling. Once the inserted sequence is complete, however, the caller's announcement of the reason for the call becomes relevant:

(2) Holt Sept/Oct 1988 (II) 2:2
   [Bob is the caller. Gordon is Leslie's son.]

```
1           Les:   HELlo::::?
2                     ( . )
3           Bob:   helLO Leslie,=
4                     =it's Bob PARker here,
5           Les:   ⬆oh HELlo:::,[hh
6 ->  Bob:                     [HOW are you.
7           Les:   oo:::hh -
8                     ALright;
9 ->               MISSing GORdon;
10                     .hhh
11          Bob:   what's happening to GORdon.=
12          Les:   =well he's in Nor- in ehm::
13                     .hhh ⬇<oh where IS he now;>
14                     .hhh uh::m::::
15                     UP the NORTH;
16                     NEWcastle.
17                     huhn huhn .hh
18          Bob:   is his college NEWcastle.
19          Les:   yes. (.) yes.
20          Bob:   so- (.)
21                     THAT means you're all on your LONEsome.
22          Les:   ⬆<yes; yes.>
23                     un[FORtunately.
24          Bob:     [⬇aaww::::
25          Les:   ⬇aaww::
26          Bob:   ⬇<NEVer mind.>
27          Les:   eh huh huhnh .hhh
28-> Bob:   ⬆uhm:::
```

[§§] ,Noticeably high pitch' can mean either high in relation to the speaker's natural voice range or high relative to prior pitch accents in a comparable position in the intonation phrase (Couper-Kuhlen 1986).

```
29          Les:  we're ↑HOPing to come Over now that we're LESS uhm:
                  BUSy;
30          Bob:  yes,
31                well that'll be LOVEly.
32                you're ALways welcome of COURSE.
33          Les:  yes.=
34                =THANK=you.
35->  Bob:  ↑uhm LESlie;
36->        the ↑REAson why I'm phoning:;
37->        is I'm ↑JUST wondering whether you might be a-
                  .h able to help a FAMily: in (.) NEVerstowie,
38                who've HAD rather a TRAGedy:,
39                (.)
40                .hhh uhm:
41    their youngest SON: was killed: on the N:everstowie
      BYpass:;
42      Les:  some YEARS ago?
43      Bob:  couple of WEEKS ago.
```

((52 lines of talk about the accident and the bereaved family))

```
95          Bob:  ↑IS this something you feel you could take un- [on-
96          Les:
                                                        [YES,
97                CERtainly.
```

When Bob the caller asks Leslie *how are you* in line 6, Leslie's response *missing Gordon* in line 9 occasions more talk about why she misses her son and where he is at the moment. The sequence concerning Gordon is, however, brought to a collaborative close in lines 26-27 with Bob's *never mind* and Leslie's subsequent floor pass. The slot which comes at its conclusion is now a potential anchor position (line 28) and Bob indeed launches into a high-pitched, stretched *uhm::* here, a routine practice as we have seen for prefacing a reason-for-the-call turn. Yet Leslie pre-empts Bob's turn-at-talk at this point by herself launching into something which she treats as having priority over what Bob was projectably going to say.[***] Bob handles Leslie's announcement gracefully but more or less routinely with an expression of welcome, to which Leslie responds in an equally perfunctory fashion (line 33-34).

At the conclusion of this sequence Bob's reason for calling becomes relevant again (line 35). Note that Bob launches the next turn once again with a high-pitched *uhm*, this time accompanied by a term of direct address to Leslie. High onsets occur here not only on the initial *↑uhm Leslie* (line 35) but on the introductory formula *the ↑reason why I'm phoning:* (line 36) as well as on the intonation phrase which follows *is I'm ↑just wondering whether you might be a- .h able to help a family: in (.) Neverstowie* (line 37). Yet upon completion of thís initial TCU,[†††]

[***] It may be by reference to what Leslie anticipates Bob's call to be doing that she sees it as urgent to declare her intention to pay him a visit before he announces his reason for calling.
[†††] What I am calling an initial TCU here comprises *↑uhm Leslie; the ↑reason why I'm phoning:; is I'm ↑just wondering whether you might be able to help a family: in (.) Neverstowie,* i.e. a stretch of talk encompassing several intonation phrases which however does not reach a point of possible syntactic and semantic completion in its

Bob's turn is not yet response-relevant: instead Bob proceeds to construct an elaborate background to his inquiry, during which time Leslie withholds anything hearable as a response directed towards it.[‡‡‡] It is not until 52 lines later when Bob inquires directly ⇑*Is this something you feel you could take un- on* (line 95) that Leslie actually responds to the request which has been presented as Bob's reason for calling.

Extract (2) makes it clear that sequences inserted at a potential anchor position in such calls merely postpone the relevance of formulating a reason for the call; they do not cancel it. Moreover, a comparison of (2) with (1) demonstrates that reason-for-the-call turns may be either ‚simple', consisting of a single TCU which is response-relevant immediately upon conclusion, or ‚complex', consisting of two or more TCUs which temporarily suspend the relevance of a response until the projected multi-unit turn is complete.

3   The prosodic formatting of reason-for-the call-turns in the Holt collection

An earlier study of American radio phone-ins (Couper-Kuhlen 2001) suggested that prosodic formatting – especially high onset – is a significant design feature in reason-for-the-call turns. But the investigation of prosody in reason-for-the-call turns in the Holt materials produced a number of surprises in this respect.

The first surprise was the discovery that high onsets are massively present in simple reason-for-the-call turns *regardless of grammatical form*. This is signficant because handbooks on English intonation have consistently claimed that initial high pitch is characteristic of a particular sentence type in British English, namely yes-no questions (see e.g. Halliday 1970). So if we follow such handbooks, the high pitch in the anchor-position turn of extract (3) below, for instance, might be attributable to its grammatical form rather than to some interactional function:

(3) Holt Christmas 1985:3
   [Leslie is the caller]

```
1          Myr:  two eight?
2                    (0.2)
3          Les:  Oh hello:,
4                    uhm  hh Leslie ⇑Field ↓he:re?
5                    (0.6)
6          Myr:  Sorry?
7                    (.)
8          Les:  Leslie[Fie:ld?
```

---

sequential environment until *Neverstowie*. I discuss the relevance of possible intonational ‚completion' for an initial TCU in §5.2.
[‡‡‡] Note that in line 39 Leslie passes up an opportunity to take over the floor herself. In line 42 she assumes the floor merely to initiate repair.

```
9         Myr:      [↑Oh hell↓o hell↓↓o[: ˙Leslie yes sorry˙
10        Les:                        [Hello,
11                  (.)
12->  Les:  ↑Are you thinkin:g of comin:g t'the meeting t'↓night
13        Myr:  D'you know I'm: terribly ↓sorry.
14                  I wz gun' to ring you in a short while
15                  hhh I've had a phone call fr'm ↓Ben,
16                  he's down in Devon.
17                  'n he's not gun' to get back t'night,
18                  hh[hh
19        Les:     [Ye[s.
```

Here the first topic, and consequently what is analyzably Leslie's reason for the call, is formatted as a yes-no question in a single TCU: *↑Are you thinkin:g of comin:g t'the meeting t'↓night* (line 12), and its high pitch might be thought derivable from this particular sentence type. But cases like the one in extract (4) cast doubt on sentence type as a viable explanation for initial high pitch in reason-for-the-call turns:

(4) Holt July 1986 1:4
    [Leslie is the caller.]

```
1         Gwe:  ...o,
2                  (0.6)
3         Les:  Oh hello- (0.2)
4                  Is ↑tha(.)t uh Missiz Carstairs,
5         Gwe:  Ye:s?
6         Les:  Oh hello .hh
7                  This is Leslie Field he:[re,
8         Gwe:                                                    [Oh
hello
9                  (0.8)
10        Les:  Ehm (.) .tch (0.7)
11->             wuh- ↑↑What's this about- (0.5) u-th' Duvals.
12               (0.6)
13        Gwe:  I ↑don't know.=
14               =I haven't heard anything at ↑a:ll.
15               (1.1)
16        Les:  Oh:.
```

Here the first topic and arguably Leslie's reason for the call is formatted as a wh-question with extra high pitch: *↑↑What's this about- (0.5) u-th' Duvals* (line 11). Initial high pitch thus appears to be an independent feature of this turn. Likewise in extract (5):

(5) Holt Christmas 1985:6
    [Leslie is the caller.]

```
1     Bod:      one three:?
2     Les:      .hh Oh hello Bodwin it's me Leslie.
3               (0.4)
4     Bod:      .hh Leslie.
5               eh Field.
6               (.)
7     Les:      Yes,
```

```
8 ->              ,n ↑coming t'↓night.
9      Bod:     Oh great.
```

In this instance the first topic and what is hearably Leslie's reason for the call is expressed as a declarative *,n ↑coming t'↓night* (line 8): its high pitch is also not predictable from grammatical form. An initial finding of the present study is thus that simple reason-for-the-call turns in the British materials begin high *regardless* of grammatical form.

But it is not only *simple* reason-for-the-call turns which are routinely designed to begin high. This was the second surprise. *Complex* reason-for-the-call turns in the data examined also invariably start high. Extract (2) is a case in point. Bob's reason for calling extends over several TCUs and indeed over several turns, yet the initial TCU has multiple high onsets (lines 35, 36 and 37):

(2) Holt Sept/Oct 1988 (II) 2:2 [Excerpt]

```
35->  Bob:  ↑uhm LESlie;
36->           the ↑REAson why I'm phoning:;
37->           is I'm ↑JUST wondering whether you might be a-
                    .h able to help a FAMily: in (.) NEVerstowie,
38                 who've HAD rather a TRAGedy:,
39                 (.)
40                 .hhh uhm:
41                 their youngest SON: was killed: on the N:everstowie
        BYpass:;
42      Les:  some YEARS ago?
43      Bob:  couple of WEEKS ago.
```

((52 lines of talk about the accident and the bereaved family))

```
95           Bob:  ↑IS this something you feel you could take un- [on-
96           Les:
                                              [YES,
97                 CERtainly.
```

In fact, even turns which *preempt* anchor position for one contingency or another begin high. Leslie's floor-usurping turn in line 29 of extract (2), for instance, is a case in point:

(2) Holt Sept/Oct 1988 (II) 2:2 [Excerpt]

```
1            Les:  HELlo:::?
2                     ( . )
3            Bob:  helLO Leslie,=
4                     =it's Bob PARker here,
5            Les:  ↑oh HELlo:::,[hh
6            Bob:                    [HOW are you.
7            Les:  oo:::hh -
8                  ALright;
9                  MISSing GORdon;
10                 .hhh
11           Bob:  what's happening to Gordon.=
12           Les:  =well he's in Nor- in ehm::
13                 .hhh ↓<oh where IS he now;>
```

```
14                      .hhh uh::m::::
15                      UP the NORTH;
16                      NEWcastle.
17                      huhn huhn .hh
18         Bob:  is his college NEWcastle.
19         Les:  yes. (.) yes.
20         Bob:  so- (.)
21               THAT means you're all on your LONEsome.
22         Les:  ↑<yes; yes.>
23                      un[FORtunately.
24         Bob:     [↓aaww::::
25         Les:  ↓aaww::
26         Bob:  ↓<NEVer mind.>
27         Les:  eh huh huhnh .hhh
28         Bob:  ↑uhm:::
29->  Les:  we're ↑HOPing to come Over now that we're LESS uhm:
29                     BUSy;
30         Bob:  yes,
31               well that'll be LOVEly.
32               you're ALways welcome of COURSE.
33         Les:  yes.=
34               =THANK=you.
```

The high onset in line 29 *we're ↑hoping to come over now that we're less uhm: busy* is used in what is projectably anchor position to format a turn which the called party arguably wishes to put on record before the caller formulates a reason for calling.

Conceivably of course, Leslie's initial high pitch in line 29 could be attributed to the competitive nature of her coming in, as the called party, in what is projectably anchor position and therefore caller's turn (French/Local 1983). Yet the use of high onset to preempt a reason for the call in anchor position is a much more widespread practice and is employed by callers as well. Excerpt (6) instantiates anchor-position preemption by a caller:

(6) Holt 2:7
    [Leslie is the caller; opening unrecorded.]§§§

```
1          Les:  ...eefon,
2          Cou:  It i:s, yah,
3                   (.)
4          Les:  Oh:, (.) this is Missiz Field he:re< (.)
5 ->             I've been ↑tryin' t'get you,
6 ->             but (.) [I hant- haven't caught you at ho:me.
7          Cou:        [Oh y-
8          Cou:  Yeah.h
9                   (.)
10-> Les:  Uhm (.) ↑Are you going t'Sundee services th's morning=
11               =because um .h my husband's going an' he owes you
s'money
                 for s'm ↓lo[gs.
12         Cou:           [Oh hhhhuh!
```

Here Leslie the caller preempts anchor position in order to announce unsuccessful attempts at reaching her interlocutor earlier: *I've been ↑tryin' t'get you, but (.) I hant- haven't caught you at ho:me* (lines 5-6) and she uses noticeably high onset on the first intonation phrase of this turn. Interactionally speaking, her move is an instance of ‚telling my side' (Pomerantz 1980) and may be dsigned to create an opportunity for her interlocutor to provide information about why she has been unable to reach him. When Cou is not forthcoming with an account, however (see the gap at line 9), the sequence is brought to an early close and the floor reverts to caller. It is at this point that Leslie proceeds to formulate what is hearably her reason for calling: *↑Are you going t'Sundee services th's morning* (line 10), likewise formatted with high onset. The second surprise finding of this study is thus that virtually *all* initial TCUs in an anchor-position or potential anchor-position turn in the British materials are formatted with high onset. In fact, high onset may be a *general* feature of sequence-initiating or topic-initiating turns in informal British conversation, a matter deserving of further research.

These rather unanticipated findings concerning high onset in reason-for-the-call turns in the Holt materials are significant for another reason: they stand in stark contrast to the pattern detected in a set of American English materials from telephone calls on radio phone-ins (Couper-Kuhlen 2001). In the American data callers were found to rely systematically on the use of high onset to cue the reasons for their call. They routinely withheld high onset, however, when their anchor-position TCU was serving as a preliminary or a ‚pre-pre' (Schegloff 1980), or was treating some contingency as ancillary to the reason for the call. Typically an anchor-position turn formatted *with* high onset in the American data was initiating a ‚big package', with speakers taking more than one TCU to elaborate on why they were calling in and the moderator withholding a response until the turn was hearably complete. Anchor-position TCUs formatted *without* high onset, on the other hand, tended to receive immediate uptake from the moderator.

Now when we compare this institutional pattern with the informal telephone calls of the Holt collection - where high onsets appear in anchor position or projected anchor position regardless of whether the turn is multi-unit or not and regardless of what the turn is doing - an interesting question arises. If private callers *do not* operate with high onset as a means for distinguishing preliminary or ancillary business from ‚real' business in anchor position, what do they do instead? In the following, I will examine the means which (British) private callers *do* use to cue their anchor-position turns as ‚big packages'.[****]

[****] Because of the incommensurability of the data sets employed in Couper-Kuhlen 2001 and the present study, the hypothesis that the relevant factor is American vs. British repertoires rather than institutional vs. private talk cannot be discounted. Note 12 indeed provides some initial support for this hypothesis. To resolve the question fully, however, a comparable analysis of private American telephone calls must be carried out.

4   Anchor-position TCUs: Reason for the call or build-up to the reason for the call?

In fact it *is* an interactional issue whether the first TCU of a caller's anchor-position turn is heard as initiating a ‚big package' or not. If the turn is going to be a multi-unit turn, no response is needed following the first TCU; if the turn is not going to be multi-unit, it is immediately response-relevant on completion of the first TCU. To see this, compare excerpts (1) and (2). In (1) Ken responded immediately following Gordon's initial anchor-position TCU: *⇑I jus' phone' to find out what's happening about tonight.* By contrast, in (2), following Bob's anchor-position TCU: *⇑uhm Leslie; the ⇑reason why I'm phoning:; is I'm ⇑just wondering whether you might be a- h able to help a family: in (.) Neverstowie,* Leslie withholds a response, even when Bob leaves a space where she could possibly come in (line 39). Bob is clearly building his turn to be multi-unit, and his recipient holds off with a response during the build-up (or alternatively, uses the available spaces only to initiate repair). Callers thus have a choice at anchor position: they may formulate their reason for the call succinctly in a single TCU, which makes a full response immediately relevant upon its completion. Or they may use their initial TCU to launch a multi-unit reason-for-the-call turn. In this case, the initial TCU requires no immediate uptake: the called party is not expected to provide anything more substantial than a continuer following this first unit.[††††]

The problem for a called party is therefore to know whether to take over the floor after the first TCU in anchor position or not. This can result in a dilemma if the first TCU is constructed in a way which allows an ambiguous interpretation, i.e. if it can be either the reason for the call or a build-up to the reason for the call. Take Leslie's anchor-position TCU in extract (5), for instance.

(5) Holt Christmas 1985:6
   [Leslie is the caller.]

```
1     Bod:     one three:?
2     Les:     .hh Oh hello Bodwin it's me Leslie.
3              (0.4)
4     Bod:     .hh Leslie.
5              eh Field.
6              (.)
7     Les:     Yes,
8 ->           ,n ⇑coming t'⇓night.
9     Bod:     Oh great.
```

[††††] Cf. Schegloff 1982. By far the most common continuer in the Holt materials is the token *yes*, often drawn out and produced with low rising intonation.

How does Bodwin, the called party, know to respond immediately to the announcement *,n ↑coming t'↓night* (line 8) as a piece of news presumably constituting a complete formulation of Leslie's reason for calling, whereas the called party in (7) below holds off with a full-fledged response after a similar TCU in anchor position (line 13)?

(7) Holt Sept/Oct 1988 (II)1:7
    [Leslie is the caller; opening unrecorded]

```
1              Les:  oh HELlo.
2                       ↑IS::: uhm that Christopher.
3              Chr:  it IS,
4                       yes,
5              Les:  oh HELlo.
6                       this is LESlie.
7                       ( . )
8              Chr:  oh ↑HELlo Leslie,
9              Les:  HELlo,
10                      HOW are you.
11             Chr:  I'm very WELL thanks,
12             Les:  good,
13->                 ehm::: we're ↑COMing to Maidstone: et hhh toMORrow.
14->   Chr:  yes,
15             Les:  .hh and I don't REALly know what my mother's plans ARE.
16                      (.) uhm
17                      so I CAN'T really make- arrangements- a-
18                      she- she ISn't one for making many arRANGEments
19                      but she has- uhm:: MEALS and so on PLANNED:,
20                      so I BETter have a WORD with her:.
21->                 but I ↑WONder perhaps if we could MEET sometime,
                        .hhh
22->   Chr:  yes;
23                      I would THINK so Leslie,
24                      uhm::,
```

The anchor-position turns in both (5) and (7) begin with a TCU which reports an upcoming activity treated as newsworthy enough to be introduced in first-topic slot. Yet in (5) the TCU is dealt with as immediately response-relevant, whereas in (7) a similar announcement is treated as requiring more work before it is ready for anything more than a continuer. The research question which emerges from such a comparison is thus: What resources do callers deploy in anchor position to make it recognizable that their TCU is a complete formulation of the reason for the call and now response-ready, as opposed to being merely *part* of a complete formulation and therefore projective of more to come?

5   Practices for initiating a multi-unit reason-for-the-call turn

To answer the research question formulated above, I will examine verbal and non-verbal practices for initiating a *multi-unit* reason-for-the-call turn in the following and consider single-unit reason-for-the-call turns only by way of contrast. Note that by ,multi-unit turn' I refer to a spate of talk by one speaker composed of more than one TCU and receiving no intermediate

full-fledged response from recipient. Examples among the excerpts discussed so far are (2), (6) and (7). A ‚multi-unit turn' in my understanding thus subsumes cases in which the recipient comes in e.g. with a repair initiator, as in line 42 of (2), or with a continuer, as in line 14 of (7), during its construction.

5.1 Verbal practices

To establish a base of comparison, let us consider first the linguistic make-up of single-unit reason-for-the-call turns. In the materials examined, these tend on the whole to consist maximally of one (finite, non-embedded) clause. Examples from the excerpts considered so far include:

(3) ⇑*Are you thinkin:g of comin:g t'the meeting t'↓night*

(4) ⇑⇑*What's this about- (0.5) u-th' Duvals*

(5) ‚*n ⇑coming t'↓night*

Further examples from material not discussed here are:

    Could your husband call my mother-in-law please (Holt 1:6)

    How did Lord Geoff get on (Holt May 1988 1:2)

    On Sunday I take it that is correct that there isn't a Sunday School (Holt 2:1)

    I understand that you didn't get a ballot paper (Holt 2:8)

Multi-unit reason-for-the-call turns, by contrast, appear to comprise more than one (finite, non-embedded) clause: see, for example, extracts (2), (6) and (7).

With the single-unit pattern in mind, we can now consider how speakers produce the extra linguistic structure typical of multi-unit turns. One means of *minimally* expanding clausal structure in anchor position which is documented in the materials at hand is the use of a topicalization device. Linguistically speaking, this practice involves separating off a clause element (typically one which contains information presumed accessible to the recipient) into a relatively independent syntactic construction and proffering it first in an intonation phrase of its own.[‡‡‡‡] As extract (8) illustrates, it is not unusual for a topicalization structure of this sort to receive uptake in the form of a continuer.

(8) Holt X (Christmas) 2:2.5
   [Mum is the caller.]

[‡‡‡‡] ‚Topicalization device' in the understanding given here would thus include left dislocation structures such as *The last paragraph – I seem to remember it being different from what's printed* (Geluykens 1992: 35), but not so-called Y-movement or preposing structures of the sort *One of these rugs Chambers delivered to Harry Dexter White* (Ward 1988: 3).

```
1          Les:  ...↑o?
2                   (1.8)
3          Les:  Hell↑o::,
4                   (2.2)
5          Les:  HELLO:?
6          Mum:  Hello:?
7                   (0.3)
8          Les:  Oh hello Mu[m?
9          Mum:              [↑Hello love .hh
10                   ↑Uh:m (.) Leslie:
11                   (0.2)
12         Les:  Ye:s?
13->  Mum:  aa baat A↑bout tomorro:w,
14->  Les:  ih-Ye::s?
15         Mum:  I ↑think (.) probably it will be best if I go on
           (0.2) t'Yeovil.
16         Les:  Yes ↑okay love,hh[hh
```

Rather than formulating her reason for calling as a single TCU: *I think probably it will be best if I go on to Yeovil tomorrow*, Mum places the temporal expression *tomorrow* in a separate and syntactically independent prepositional phrase *A↑bout tomorro:w* and presents this in its own intonation phrase first. Leslie's continuer displays an understanding of the turn so far and thus serves as a warrant for Mum to continue. Use of a topicalization device such as *About X* is thus one way of expanding a single-unit reason for the call into a multi-unit construction: the topicalized structure evokes a typically temporal or local frame for the new material which is projected to follow, and which in anchor position will be hearable as the reason for the call.

A somewhat more substantial expansion of clausal structure can be achieved through the use of clefting structures (Collins 1994) such as *The reason why I'm phoning…, What I'm phoning for…,* or *The thing is….*[§§§§] In contrast to topicalization formulae, these serve as *generic* prefaces to an upcoming reason for the call, without revealing anything specific about its nature. Because of their lack of specificity, such constructions leave most of the work of topic introduction yet to come. Furthermore, they do not implicate the called party in any way as a collaborative partner in the enterprise: initial anchor-position TCUs built this way rarely get any uptake from the recipient. Extract (9) is typical in this respect:

(9) Holt Oct 1988 1:8
   [Leslie is the caller; the initial insertion sequence is occasioned by noise in the
   background; Joy has explained that it was the dog who began to whine when her
   husband brought her the phone]

```
1          Les:  Are you not in bed are [you?
2          Joy:
[˚Most peculiar˚ mNo: no ↓no
```

[§§§§] Anchor-position use of *The thing is…*, a regular occurrence in the British materials, serves as a nice reminder of the fact that we are dealing with practices which may vary from one linguistic community to another. To my knowledge *The thing is* would not be used in American English to *project* a complex turn dealing with the reason for the call but only to formulate the gist of one retrospectively.

```
3                        I['m:-
4          Les:   [Oh ↓no.
5          Joy:   No: I'm in the sitting room.
6          Les:   hAh:.
7  ->              .hhh No the ↑thing is uhm
8                        I'm teaching Tues↓da:y.
9                        hh An(.)d ↓Mondee as: a matter'v fa:ct but
10                       .hhh e-thi- e-m-mMondee dzn' matter but uuh
11                       I'm teaching Tuesdee 'n I've got t'get ready:
12         (J):          [°(       )°
13-> Les:  Would ↑you mind if: u-uhm:: I went first or second t'morrow
           night,h
14         (0.6)
15         Joy:   ↑YES.[↓Su:re.
16         Les:        [Is that alri:ght,
17         Joy:   [Ye:s.
18         Les:   [Cuz: then Skip'll pick me up after the soft mat bowling.
```

In this call there is a noise in the called party's background which prompts Leslie the caller to search for some account. Once an account has been proffered (in talk prior to this extract) and business attendant on the account has been dealt with (lines 1-6), anchor position and a formulation of Leslie's reason for calling become relevant (line 7). The ready-made formula *The thing is…* is deployed to construct an initial anchor-position TCU *No the ↑thing is uhm I'm teaching Tues↓da:y.* Despite the fact that this is a syntactically complete sentential construction, it is not response-ready. Rather *The thing is…* signals that the turn's business is complex and thus projects a multi-unit turn. In fact, in extract (9) anchor-position business is not brought to a close until line 13: *Would ↑you mind if: u-uhm:: I went first or second t'morrow night,h.* Note that until this point there is no response from Joyce, with the exception of a scarcely audible minimal token (line 12) in terminal overlap with the elaboration of Leslie's account for her upcoming request *I've got t'get ready:an' all tha:[t.h* (line 11). Yet on production of line 13, Joyce comes in with a full-fledged response: *↑YES.[↓Su:re.*

Less ready-made but hardly more specific in design are verbal practices for anchor-position turns which entail making a meta-statement, frequently of an epistemic nature, on an upcoming or projected reason for the call. For instance, coordinated structures embodying an implicit concession are found: *I'm not very sure of what to do but…* or *I really don't know who to contact but….* [*****] Such structures in anchor position project only very generally that a formulation of the reason for the call will be forthcoming, and they prospectively cue this upcoming reason as something which the caller is treating as delicate or problematic. They too rarely receive any uptake from the called party. An example is provided by extract (10):

[*****] See also Couper-Kuhlen & Thompson 2000. The concession implied might be paraphrased as: ‚Although I'm not very sure of what to do, I'm doing this…' or ‚Although I really don't know who to contact, I'm contacting you…'

(10) Holt Sept/Oct 1988 2:1
   [Leslie is the caller.]†††††

```
1          Des:   Good afternoon Barkley's Castle Cary
2                      (0.3)
3          Les:   Oh hello- uhm .tch.hhh
4 ->              I'm ↑not very su:re of .kloh (0.4) u-what I do eh-
5                      if ↑I: give my s-
6                      I deal with uhw uh- Midlan:d,[hh .hh[h.hhhh
7          Des:
[-(0.7)[Ye:s,
8          Les:   But if my son comes dow:n u-with a ↓check.h
9                      A Midl'n che:ck .hhh u-aa:
10                     for thirty five pounds
11->              will you cash that fo:r him,
12->              at Barkley's
13                     (0.3)
14         Des:   nNot normally
```

Leslie's first anchor-position TCU *I'm ↑not very su:re of .kloh (0.4) u-what I do eh-* opens up an epistemic frame which projects a subsequent situation or state of affairs demanding a decision. Note that the only response which her interlocutor provides during the ensuing multi-unit turn is a continuer *yes* (line 8)*,* provided in response to information which Leslie presents parenthetically as background to the scene under construction: *I deal with uhw uh- Midlan:d* (line 6). Leslile's extended turn is not response-ready until line 11: *will you cash that fo:r him,*respectively until line 12 following the increment *at Barkley's.* As with the clefting devices discussed above, here too the first TCU is a syntactically complete sentential construction. Yet because it provides only an epistemic frame for something which is projected to come afterwards, it reflexively signals its own incompleteness as a tun-at-talk and, being in anchor position, as a full statement of the reason for the call.

More intriguing are practices for constructing multi-unit turns at anchor position which do not inherently bear the marks of incompleteness. Rather than expanding or framing a single-clause formulation of the reason for the call, these entail building a multi-clause text-like structure, with early clauses preparing the way for later ones. Preparatory material may, for instance, provide an account for an upcoming request which will be presented as the reason for the call, as in (9) where Leslie's *I'm teaching Tuesdee 'n I've got t'get ready: an' all tha:t.h* serves to warrant her subsequent request *Would ↑you mind if: u-uhm:: I went first or second t'morrow night,h*. Extract (7) provides a somewhat more elaborate case of preparatory accounting and its contingencies:

(7) Holt Sept/Oct 1988 (II)1:7
   [Leslie is the caller; opening unrecorded]

```
1          Les:   oh HELlo.
```

---
††††† The upwards arrow in line 4 is my addition.

```
2                        ↑IS::: uhm that Christopher.
3            Chr:  it IS,
4                        yes,
5            Les:  oh HELlo.
6                        this is LESlie.
7                        ( . )
8            Chr:  oh ↑HELlo Leslie,
9            Les:  HELlo,
10                       HOW are you.
11           Chr:  I'm very WELL thanks,
12           Les:  good,
13->                ehm::: we're ↑COMing to Maidstone: et hhh toMORrow.
14->  Chr:   yes,
15           Les:  .hh and I don't REALly know what my mother's plans ARE.
16                       (.) uhm
17                       so I CAN'T really make- arrangements- a-
18                       she- she ISn't one for making many arRANGEments
19                       but she has- uhm:: MEALS and so on PLANNED:,
20                       so I BETter have a WORD with her:.
21->                but I ↑WONder perhaps if we could MEET sometime,
                         .hhh
22->  Chr:   yes;
23                       I would THINK so Leslie,
24                       uhm::,
```

In contrast to (8), where the temporal specification of the situation engendering the reason for calling could be expressed with a simple topicalization device *A↑bout tomorro:w,* in (7) a similar temporal specification cannot be packaged this way because it involves information which is new to the interlocutor, namely that Leslie and her Mum are going to travel to Maidstone the next day. This preparatory material is therefore packaged as a separate clause: *we're ↑coming to Maidstone: et hhh tomorrow* (line 13). Together with subsidiary information - such as, e.g., that Mum's meals are already planned – it provides background information which puts Christopher in a position to respond to Leslie's request – analyzably her reason for calling - when it is made. Note that only once the construction of Leslie's reason for calling is complete (*I ↑wonder perhaps if we could meet sometime*, line 21) does Christopher come in with a full-fledged response: *yes I would think so Leslie* (line 23).

To sum up the discussion so far, the verbal practices which British callers are observed to use in constructing the initial TCUs of multi-unit reason-for-the-call turns range from minimal clause-expanding techniques, e.g. the use of lexical/phrasal topicalization devices (*About X*), clefting constructions (*The reason why I'm calling is…, The thing is…)* as well as epistemic clause combining structures (*I'm not so sure of what to do …)* to more substantial ‚text-making' strategies, in which full clause-size chunks of material (e.g. *We're coming to Maidstone tomorrow*) are used to preface and often to provide a beforehand account for a projectably upcoming action construable as the reason for the call.

5.2   Non-verbal practices

It is precisely the latter cases – the multi-clausal text-like constructions of a reason for the call – which are intriguing. How are recipients able to identify a clausal TCU as background information which is preparing the way for a subsequent reason-for-the-call TCU and therefore requires, if anything, only a minimal response, as opposed to an initial clausal TCU which is the reason for the call itself and requires a full response?

Of course the nature of the information contained in an initial anchor-position TCU in the context of the specific interactional history of the interlocutors involved will naturally help determine whether it is ready for response or not. When Bob says in (2) *⇑uhm Leslie; the ⇑reason why I'm phoning:; is I'm ⇑just wondering whether you might be a-.h able to help a family: in (.) Neverstowie,* Leslie still arguably lacks the information she needs to decide whether she can be of help or not. On the other hand, in (5) when Leslie says *,n ⇑coming t'⇓night,* Bodwin her interlocutor presumably already has the necessary background information based on past interactional history to know what Leslie is referring to and is therefore in a position to respond immediately. Yet, above and beyond the situated specifics of each interaction, there is evidence in the data to suggest that the way an initial anchor-position TCU is delivered prosodically may help determine whether a full response is due now or later. Consider, for instance, extract (11):

(11) Holt 1988u 2:1
   [Leslie is the caller; opening unrecorded.]

```
1           Arn:  we-we were g'nna give you a[ring but now you you .hh
2           Les.
      [.hhhh
3           Arn:  you've beaten us to  i[t!
4           Les:
[eYe:s.
5 ->              Well the ⇑children'v all gone back tih college ⇓no:w,
6           Arn:  Ye[s
7           Les:    [.hhh Only just.
8                     An:d Gordon and we had t'go to: Kent f'the weekend
         t'see my mother who's going off .t.hhh on holiday in
         Canada:
9                          a[n' no:w u-now we're feeling a bit=
10          Arn:    [(                )
11          Les:  =freer.
12                        (.)
13          Arn:  [⇑Ye:s.
14-> Les:   [.hhhhhh So we wondered if you'd like to meet us.hh
15->  Arn:  Yes certainl[y.
```

Anchor position comes in line 5 after Leslie's prior *yes,* which is responsive to her interlocutor's preemptive move in the preceding turn before: *we-we <u>were</u> g'nna give you a ring but now you you .hh you've <u>beaten</u> us <u>to</u> it!* (lines 1+3). The initial TCU in first-topic slot is thus: *Well the ↑children'v all gone back tih college ↓no:w,* (line 5). This TCU could of course be said in a way which would present it as a piece of news and make it immediately response-relevant. Yet that is not what happens here. Instead, Leslie delivers the TCU with a characteristic intonation pattern which marks it as continuing and thus projective of more to come: she uses a high pitch accent on the first accentable word *children* (this is the high onset) and a low rising pitch accent on the last accentable word *now*, producing what English intonationalists would call a fall+rise pattern (Couper-Kuhlen 1986) or a ‚split' fall-rise (Cruttenden [2]1997). The nicely scooped out low rising tone on *now* serves as a quasi-iconic sign of ‚more to come'. Similar final low-riseing contours are used in extract (2) on *Neverstowie* (line 37) and on *tragedy* (line 38).

By contrast, when the fall+rise accent type is *not* used on similar material in an initial anchor-position TCU, we often find recipients treating the TCU as immediately response-relevant. Compare, for instance, extract (12):

(12) Holt 2:2:2

   [Leslie is the caller; opening unrecorded.]

```
1           Les:  .t I didn'think you w'r going to uk- (.) ↓answer.
2           Car:  hhWho's thha(h)[t.
3           Les:                  [mghh Me Leslie.
4                       (0.7)
5           Car:  ↑↑Oh: sorry ih hih ye:[s,
6           Les:                        [Hm::
7                       (0.8)
8  ->  Les:  .t CAROL I ↑finished the boo:k.
9                       (0.3)
10          Car:  .hhh ↑Oh gosh that wz qui:ck,
11          Les:  Well it wz very grippin:g.
12                      (.)
13          Car:  Ahh haa-haa?
14          Les:  So ↑what sh'll I do.=
15                      =Sh'll I drop it ↑in on you,
16                      or drop it in on: li:br'y.
17                      (.)
18          Car:  Ahh::m well'm in the libr'y t'morrow morning you coming
            in?=
19                      =or you going in t'ni:ght.
20          Les:  nT'night.
21          Car:  .hh Well drop it in: t'night then Leslie
```

In anchor position here, Leslie uses a high-pitched accent on *finished* and a final fall to low rather than a low rise on *book* (line 8). All other things being equal, the high onset followed by a low falling final accent appears to cue an anchor-position TCU as response-relevant. A similar

accent configuration is used in extract (5) on *,n ↑coming t'↓night,* which also receives a full response in next turn.

Yet it is not merely the presence of a final fall to low in an anchor-position TCU which renders the turn response-ready. This can be seen by taking another look at (7):

(7) Holt Sept/Oct 1988 (II)1:7
　　　[Leslie is the caller; opening unrecorded]

```
1             Les:  oh HELlo.
2                        ↑IS::: uhm that Christopher.
3             Chr:  it IS,
4                        yes,
5             Les:  oh HELlo.
6                        this is LESlie.
7                        ( . )
8             Chr:  oh ↑HELlo Leslie,
9             Les:  HELlo,
10                       HOW are you.
11            Chr:  I'm very WELL thanks,
12            Les:  good,
13->                ehm::: we're ↑COMing to Maidstone: et hhh toMORrow.
14->  Chr:  yes,
15            Les:  .hh and I don't REALly know what my mother's plans ARE.
16                       (.) uhm
17                       so I CAN'T really make- arrangements- a-
18                       she- she ISn't one for making many arRANGEments
19                       but she has- uhm:: MEALS and so on PLANNED:,
20                       so I BETter have a WORD with her:.
21->                but I ↑WONder perhaps if we could MEET sometime,
                         .hhh
22->  Chr:  yes;
23                       I would THINK so Leslie,
24         uhm::,
```

Leslie's initial anchor-position TCU *we're ↑coming to Maidstone: et hhh tomorrow* (line 13) has a clear fall to low and a subsequent micro-pause, yet Christopher does not treat it as ready for a full-fledged response. He produces only a low-rising continuer *yes* at this point (line 14). But we must not overlook the fact that Leslie's turn is delivered with noticeable stretches and filled pauses, which cue it as leading up to something rather than being that thing itself. Thus a pitch configuration with final low rising accent should not be thought of as a prosodic feature *sine qua non*: it is not the case that this contour and this contour alone cues an anchor-position TCU as projective of more to come. Speech rate, syllable timing and loudness are other prosodic resources which can be deployed to similar effect: witness the well-known rush-through (Schegloff 1982) (noticeable, for instance, in extract (6) lines 10-11).‡‡‡‡‡

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‡‡‡‡‡ Interestingly, rushing through entails an acceleration of delivery, whereas in extract (7) it is precisely the opposite, a deceleration of delivery, which achieves the same effect, namely that the floor does not pass to interlocutor despite the presence of a completed TCU.

If prosody is not clearly continuing or projective, however, anchor-position TCUs *can* be ambiguous as to whether they are the actual reason for the call or only a build-up to the reason, and recipients may mistake one for the other. Extract (13) shows a case where this is arguably an issue:

(13) Holt Oct 1988 (II) 1:5
    [Ruth is the caller.]

```
1                             ((Ring))
2          Les:        HELlo,
3          Ruth: HELlo Missiz Field,
4                        it's RUTH.
5          Les:        oh HELlo Ruth, hh
6  ->  Ruth: I'm ⇑HOME for a few days.
7  ->  Les:       ⇑⇑<oh ARE you?>=
8  ->  Ruth: =°(wondered)° if you'd like the honour of a VISit.
9          Les:        oh yes;=
10                          =⇑<yes yes yes,>
11         Ruth: heh heh hh
12                        WHEN would be best.
13         Les:        whenever you'd like to COME. hh
```

Ruth's announcement in anchor position *I'm ⇑home for a few days* (line 6) is clearly something which could be taken as a piece of news worth responding to in full. Moreover, its prosodic delivery – although not overly enthusiastic – in no way suggests continuation. So it is perhaps not surprising that Leslie treats Ruth's announcement as response-ready in next turn: *⇑⇑<oh are you?>.* Yet Ruth does not now acknowledge Leslie's turn nor does she deal in any way with its enthusiastic display of affect. Instead her next TCU *°(wondered)° if you'd like the honour of a visit* (line 8) is delivered as a continuation of same-speaker talk: it is latched on to the intervening turn and begins noticeably low in pitch and volume, in fact where Ruth's initial anchor-position TCU left off.§§§§§ This has the effect of virtually deleting Leslie's response in line 7 from the interactional record. The prosodic delivery of line 8 thus suggests that Ruth intended the construction of a multi-unit turn with *I'm ⇑home for a few days* as background material (worthy at most of a minimal response) providing a warrant for a subsequent self-invitation *°(wondered)° if you'd like the honour of a visit*, analyzably the reason for her call. If so, Leslie's response in line 7 can be heard as misreading Ruth's signals and dealing with her initial TCU as if *it* were carrying out the action which is the reason for calling.

6   Practices for dealing with newsworthy background material

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§§§§§ In this sense it clearly „starts … with something which is hearably *not* a beginning" (Schegloff 1986:75).

Extract (13) points to another dilemma which interactionalists may face in constructing and responding to reason-for-the-call turns: how to handle something which is at once new *and* only background to the ‚real' reason for calling.[******] Extract (6) shows that this is a problem for recipients:

(6) Holt 2:7

   [Leslie is the caller; opening unrecorded.][††††††]
```
1           Les:  ...eefon,
2           Cou:  It i:s, yah,
3                     (.)
4           Les:  Oh:, (.) this is Missiz Field he:re< (.)
5  ->             I've been ↑tryin' t'get you,
6                     but (.) [I hant- haven't caught you at ho:me.
7           Cou:          [Oh y-
8           Cou:  Yeah.h
9                     (.)
10-> Les:  Uhm (.) ↑Are you going t'Sundee services th's morning=
11                      =because um .h my husband's going an' he owes you
s'money
                     for s'm ↓lo[gs.
12          Cou:            [Oh hhhhuh!
```

When Leslie announces first off *I've been ↑tryin' t'get you, but (.)* (lines 5-6), her interlocutor begins to construct a response right away *Oh y-* (line 7), showing an attempt to deal with Leslie's first TCU as a piece of news. Yet – by not heeding this attempted incoming and continuing, in overlap, with *I hant- haven't caught you at ho:me* – Leslie signals that her first TCU was meant merely as a preface and not as a response-relevant contribution itself. In extract (13) Ruth likewise appears to attempt a turn-organizational solution to the problem of how to present material that is new and background at the same time: that is, she constructs or attempts to construct a multi-unit turn in anchor position.

A reconsideration of extract (12) reveals that on other occasions callers adopt a sequential solution to the problem from the outset:

(12) Holt 2:2:2

   [Leslie is the caller; opening unrecorded.]
```
1           Les:  .t I didn'think you w'r going to uk- (.) ↓answer.
2           Car:  hhWho's thha(h)[t.
3           Les:                              [mghh Me Leslie.
4                     (0.7)
5           Car:  ↑↑Oh: sorry ih hih ye:[s,
6           Les:                                        [Hm::
```

```
7                        (0.8)
8 ->  Les:  .t CAROL I ↑finished the boo:k.
9                        (0.3)
10         Car:  .hhh ↑Oh gosh that wz qui:ck,
11         Les:  Well it wz very grippin:g.
12                        (.)
13         Car:  Ahh haa-haa?
14->  Les:  So ↑what sh'll I do.=
15->             =Sh'll I drop it ↑in on you,
16->             or drop it in on: li:br'y.
17                        (.)
18         Car:  Ahh::m well'm in the libr'y t'morrow morning you coming
           in?=
19                  =or you going in t'ni:ght.
20         Les:  nT'night.
21         Car:  .hh Well drop it in: t'night then Leslie
```

In this call Leslie presents her new information first in anchor position*: .t CAROL I ↑finished the boo:k.* (line 8), allowing space for it to be handled as a proper news sequence: see Carol's response *.hhh ↑Oh gosh that wz qui:ck,* (line 10) and Leslie's rejoinder *Well it wz very grippin:g* (line11). Once her interlocutor has signalled willingness to close down this sequence (see Carol's floor pass in line 13), Leslie then moves on – in an expansion of the news sequence – to what is hearably her reason for calling *So ↑what sh'll I do.= =Sh'll I drop it ↑in on you, or drop it in on: li:br'y* (lines 14-16). Note that with the use of *so* (line 14) Leslie builds the first turn of the follow-up sequence in such a way that the reason for calling appears to follow logically from the news itself.

The construction of a multi-unit turn in everyday conversation is known to be a task which, given the bias of the turn-taking system towards single-unit turns-at-talk (Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson 1974), requires considerable work. The present set of data suggest that constructing a multi-unit turn may be especially problematic in formulations of reasons for the call: not only do called parties on occasion misjudge whether an anchor-position turn is to be multi-unit or not, but callers also appear to choose round-about ways of handling complex formulations by constructing, for instance, news sequences which can be expanded into reasons for the call. A sequential solution to the problem of multi-turn construction at anchor position may not only help avoid misunderstanding: it also buys valuable room for negotiation. If the reason for a call is something which, for instance, might otherwise be perceived as manipulative, sequential organization of a reason for the call may be a strategic way of providing an opportunity for the called party to come forth voluntarily with what otherwise the caller might have had to pointedly elicit. A final example shows that this is indeed a documented trajectory of talk initiated in anchor position:

(14) Holt 2:14

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1           Jim:       J. P. Blenkinsop good morning,
2                               (.)
3           Skip: Good morning Ji:m,
4                               (0.5)
5           Skip: Uh it's Skip.
6           Jim:       ↑Hiyuh,
7 ->   Skip: ↑You coming past the doo:r,
8           Jim:       Certainly?
9                               (0.8)
10->   Jim:       What time wouldju like the ↓car Sah.↓=
11          Skip: =Uh vwell ehhh hhehh hhhehh hhehh .hh
12                          Oh that's m:ost unexpected of you hhh::
13                          n(h)o it's v(h)ery nice'v you to offer
14                          huhh uh-↑heh heh-u-hu-.ehhh
15                          £Thanks very much.£
```

Skip's anchor-position turn here, *you coming past the door* (line 7), is ostensibly addressed to obtaining information, viz. whether Jim will be coming by his house or not. In the affirmative case, this will subsequently allow Skip to request a ride. As it turns out, the latter is Skip's ultimate reason for calling and anchor-position turn can be heard as a sequential build-up to it. Through its transparency Skip's strategy provides his recipient with the opportunity to anticipate his reason for calling and to make a preemptive offer himself, which Jim does, after a 0.8 sec. delay, in a gently jocular mode (*What time wouldju like the ↓car Sah.↓=,* line 10). At the same time, however, the preliminary move of asking whether Jim will be coming by his door affords Skip the possibility of aborting the request move should the facilitating circumstances not obtain, i.e. should it turn out that Jim will not be coming by. It thus gives Skip considerable room for interactional maneuvering.

6   Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has dealt with two turn-construction problems that face participants in informal telephone conversations: first, how to build a TCU in anchor position in a way that demonstrates whether it is intended to stand alone as the reason for the call or to project more to come, and second, how to deal with the special case of something which is potentially new to one's interlocutor but at the same time only prefatory to one's reason for calling.

With respect to the first problem, the investigation has shown that callers in the Holt collection make use of a range of devices for projecting a multi-unit turn in anchor position. Some of these are lexical and/or grammatical, some are textual and/or rhetorical; others are prosodic in nature. They may be used singly or in conjunction with one another. Presumably, the more the content

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^{‡‡‡‡‡‡} The upwards arrow in line 7 is mine.

of a first TCU is susceptible to ambiguity, i.e. capable of having either an independent or a dependent interpretation, the more work a caller must do, i.e. the more specific devices must be used to design the turn as either demonstrably a reason for the call or demonstrably a preface to the reason for the call.

With respect to the second problem – how to handle material which is at once new and background to the reason for the call, the data suggest that callers may opt for either a turn-organizational or a sequential solution. The turn-organizational strategy entails constructing a multi-unit turn with preparatory material cued as leading up to the reason for the call; the sequential strategy involves, e.g., constructing e.g. a news-delivery sequence in which the new material is presented as ‚news‘ in an anchor-position TCU and the reason for the call is introduced as a follow-up to or expansion of the ‚news‘ sequence. Regardless which strategy is chosen, callers rely on a specific set of verbal and prosodic resources to make what they are doing recognizable. This paper has been an attempt to catalog some of these special resources for designing reason-for-the-call turns.

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