Voices are what they say:  
A study of language in the experience of hearing voices

Volume 1

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Abstract

Studies of people’s experiences of hearing voices (auditory verbal hallucinations) have traditionally focused on such areas as number, type, frequency, severity and auditory features. In the last two decades, cognitive-behavioural therapy research has emphasised the role of what hearers believe about their voices. More recent qualitative studies recognise the importance of their relationship to their voices, and the meaning of these experiences in their lives. However, the verbatim verbal behaviour of voices has received minimal attention. On the whole, descriptions of voices are included as illustrative ‘soundbites’ and rarely form the main content of discussion. Moreover, these studies do not focus on the detail of individual hearer’s experiences of their voices.

The present study addresses the current gap in the literature by describing how hearers represent what their voices say. The design of the study drew on qualitative methods. Seven people with a clinical history of hearing voices participated in a series of open-ended interviews, with the addition in three cases of parents or partners, and two treating psychiatrists. Transcripts of recorded interviews were coded for how hearers referred to their experiences, and voice content analysed in terms of their pragmatic function to demonstrate how voices interacted with hearers. In addition, the tools of systemic functional linguistics were applied to map how voices use language to represent and evaluate the hearer’s world.

Four main findings provide evidence for the individual nature of hearers’ representations of their voices. The first finding is that hearers use a wide variety of terms to designate their experiences, including metaphors and descriptive phrases that often refer to their voices as acts of communication. Second, voices draw on a range of common communicative functions beyond ‘commands’ and ‘commentary’, which distinctively characterise their verbal behaviour as both positive and negative forms of social interaction. Third, the content of voices features a number of grammatical patterns in which voices are represented as both compelling agents in a material world and interpreters of its underlying meaning. Fourth, the evaluative language that voices use concentrates on appraisals relating to hearers’ competency, value and moral integrity.

Together these findings provide the first systematic account of how different hearers use language in representing the verbal behaviour of voices. The main recommendation of the study is to include a linguistic perspective in future phenomenological research, with the ultimate aim that such an approach could lead to a contribution to therapeutic approaches which aim to improve hearers’ relationships with their voices.
Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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Keith Smith

Date

May 2016
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I am proud to have been ‘Bob’s last dancer’.

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In memory of

my father

Leslie Smith

(1921–2012)
We are listeners as well as speakers
of this mystery, both of us,
but who else will join
this strange companionship?

Rumi (Barks, 2004, p. 96)
1 Introduction

This research study examines the accounts given by people who hear voices, clinically known as auditory verbal hallucinations (McCarthy-Jones, 2012), with a specific focus on the importance of the language voices use to interact. Voices have been studied from a range of disciplines, for example, historically, culturally and psychologically, but especially medically as hallucinatory phenomena because of their clinical significance as indicators of mental illness. However, slightly modifying Romme and Morris (2009), people who hear voices were “hearers [before they] became patients” (p. 1). Nevertheless, a linguistic account of the verbal behaviour of voices which recognises the role of ‘grammar’ in effecting communication and relationship is generally absent from psychiatric discussions. Grammar here refers to the use of words and structures to create meaning, which is a view central to the work of systemic functional linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This lack of attention to the role of language is despite the most distinctive phenomenological feature of voices being their use of words. In acknowledgement of “[t]he phrase hearing voices” (authors’ italics), Leudar and Thomas (2000, p. 176) suggest that “perhaps all voice-talk should be describable as language, and some of it (or perhaps much of it) as speech”. This study addresses the imbalance in recent research by arguing that voices are as much a linguistic phenomenon as they are a sensory perception. As Hayes and Leudar (2015) observe concerning one of their participants, “the voice itself is meaningful (authors’ italics) language, not just a sound” (p. 7).

Language has been a personal interest of mine since childhood. However, like many other people in Australia who started school in the 1960s, my dislike for grammar was nearly as great as my dread of mathematics. Grammar was a synonym for boredom. But it was my love of drama as a young boy that prevailed over the dull grammar lessons of the classroom to the exciting use of language to express meaning and emotion. I went on to study at drama school as a teenager and pursued a brief career as an actor before learning to teach English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Initially I knew nothing about how language was structured but over twenty years through teaching international students I learnt that language mattered first and foremost as the means through which we experience ourselves.
making sense to others – language lives through human interaction. But it was not until I studied systemic functional linguistics (hereafter SFL) that I was introduced to an understanding of language that was able to describe how grammar modelled the human condition as well as enabling communication. It was this further development in my knowledge that motivated me to examine the contribution made by grammar in a published example of the Jungian psychotherapeutic practice of ‘active imagination’ (R. A. Johnson, 1986; K. L. Smith, 2002). This is an activity in which a person dialogues, often in writing, with emotions or dream contents personified as living beings (Hannah, 2001; Jung, 1970, 2009; von Franz, 1997; M. Watkins, 2000). My research in this area laid the ground for considering the role of language in the involuntary experience of hearing voices.

This chapter illustrates the focus of this study with a brief discussion of a selection of excerpts from interviews with one of the research participants. It then provides a historical context for describing how voices eventually became considered a symptom of a mental disorder. In particular, this overview situates the accounts given by participants in this study in relation to those of mediaeval people, whose own spoken descriptions of their voices were formative in the development of autobiographical narratives of personal experience. Given that I have no background in psychiatry, this chapter outlines the contribution made by scholars in philosophy and linguistics to developing my approach to an area that is mostly the preserve of clinical research. This is followed by a brief summary of the design of the study before an outline is presented of the content of each chapter of this thesis.

**Focus of the study**

As a way of highlighting the focus of this study, the importance of language in constituting voices can be briefly exemplified by one of the research participants, Shirley\(^1\), who consented to talk about her voices. The following quotes each illustrate an aspect of her experiences that forms a specific lens of this research. The first quote was given in the context of Shirley telling me about a night-time routine in which she sometimes invites her voices to make themselves known to her. The second includes a verbatim example of what her hostile male voices used to say to her. In the third quote, Shirley explains how she needed to reassure her very young voices about her visits to hospital as they were frightened of what the surgeons were going to do.

\(^1\) Names of research participants are all pseudonyms.
“Okay is there anybody here that wants to introduce themselves to me?” (2.38, 197-198)

… there’s a lot more that are probably much nicer um I don’t get the “It’s your fault that happened” all the time’ (2.86, 467-468)

… we often have to talk about how they felt and um you know what comforting things to help comfort them (3.40, 228-230)

First, knowing who her voices are is very important for Shirley. If Shirley does not know their name, she creates one of her own. She also has a range of more informal ways of referring to her voices when talking to other people about them. What she calls them expresses what they mean to her. Her descriptions create a link between identity, behaviour and content. Second, a significant part of talking about voices involves hearers telling others what their voices say. For many years, Shirley had heard negative voices that blamed her for anything unpleasant that happened. But shortly before our interviews, these voices unexpectedly changed to the voices of women who were very calming and reassuring. What they say functions as types of interaction. Third, at the same time, in speaking for her voices, Shirley often let her voices speak through her in the form of the words they used. What they say uses grammar to represent meaning in the hearer’s world. Fourth, as well as using language to interact and express meaning, Shirley’s voices communicate their views and feelings about her, her family and others, and themselves. What they say expresses an explicit form of evaluation.

Each of these four perspectives represents a different view of the role of language in hearers’ experiences of their voices. The central argument of this thesis is that these perspectives can provide a framework for investigating their meaning as acts of communication. These functions are important as they collectively contribute to the verbal reality of voices (see Figure 1).

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2 References to transcripts are cited using interview number, turn number and line number. Shirley’s first quote is therefore from interview 2, turn 38, lines 197-198 (see Appendix 4 for transcripts).
Hearing voices is the only sensory experience that is mediated through an intermediary system, namely language. This system generates spoken signs to communicate meanings. These meanings are exchanged within a social context. They serve an interpersonal function. It is for these reasons that language is described as a ‘social-semiotic’ system for making meanings (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). When voices are considered as a linguistic phenomenon in relation to the four perspectives illustrated above, the potential for therapists to develop a shared understanding with hearers of how voices use language to interact may assist with destigmatising these experiences.

**Context of the study**

Hearing voices by definition involves language, whatever a voice hearer, a psychiatrist or a researcher decide that voices really are … (Leudar & Thomas, 2000, p. 173).

[V]oices usually don’t just make idle conversation … (J. Watkins, 1993, p. 4).

A major question that faces a researcher with a professional interest in language is the problem of how to talk about ‘voices’. Behind this question, of course, is the complex issue of what it is that we are talking about. A clinician would be expected to call them auditory hallucinations because they are not real. Auditory hallucinations are defined as “perception-like experiences that occur without an external stimulus” according to *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5®)* (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013, p. 87). They are considered a key symptom of
schizophrenia but are also associated with bipolar affective disorder, major depressive disorder and dissociative identity disorder, otherwise known as multiple personality disorder (Perona-Garcelán, Pérez-Álvarez, García-Montes, & Cangas, 2015). Indeed, it is standard practice for many articles in psychiatric journals to begin by defining them in relation to the major types of mental illness (for example, Shinn et al. 2012).

Despite the conventional use of clinical terms, Lucas (1999) argues that psychiatrists do not have a satisfactory name for what hearers experience. Indeed, Rabkin (1970, as cited in Schwab, 1977, p. 345) considers the use of the word ‘hallucination’ to be a form of “cultural fascism”. The intellectual climate in which ‘hallucination’ was first introduced, Stevenson (1983) argues, was at the time justified in coining a term to refer to the distorted perceptions of people with mental disorders. However, his proposal to call both pathological and non-pathological “unshared sensory experiences” (p. 1609) by the Greek derived term “idiophany” (p. 1609), meaning ‘private appearance’, is as likely to remain unused as Wernicke’s use of the phonological term ‘phonemes’ a hundred years ago (Fish, 1974; Sims, 1988). Jones (2010) and McCarthy-Jones (2011) foreground the dilemma by crossing out the word ‘hallucination’ in the manner of the philosopher Jacques Derrida to acknowledge its problematic meaning despite its continuing use.

A hearers’ support group would probably refer to their experiences collectively as voices because what they hear is the sound of someone speaking. Individually, they might refer to them by personal name or impersonal identity, such as demons or spirits (J. Watkins, 2008). However, Lucas (1999) found that the informal term ‘voices’ was too specific. The experiences described to him often resisted such straightforward naming. They suggest speech but also transcend it. Nevertheless, in this study, ‘voices’ is used as that is the term agreed on by the hearers who talked to me in our interviews. Equally, it is recognised that ‘voices’ serves for a range of experiences, from distinct speech to experiences of communication that are more sensed than heard. Its meaning should not be taken literally and it is perhaps better seen as the most readily available “metaphor” (Gagg, 2002, p. 164).

What these various ways of talking about voices suggests is that the significance of “hearing the unsaid” (McCarthy-Jones, 2011, p. 353) varies according to the context of use and the orientation of the speaker. If we look further back to Europe in the Middle Ages, voices were talked about as interactions with demons and spirits, or even God or Christ. Mediaeval scholars and mystics went to great lengths to produce detailed typologies of voices to assess

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3 Lucas follows Bleuler’s (1911/1950) use of quotation marks to show that he is using the word loosely.
reports of spiritual communications. In a number of countries, especially those with indigenous societies, voices are still considered to be spiritual or supernatural beings (Al-Issa, 1977, 1978, 1995; Barrett, 1993, 2003; Browne, 2001; Kent & Wahass, 1996; Larøi et al., 2014; Luhrmann, Padmavati, Tharoor, & Osei, 2015; Okulate & Jones, 2003; Wahass & Kent, 1997). In fact, what voices mean has always been a cultural and historical problem (Leudar & Thomas, 2000; McCarthy-Jones, 2012). Their modern psychiatric meaning is not separate from the influence of culture or history. It is but the most recent development in how people have interpreted such experiences.

Anthropological and historical accounts cited in the psychiatric literature suggest that hearing voices has long been a part of human experience (Berrios, 1996; Berrios & Dening, 1996; Leudar & Thomas, 2000; McCarthy-Jones, 2012; J. Watkins, 2008). Indeed, according to Jaynes (1976/1990, 1986), whose theories triggered what later developed into the Hearing Voices Movement⁴, hearing voices is the remnant of a form of hallucinatory behaviour that predates consciousness. Jaynes (1976/1990, 1986), arguing from his analysis of Homer’s epic poem the Iliad, claims that our ancestors experienced their thoughts as a form of communication from the gods. He calls this early stage in our mental development the ‘bicameral mind’. Messages from one side of the brain were perceived by the other as wholly alien. It was in response to such hallucinatory experiences that language may have started to evolve in the late Pleistocene epoch some 70,000 years ago (Jaynes, 1976).

However, with the end of the Pleistocene epoch (around 10,000 BCE), our ancestors were living in settled farming societies which were hierarchically organised. Their voices were now personified as tribal gods which they could worship together (Jaynes, 1976/1990, 1986). Although Leudar and Thomas (2000) cite some scholarly support for the absence of psychological terms in the Iliad to describe the heroes’ mental behaviour, Jaynes’ reading of the linguistic material is deterministic. Leudar and Thomas (2000) refer to contrary evidence in the Iliad that demonstrates that the ancient Greeks knew that they were able to ‘think for themselves’.

Clinicians claim that people have been aware of the occurrence of hallucinations since antiquity (Asaad & Shapiro, 1986; Slade, 1976). These experiences are said to have been associated with madness from the beginning. The roots of the idea and the word

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⁴ Romme & Escher (1989) describe how Jaynes’ book helped one of their patients to find a non-pathological explanation for her voices. A few years previously, it was after reading Jaynes that Posey and Losch (1983) conducted one of the earliest studies in modern times into the experiences of hearing voices in the general population. Their survey was influential in developing further research among non-psychiatric groups (Beavan, Read, & Cartwright, 2011; Bentall, 2003; Longden, Madill, & Waterman, 2012).
‘hallucination’ are over 2,000 years old in our culture, with the Roman philosophers and statesmen Cicero and Seneca being among the first to use the term (Rojewicz & Rojciewicz, 1997). Nevertheless, its meaning changed markedly in that time and has always been subject to definition. What we now call a hallucination began to be formulated less than 200 years ago. Indeed, the history of the development of the meaning and usage of ‘hallucination’ is a complex one (Bentall, 2003; Berrios, 1996; Berrios & Dening, 1996; Gosden, 2001; McCarthy-Jones, 2012; Leudar & Thomas, 2000; Rojewicz & Rojciewicz, 1997; Sedman, 1967).

However, it is as an indicator of a mental disorder, in particular schizophrenia (APA, 2013), that the status of voices has assumed clinical importance. An overwhelming number of scientific studies have been conducted into their biopsychiatric and neurological bases (Blom, 2015; David, 2004), as well as clinically-based investigations of their phenomenology (Beavan & Read, 2010; McCarthy-Jones et al., 2014), treatment (Birchwood & Chadwick, 1997; Birchwood et al., 2004; Hayward, Berry, McCarthy-Jones, Strauss, & Thomas, 2014), and significance (Holt & Tickle, 2014, 2015; Kalhovde, Elstad, & Talseth, 2013).

Notwithstanding such extensive research, in clinical interviews psychiatrists question the patient about the presence and form of symptoms such as hallucinations and delusions in order to make a diagnosis. Many of the questions asked require only a yes/no answer (Othmer & Othmer, 2002). Discussion of the content, beyond establishing whether the patient hears ‘commanding voices’ that may place their safety or that of others at risk, is considered unnecessary or simply does not appear to feature as standard practice in clinical consultations (Stephane, Thuras, Nasrallah, & Georgopoulos, 2003). They have no meaning beyond their significance as clinical symptoms of a biological illness. The “medicalisation” (Leudar & Thomas, 2000, p. 123) of voices admits no further consideration beyond their elimination through a treatment plan in which:

the subject’s preoccupation with and self-reports of voices becomes little more than an index of the extent to which the underlying illness is controlled by medication (Leudar & Thomas, 2000, p.114).

Indeed, a widespread concern among psychiatrists and mental health nurses is that any expression of interest would be seen as investing too much meaning in their patient’s experiences and so only strengthen their delusional beliefs (Aschebrock, Gavey, McCleanor, & Tippett, 2003; Coffey & Hewitt, 2008; Kalhovde et al., 2013; Leudar &
Thomas, 2000). However, no clinical evidence has been found to support this assumption (Hartigan, McCarthy-Jones, & Hayward, 2014). In addition, there is the problem of how to manage the potentially overwhelming amount of information that might be forthcoming, not to mention the fear of losing the respect of colleagues if it became known that a psychiatrist was questioning their patients on such matters (Aschebrock et al., 2003).

However, by marginalising the patient in this manner, voices are clinically constructed as a psychiatric symptom before being discussed with patients as a personal experience. Indeed, as Leudar and Thomas (2000) wryly express it, the conventional wisdom is such that “even though hearing voices is a patient’s experience, it is better understood as a psychiatric symptom, by a specialist” (p. 3). From this standpoint, it is recognised that talking about the content of hallucinations and delusions with patients may be helpful rather than unproductive or harmful (Aschebrock et al., 2003). Such discussions may help mental health practitioners understand the personal features of what their patients are living with. Furthermore, not only can talking about their content improve rapport and empathy, but hallucinations and delusions may make sense when considered in relation to the patient’s life (Aschebrock et al., 2003). Importantly, psychiatrists report making better risk assessments and management plans as a result (Aschebrock et al., 2003). However, despite their clinical experience, psychiatrists may consider that they did not receive enough training on how to deal with the content of their patients’ experiences (Aschebrock et al., 2003). Equally, there are many hearers who do not feel the need of psychiatric treatment but may want help in being able to talk about their experiences without fear of being stigmatised (Leudar & Thomas, 2000).

Although it might be considered preferable for people to disregard hearing voices as a personal experience, and to take the clinical view that they are simply evidence of a brain disorder, a wholesale rejection of any meaningful content can reinforce the sense of helplessness that overwhelms many hearers. In their influential early paper, Romme and Escher (1989) argue that it is important that hearers are able to understand and relate to their experiences so that they feel capable of managing them. If their voices are considered solely in terms of biochemistry, the absence of a personal dimension may be too daunting for hearers (Romme & Escher, 1989). Furthermore, for the adoption of any attitude to be effective, it needs to have an emotional core; hence, the argument that as intense negative emotions may only prolong the occurrence of hostile voices, the development of a tolerant and patient, even loving, outlook may be needed to effect any change in the nature of the voices heard (McCarthy-Jones & Davidson, 2013).
This study considers voices within the context of the personal accounts in which they are featured. That is, voices are regarded as experiences that can be *talked about* and *spoken for* by hearers. The perspective therefore that is taken is not a clinical one from which voices are examined as symptoms of a pathological illness. Rather, this study seeks to restore voices to their function in hearers’ verbal descriptions as a speaker who acts *through* and, importantly, *as* language. As personal accounts shared in conversation with others are central to this study, and the history of hearing voices has for the most part been told by those who have heard them, it is relevant to briefly look back to the Middle Ages to consider the question of authority in the representation of voices in the accounts of mystics. It is accounts such as these that constitute a history as “[h]istory does not exist until it is recorded or told” (Pernoud, 1998, p. xii).

But what have the mediaeval accounts of mystics to do with a study of how modern-day hearers represent their voices? The participants interviewed for this research make no claim to being mystics. One reason for drawing this connection is that the accounts given by people in the Middle Ages are examples of how descriptions and interpretations of voices were neither made in isolation nor were independent from the context in which they were obtained or recorded. Autobiographical accounts were co-authored with another through conversation, dictation (Beckwith 1992; del Mastro, 1977; Holdsworth, 1963; L. S. Johnson, 1991; Paintner, 1991; Riddy, 1993; Spearing, 1998; Windeatt, 2004) or, less fortunately as in the case of Joan of Arc, interrogation (Hobbins, 2005; Sullivan, 1999; Wheeler & Wood, 1996). Although this study is not a feminist account of hearing voices, women were once at the forefront in providing the first autobiographical representations of voices in the context of spoken retellings of their lives composed in interaction with others (Obermeier & Kennison, 1997; Riddy, 1993; Spearing, 1998; Windeatt, 2004). However, these mediaeval female mystics were denied “the authority and authorization” (Obermeier & Kennison, 1997, p. 137) to author their own texts independently of the Church. They are representative of many hearers past and present who have found their accounts of their experiences authored for them by clinical studies. In this research the accounts of the participants are authored recognising the personal authority with which hearers represented their voices, as did their mediaeval forebears, through the shared activity of talking.

Early oral accounts initially gave laypeople – such as Margery Kempe (c. 1373 to after 1438) and Dame Julian of Norwich (c. 1342 to after 1416) – a means of personally representing the content of their experiences. The former is particularly notable for the emergence of women’s literature in which the content of spiritual communications were included as
verbatim speech. From a modern-day perspective, it is easy to underestimate the far-reaching significance of a layperson, let alone a woman, talking about hearing God and representing what was said in common language\(^5\), and not in scholarly Latin written by an ordained male cleric. The rise of lay people, particularly women, believing that God was making himself known to them in their own language presented a threat to the Church establishment. Indeed, mystical experiences in which God spoke in the vernacular helped bring the day when the Bible should also be made available in the language people used in daily life. In this sense, God went into circulation. He became “a little less divine” (Beckwith, 1992, p. 197).

Telling the story of an experience however private is an intersubjective activity (Schutz, 1962). In the cases of both Margery Kempe and Dame Julian of Norwich, the later written versions, which were typically mediated through a literate cleric, had their origins in ‘writing aloud’ as they spoke (Riddy, 1993). Conversation was central to how they lived especially as they could neither read nor write for themselves. Composing their accounts was therefore not a solitary endeavour. It grew out of telling their stories to someone else. They found their voices as authors by listening to themselves talking. Indeed, it was in talking about mystical experiences in the circumstances of their own lives, often with other women in domestic settings, that many women cultivated their own voice (Petroff, as cited in Obermeier & Kennison, 1997, p. 137). This process of ‘writing aloud’ may even have been a necessary step towards sharing their experiences with a wider audience. In this way, relating their experiences arose out of interaction as well as reflection. The reflexivity involved was both social and personal. Similarly, the accounts that developed over several interviews with participants in this study were not isolated occurrences but the most recent interpretation in a long process that had evolved through previous interactions with family, friends and psychiatrists. Similarly, the historical development of a psychiatric understanding of hearing voices emerged through the personal conversations of doctor and patient and professional discussion (Borch-Jacobsen, 2001). Indeed, given the absence of any medical test that can safely diagnose a mental disorder such as schizophrenia (Bentall, 2003; Gosden, 2001), if hearers could not communicate, psychiatrists would have no way of being able to categorise their experiences of voices.

In the case of Joan of Arc, what she said about her voices was influenced by how her

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\(^5\) The idea that God would not only speak in a language other than Latin but even make grammatical errors or use uneducated speech was considered unthinkable. However, this was the experience of Joan of Arc and St Birgitta (Aston, as cited in Beckwith, 1992).
interrogators expected her to talk (Sullivan, 1996). The questions they asked required her to explain her experiences according to their own theological categories. In keeping with the scholastic thought of her ecclesiastical judges, they pushed her to identify her voices as those of angels, saints or God himself. They presumed that as she was the one who heard them she should be able to give precise details about them. Sullivan (1996) shows how Joan’s courtroom account of her voices was often vague and contradictory. The requirement to logically describe her experiences eventually compelled Joan to define her voices on her interrogators’ terms. Until her trial there had been no need for Joan to think of her voices in this way. By the end of her trial, Joan’s original experiences had been reconstituted for her (Sullivan, 1996). She had been forced to consciously make sense of her voices through a process of intense introspection. As regards the interviews conducted for this study, this example of the extraction of an account serves as a salutary warning concerning the nature of the contribution the interviewer makes to the account given. Interviews may offer a supportive context in which to develop descriptions, as in the case of Margery Kempe and Dame Julian of Norwich, or a coercive one as in Joan’s experience, which traumatises the participant as well as violating the integrity of their account. Nevertheless, the process of relating what is experienced highlights the fundamental problem of describing an ineffable experience for others to understand. It suggests that any act of communication will change the original experience into an organised form that can be shared.

The tension between hearer-centred accounts and authoritative clinical studies in the present day can be traced back to the growing divide within the Catholic Church between the mystical (experiential) and scholastic (analytical) treatments of visions and voices. Sarbin and Juhasz (1962) argue that the origins of Western clinical theory and practice concerning hallucinations can be traced to the different positions held by the Church Fathers on the sensory nature of religious experience. They identify two major schools that vied with each other. These are the early mystical tradition and the mediaeval scholastic movement.

According to Sarbin and Juhasz (1962), the first is exemplified by St Augustine of Hippo⁶ (354–430) and the second by St Thomas Aquinas (1225–74). Sarbin and Juhasz (1962) describe the divide that grew between these two views in terms of their contrasting understanding and treatment of spiritual experience. Theological debate centred on visions but the arguments put forward by both sides had implications for ‘hearing voices’ as well (McCarthy-Jones, 2011, 2012).

⁶ St Augustine in his Confessions (397-398) describes how his emotional conversion to Christianity was brought about hearing a child’s voice telling him to pick up the Bible. He interpreted it as a divine command.
The eventual victors of the mystics – scholastics debate were the scholastics, as demonstrated in Joan of Arc’s trial. They insisted that the authenticity of divinely inspired experiences was subject to Church endorsement. Visions or voices that were not approved were judged to be of the devil. In Sarbin and Juhasz’s (1962) opinion, all that remained was for “the medical man (to replace) the priest as the authority figure to declare valuations on reported imaginings” (p. 342). Tension between mystical and scholastic accounts would resurface in the nineteenth century as psychological and medical descriptions vied with each other. Historically, the psychological account lost out to the medical account in the nineteenth century because it “did not offer an alternative of sufficient scientific prestige to displace the model supported by the medical profession” (Sarbin & Juhasz, 1962, p. 349).

The prerogative of ordinary people to author personal accounts of their experiences was largely taken out of their hands by the critical approach of such ecclesiastical scholars as St John of the Cross (1542–91) and St Teresa of Ávila (1515–82), who were both accorded the rare distinction of being made Doctors of the Church. They organised their own experiences within a classificatory framework to give an ordered phenomenological account of the form, nature, origin and theology of mystical experience. There are two books in which St Teresa writes at some length on the subject of hearing voices, or ‘locutions’7. The first is her autobiography The life of Saint Teresa of Ávila by herself (c.1558–65), in which she describes some of her own mystical experiences. The second is The interior castle (1577), in which she includes a chapter on distinguishing the different types of voices which her fellow nuns might hear. Her ideas arguably laid the ground for the later wholesale pathologisation of voices (McCarthy-Jones, 2012; Sarbin & Juhasz, 1967). St John contributed a lengthier treatise on the subject of ‘locutions’ that set out to make more systematic distinctions in his Ascent of Mount Carmel (1578/1579–84).

St Teresa reluctantly wrote her autobiography at the behest of her confessors to defend herself from charges of heresy. She had several times been subject to persecution by the Inquisition on account of her mystical experiences and had come close to being arrested. In distinguishing between ‘imaginary’ and ‘true’ locutions, she introduces the notion of linguistic competence to rule out the possibility that hearers invent the content of true locutions (St. Teresa of Ávila, 1957, pp. 175–176). It is too far-fetched, St Teresa argues, that hearers could produce complex locutions and not know that they were doing this.

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7 The English translations consulted render the Spanish word St Teresa and St John of the Cross use as ‘locutions’. These are glossed as “supernatural words that fall upon the inner ear with the authenticity of actual speech” (Cohen, 1957, p. 13). More recently, Jones (2010) retains ‘locutions’ in his discussion of the works of St Teresa and St John of the Cross.
Furthermore, St Teresa introduces a distinction that St John does not parallel in his later account. This identifies the category of ‘false’ locutions as a form of pathological experience:

(The soul) does not believe in them, but on the contrary knows that they are the ravings of the mind, and takes no more notice of them than of someone whom it knows to be a lunatic (St. Teresa of Ávila, 1957, p. 176).

She will later develop this idea in The interior castle. Given that she is writing her autobiography, St Teresa gives examples of the content of her experiences as well as their manner of interaction. On the other hand, St John of the Cross does not provide verbatim examples of the different types of locution but explains their origin in accordance with the distinctive attributes of each category of experience. Central to his treatise is his concern to counsel the reader regarding which forms of locution to disregard or believe. St John (1983) advises the faithful to ignore voices that clearly use language in the form “successive words” (Ch.XXIX, p. 195) or “formal words” (Ch.XXX, p. 202) to communicate. In short, the closer to actual speech the locutions are, the more they are to be distrusted. Although St John attributes the grosser form of locution to the mind, at no point does he suggest that some voices indicate that the believer may be mentally unwell.

As McCarthy-Jones (2012, p. 104) and Woods et al. (2014) note, the statistical analyses presented in current studies are very different from the profuse examples of voices provided in the early psychiatric accounts of Bleuler (1911/1950) and Kraepelin (1919). Their text-book descriptions are illustrative of the way in which voices rather than hearers take centre stage. These were produced in the context of interactions with severely psychotic patients detained in psychiatric hospitals. Bleuler (1911/1950) recognises the influence of the psychiatrist in affecting what patients say and recommends when possible letting “the patient … speak freely” (p.102) instead of being questioned too closely. In terms of their construction in these written accounts, the wild behaviour of these voices is displayed as a rapid series of glimpses into the world of madness. Although Bleuler (1911/1950) is as capable as Kraepelin of unleashing a torrent of vignettes that dramatically illustrate what voices can do, he often tempers them with reflections on the psychological significance of his patients’ experiences. Their psychological pathology is revealed by how the patient interacts with them. They are usually abusive or delusional although they may actually have little to say. They “threaten, curse, criticize and console in short sentences or abrupt words … they express ever the same wishes, hopes and fears” (p. 96). On the other hand, Bleuler
give many examples of “voices” that defy straightforward description that are reminiscent of the bizarre experiences described in such accounts as those of John Thomas Perceval (Bateson, 1961), published in 1838 and 1840, and Daniel Paul Schreber (2000) that had become available to the general public in 1903.

Kraepelin’s (1919) account is a vividly interactive one. What his patients say about their experiences as well as what they hear is given voice. He demonstrates that talking about voices means getting patients to describe what it is like in their own words. As a result, he provides a dizzying array of voices drawn from his clinical experience. Some patients provided him with written notes that give verbatim examples of what their voices said. He crowds each page with ‘sound bites’ of what his patients told him that attest to both the variety and the similarity of their experiences. Voices fall over each other in their frenzy to exhibit their peculiarities. They clamber to shock with their outlandish behaviour. They often do not appear to use language for any pragmatic purpose. They string sentences at random or repeat words and phrases for no apparent reason. However, Kraepelin (1919) brings order to this confusion like a lion tamer in a circus. He gives them their head but does not let them run the show. The ring in which they perform has been built to suit their particular talent. Each paragraph announces their act and then lets their voices loose before a new paragraph clears the stage for the next act. Nevertheless, the last word often belongs to a voice and not to Kraepelin.

The foregoing overview of the shift in the description of voices from hearer to clinician necessarily omits a considerable amount of detail and explanation. However, its inclusion illustrates how accounts of voices changed from personal descriptions in which meaning and content were foregrounded to current authoritative analyses which compartmentalise voices with respect to their significance as pathological symptoms. The attention psychiatrists such as Bleuler and Kraepelin paid to voices in accentuating their outlandish behaviour in chronically ill patients under their supervision led to the description of voices as exhibits which could be described more or less apart from the people who experienced them. However, although voices were identified by their verbal behaviour, the role of language itself in constituting voices as the experience of hearing someone speaking was largely overlooked.

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8 Bleuler (1911/1950) adds quotation marks (“voices”) for more ambiguous cases.  
9 Laing (1967, pp 88–90) critiques Kraepelin’s dramatic behaviour in his clinical examination of a patient in front of medical students.
Approaching voices

The question naturally arises as to what a researcher with no background in mental health can be expected to offer in an area that has been the subject of intense clinical investigation and discussion. The lives of the people I would be talking to had been radically affected by an experience whose dimensions I did not have the personal understanding to grasp. I came to find that much of what is taken for granted in the world of ordinary reality had been shattered in their lives. As with patients confronted with a debilitating physical illness (Good, 1994), participants in this study similarly describe how their “everyday world is systematically subverted or ‘unmade’” (Good, 1994, p. 124) by their voices and the traumatic events that preceded their onset or followed in their wake, as well as by their ongoing experiences of psychiatric treatment. Furthermore, I was faced with the practical problem of how to investigate an experience that is essentially private. In view of my experience as a Cambridge ESOL and IELTS speaking examiner, I was familiar with the strategies for eliciting samples of language, developing rapport with candidates, and assessing communicative competence. However, as I had no direct training in interviewing people on such sensitive issues, over a period of six months I attended weekly handover meetings and demonstrations of mental health status examinations in the psychiatric wards of the Royal Adelaide Hospital and Glenside Hospital in fulfilment of my ethics submission to the Royal Adelaide Hospital Research Ethics Committee. In addition, the works of several scholars influenced me in the approach I took to engaging with participants and working with what they shared with me.

Lowe (1973) and Lucas (1999) discuss the problem of investigating a phenomenon such as hearing voices that cannot be directly observed. Both the experience and its verbal expression challenge hearer and researcher (Lucas, 1999), as well as clinician. On the other hand, hearers’ experiences may be too readily understood in terms of the world we live in. Concepts for locating voices such as internal and external, near and far, or above and below are borrowed from the world perceived by the listener. Hearers use these terms to make their experiences understandable to others. Or perhaps it is truer to say that they are obliged to use references to the material world for the convenience of the person listening (Leudar & Thomas, 2000, pp. 174–175). This is one difficulty faced when a clinician or researcher defines an experience as ‘unreal’ but then requires hearers to describe it in terms the listener will understand. Lucas (1999) freely admits how confusing it also was for him to interpret

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10 English for Speakers of Other Languages.
11 International English Language Testing System.
what his hearers told him. Indeed, “motifs of perplexity” (p. 309) are at the heart of any attempt to make sense of voices. He was aware that he could never make sense of them in the same way as his participants did. With this in mind, this study is guided by Lowe’s (1973) recommendation of taking “‘what the patient actually said’ as the most valid and reliable measure” (p. 626) of their reality. All that can be known about voices is what hearers can say about them.

**Social phenomenology**

The writings of the philosopher and social phenomenologist Alfred Schutz (1899-1959) helped me during interviews to recognise the inherent problems I faced as an outsider bringing with me a host of naïve preconceptions. In particular, Schutz’s (1962, 1976) ideas concerning ‘multiple realities’ and ‘intersubjectivity’ were fundamental to attempting to ensure during interviews that participants felt that their accounts of their voices were respected and that interviews were experienced as a collaborative undertaking. Participants were encouraged to actively contribute to the research. Their cooperation was recognised as essential to negotiating the different worlds of experience at play during interviews and that making sense of their voices could be done with me despite my lack of first-hand knowledge.

Regarding’ multiple realities’, Schutz (1976, p. 135) begins his discussion with a question that the psychologist William James had raised in his *Principles of psychology* published in 1890: “Under what circumstances do we think things real?” James questioned the concept of a single absolute reality. He argued that reality did not exist in an objective sense. It was not an entity that existed independently of ourselves somewhere ‘out there’. Instead, reality was what we made of our experiences: “To call a thing real means that this thing stands in a certain relation to ourselves” (Schutz, 1962, p. 207). But what really influenced Schutz was James’ view that our sense of what is real can take many forms. However, people who hear voices experience an order of reality that often conflicts with the dominant or “paramount” reality (Schutz, 1962, p. 226) shared by others.

It was in relation to this disjuncture that Schutz (1962, 1976) helped me stay aware during interviews of how I was interpreting what participants were telling me. For instance, Schutz (1962, 1976) helped me to acknowledge my potential insensitivity in seeming to identify with the orthodox world of conventional behaviour in my responses to what they told me. In preparing for my interviews with hearers, I recognised that they would be telling me about
experiences whose lived reality was a complex and often frightening one whose “accent of reality” (Schutz, 1962, p. 230) represented a different world order from the one I knew from personal experience. More broadly, Schutz (1962, 1976) clarified for me during my literature review how different fields of research each bring their own set of values and beliefs. Each discipline embodies a different view of what constitutes reality. Interpretations will vary according to the principles and practices that define their perception of what is real. As a result, all are bound by the meanings of their own particular “finite province of meaning” (Schutz, 1962, p. 230). The statements they make are valid insofar as they stay within their own borders.

Such disparities have important implications in terms of ‘intersubjectivity’. Just as Schutz’s theories supported Good (1994) in his understanding of people living with extreme physical pain, I could only learn vicariously about hearers’ experiences by listening to them talking about their voices. I could not enter the ‘field’ to hear for myself and it is only “through the description of that lifeworld that we have access to the selves of others” (Good, 1994, p. 123). Their experiences may make little sense to the outsider but to hearers they form a complex and problematic fabric of meaning within the context of their own lives. Discussion becomes especially challenging when the experience is considered abnormal or shameful (J. Watkins, 1993). Reaching a shared understanding of such a phenomenon is a dialectical process between different types of experience (Schutz, 1976). Understanding how people make sense of their voices means being able to share in their narratives.

According to Schutz (1962, 1976), our experience of reality is more than a private or subjective interpretation. He argues that it emerges through interaction as an intersubjective understanding. It arises from the interplay of what we believe and perceive with what others believe and perceive about the world we live in. Talking together is the main way we do this. It is a shared experience of time within which we exist and change side-by-side (Schutz, 1962, 1967). Rather than being segmented into separate, discrete experiences, Schutz maintained that “the social world is experienced as a common, shared world in which the individual is personally involved (authors’ italics)” (Cuff, Sharrock, & Francis, 1990, p. 169). Voices are reported in the context of conversations between hearers and others. What we can learn about how they act is therefore mediated through human interaction. One participant, Amy, is representative of all the participants in this study in that reconciling the experiences of her own personal reality with a reality she can share and belong to with other people is a key theme of her journey to recovery.
However, this research is not a philosophical enquiry into the world of hearing voices. The question still remains how it is possible for a researcher who is neither a clinician nor a social philosopher to offer any worthwhile observations concerning the voices people hear. Whereas the theories of Schutz (1962, 1976) offer support for understanding how the personal reality of hearing voices is expressed in interaction with others, the rationale for undertaking this research is found in my own professional domain of language. This is because voices are often described in terms of what they say. Considering voices as an experience of language is the primary way in which they become accessible to others (Leudar & Thomas, 2000). By using language, voices become a part of the hearer’s wider social world. It is this aspect of many hearers’ descriptions that allows psychiatrists to ask hearers questions about their experiences. As voices are a form of mental action (Brand, 1986) they can be considered from a functional point of view. That is, they can be described in terms of what they do. Voices are both messenger and message – literally what they say.

The perspective taken in this study is realised through two models of language that are fundamental to hearers’ experiences as they describe how voices use language for interpersonal communication and the representation of experience. These twin areas are respectively circumscribed by the linguistic domains of pragmatics and grammar. Thus the writings of the language philosophers Austin (1955/1975) and Searle (1969, 1976) on the one hand, and those of the linguists Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), Martin and White (2005) and Martin and Rose (2007) on the other, have framed my research.

**Pragmatics**

Pragmatics considers language from a functional perspective and is concerned with how language is used as a means of expressing and organising social behaviour (Leech, 1983; Levinson, 1983; Verschueren, 1999; Yule, 1996). It is typically contrasted with grammar in that the same sentence may be used in a range of contexts to convey different meanings without any of the wording being changed. The language philosopher J. L. Austin (1911-60) proposed that as well as representing meaning by referring to actions and objects, language was used to bring into actual effect the state of affairs referred to in the sentence. In a series of lectures given in 1955, Austin (1955/1975) referred to such verbs as ‘declare’ and ‘name’ as ‘performatives’ (p. 6), because the words themselves when used in context enacted the action represented. These observations provided the basis for his theory of ‘speech acts’, which Austin (1955/1975) also extended to the use of verbs in ordinary spoken and written communication, such as ‘promise’ or ‘suggest’.
In order to distinguish between the many speech act verbs used, Austin (1955/1975) proposed five general types but expressed his dissatisfaction with his analysis. The categories identified were partly based on the perceived ‘illocutionary force’ (p. 151) of the speech acts, that is the apparent intention of the speaker in using these verbs given their meaning. Illocutionary force (intent) contrasts with ‘locution’ (words) and their effect on the listener, or ‘perlocutionary act’ (Austin, 1955/1975, pp. 100ff.). The notion of illocutionary force also provides a communicative perspective from which to describe the function of sentences in which a speech act verb is not expressly used but can be assumed from the meaning of the locution and its probable perlocutionary effect. In view of the present study, the concept of the illocutionary force of a sentence enabled me to approach the description of what voices say in terms of a whole speech act, such as ‘threat’ or ‘warning’, and to distinguish their different functions. Considering voices in terms of their illocutionary therefore foregrounds the perspective of the voice as an interactive phenomenon. Leudar, Thomas, McNally, and Glinski (1997) call this characterisation of voices using speech acts as “voice individuation by conduct” (p. 891).

Austin’s (1955/1975) lecture notes reached a larger audience through the work of Searle (1969, 1976), who substantially revised the theory of speech acts and developed his own classificatory framework. Although Searle (1969, 1976) has been criticised for the lack of exclusion criteria in the definition of the categories proposed (Verschueren, 1999), speech act theory has been applied at varying levels of analysis in a range of contexts, including medical ethics and law (Gordon, 2013), scientific discourse, (Marks, 2014), institutional documents (Hanganu-Bresch & Berkenkotter, 2012), child mental health (Kissine et al. 2015), and neuroscience (Egorova, Shtyrov, & Pulvermüller, 2016). However, the lack of objective criteria for determining the various functions of spoken communication has equally led to researchers developing alternative systems of classification (Ballmer & Brennenstuhl, 1981; Hancher, 1979; Stiles, 1981). In their landmark study of psychotherapeutic discourse, for example, Labov and Fanshel (1977) developed their own listing and grouping of “speech actions or ‘verbal interactions’” (p. 61) to represent different types of communicative behaviour.

Despite disagreement concerning the value of Austin’s (1955/1975) and Searle’s (1976) principal classifications, speech act theory provides a widely-accessible means of describing voices in terms of human communication. This aspect is only summarily considered in clinical research and yet a pragmatic approach to describing voices is central for understanding what hearers experience as a meaningful interaction. In fact, the role of
language in managing interpersonal activity offers a linguistics researcher who has no medical credentials a valid reason for entering the field. Reference to the content of voices involves hearers in making sense of the behaviour of their voices as they would that of another person. Pragmatics situates hearing voices within the domain of language and relationship and allows for the investigation of how what voices say is a form of action in its own right.

**Functional grammar**

However, pragmatics alone was not enough for me to be able to account for how language contributes to the reality for hearers of a voice interacting with them. It was in this regard that a functional model of the contribution made by grammar was required. Such an account was needed so that I could demonstrate how voices also used language to represent experience and the hearer’s world. This understanding of grammar is at a far remove from the conventional view of grammar as rules for determining how to use language correctly. The means that enabled me to consider grammar beyond such prescriptive concerns were provided through the work of the linguist M. A. K. Halliday (b. 1925), whose prototype model of systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1985a) has since been further developed (Halliday & Martin, 1993; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The present study draws on two domains within systemic functional linguistics (hereafter SFL), namely systemic functional grammar (hereafter SFG) and appraisal theory (Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005).

Systemic functional grammar first came into prominence as a pedagogical grammar for use in Australian schools (O’Donnell, Zappavigna, & Whitelaw, 2008). However, it has been applied in a wide range of contexts in qualitative research. In addition to education, SFG has been used to investigate such areas as law (Sieborger & Adendorff, 2011), media studies (Lukin, 2006), and engineering (Guinda & Pellon, 2011), as well as healthcare (Cartmill, Moore, Butt, & Squire, 2007; Körner et al., 2011; Matthiessen, 2013; Moore, 2005), psychiatry (Armstrong, 2009; De Villiers, 2005; Mortensen, 1992; Rochester & Martin, 1979)12, and psychotherapy (Garbutt, 1996; Henderson-Brooks, 2006; K. L. Smith, 2002).

Systemic functional grammar proposes a multilayered account in that it describes how language functions at different levels to produce distinct types of meaning. However, for this study I focused on how voices used verbs to express a particular type of action, or ‘process’

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12 Martin (2009, pp.162–163) includes examples of research from a range of educational and professional disciplines.
Identifying the type of process used is called a ‘transitivity analysis’. This form of grammatical investigation gives insights into how voices interpret the world, for example in terms of physical events, abstract concepts or mental behaviour. The primary reason for choosing the transitivity system as the focus of analysis is the holistic framework it gives for describing how meaning is constituted through grammar. Just as voices perform a type of communicative act on hearers, the content of that interaction depicts an action or a situation that signifies a form of reality. Similarly, as speech act theory offers the means for illustrating the apparent purpose of what voices say, a transitivity analysis maps the terrain of the world voices describe. Although voices are often described using a ‘freehand’ form of functional description (Berry, Wearden, Barrowclough, Oakland, & Bradley, 2012; Birchwood & Chadwick, 1997; Cheung, Schweitzer, Crowley, & Tuckwell, 1997; Nayani & David, 1996), for example as ‘critical voices’, the skills needed to demonstrate how voices are as much pragmatic as they are grammatical are understandably not part of a clinician’s training. It is an involved task given that “[m]eaning in language is the most complex web of meaning that we know of” (Halliday, 2009, p. 60). Far from bestowing a mere form, grammar “‘transforms experience into meaning’ … Another way of putting this would be to say that grammar is a theory (author’s italics) of human experience” (Halliday, 2005, p. 63). Transitivity grants insight into the theories of experience to which voices subscribe.

In particular, the transitivity system maps the way in which three fundamental dimensions of experience (see Figure 2) are expressed through grammar in the form of six process types (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).
The view of grammar offered by SFG is a dynamic one in that it describes how language manages our experience of different types of phenomena through process types that represent the world “unfolding through time” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 223). It demonstrates how a speaker’s perception of the world is organised using language to signify processes of change and stability. In short, the transitivity system is that element of grammar that “turn[s] experience into meaning, and into wording” (Martin, Matthiessen, & Painter, 2010, p. 99). This aspect of SFG is emphasised because what hearers experience through their voices’ use of language is not merely sounds as words. The words and grammatical structures of voices are relevant to hearers because of what they mean. They refer to real-world events and actions that represent change and possible disruption to the order of hearers’ lives. No other model of grammar is this graphic in charting the linguistic landscape of human experience.

**Appraisal**

Yet, notwithstanding the role of grammar in enabling voices to express meaning, voices also use language to express evaluations. Although previous studies of voices highlight the use of pejorative language (Legg & Gilbert, 2006), it is more often subsumed in references to
critical or insulting voices. However, this aspect of the verbal behaviour of voices warrants a specific treatment of its own. As a result, the final linguistic resource that shaped my approach to working with hearers’ accounts of their voices is provided by appraisal theory (Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005).

As in the case of SFG, appraisal theory originally had a pedagogical purpose but was later applied to the use of evaluative language in journalism (Martin & White, 2005). It has been used in similar contexts to SFG, for example law (Bock, 2011; A. J. Johnson, 2008), media studies (Becker, 2009; Jullian, 2011), cultural and political discourse (Martin & Rose, 2007); evangelical preaching (Ethelston, 2009), engineering (Koutsantoni, 2004), and health care (Adendorff & De Klerk, 2005; Gallardo & Ferrari, 2010). The focus is lexical rather than grammatical as it is concerned with how words express different types of attitude. These are organised into three domains which map evaluations that broadly refer to emotional reactions (affect), appraisals of worth (appreciation) and judgements of behaviour (see Figure 3).

![Figure 3 Taxonomy of attitude](image)

Appraisal theory offered me the means to identify how the language used by voices expresses a personal perspective from which they evaluate hearers, others and themselves. Considered in relation to how voices interact with hearers and represent their world, appraisal makes a further important contribution to understanding how language mediates the reality of voices.
In summary, although the various approaches taken in this study are not clinical in their aims, theories or methods, they still offer useful insights into understanding voices as individual experiences of communication, content and relationship that carry significance for hearers. The fields of social phenomenology, pragmatics and functional linguistics are all grounded in producing a description of the world of the hearer and their voices as a site of interaction and meaning-making. These domains guided me in my attempts to preserve the relationship between the account of voices that developed through my analysis and the original context in which my participants talked to me about their personal experiences.

**Designing the study**

The research question developed for this study is set out in Chapter 3 Methodology and is defined in terms of the four perspectives for investigating voices introduced at the beginning of this chapter. This study is qualitative in design and draws on the analytical tools of linguistics to provide an account of how voices express action and meaning. Seven participants consented to take part in a series of open-ended interviews to talk about their voices. In the case of three of the participants, family members, partners and treating psychiatrists were also included in one of the interviews. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded in accordance with the aims of the four research sub-questions.

The methodology provides practical resources for analysing the language hearers use to refer to their voices, and the language used to represent the verbal content of voices. First, what hearers call their voices is examined through the words used to talk about them. Second, what voices say is described as a form of interactive behaviour through hearers’ use of quotes and reports. Third, the role of grammar in mediating how voices represent the world of action is foregrounded through the same examples of voice content. Fourth, how voices use language to make personal evaluations of the hearer, other people and themselves is the focus of the final analysis. Together these questions address the overarching research question of how people who hear voices represent them.

**Overview of chapters**

The next chapter reviews the clinical literature for studies in which the language of voices has been previously investigated. Research that examines voices in relation to their phenomenology, typology and therapeutic treatment is considered in terms of the four perspectives of naming, interacting, representing and appraising. Chapter 3 describes the qualitative methodology of this study and explains how the accounts of research participants
are developed through the use of open-ended interviews. As each of the four perspectives required its own methods of analysis, details of their individual application are provided. The four data chapters that follow (Chapters 4–7) present in turn the results for one of the research sub-questions in the context of each participant in this study. Chapter 4 focuses on the names and descriptions participants use to refer to their voices. Chapter 5 analyses how hearers represent their voices using language to communicate. Chapter 6 examines how the grammar of the language attributed to voices forms a particular view of reality. Chapter 7 foregrounds the use of evaluative language by voices to make positive or negative appraisals of emotional states, personal value and competency, and moral behaviour. Finally, the contribution in relation to clinical descriptions of the behaviour and content of voices made by this research is then discussed in Chapter 8. This chapter argues for a greater inclusion of a linguistic perspective in future descriptions of voices in which the management of voices is the focus of a psychotherapeutic approach developed in partnership with hearers.
2 The role of language in studies of the content of voices

A number of influential books have been written since the 1990s which bring together a wealth of material in which the phenomenon of hearing voices is researched from historical, cultural, psychological and clinical perspectives (for example, Leudar & Thomas, 2000; McCarthy-Jones, 2012; D. B. Smith, 2007; J. Watkins, 2008). A range of other publications also consider hearing voices in reference to a specific theoretical framework (for example, Chadwick, 2006; Chadwick, Birchwood, & Trower, 1996; Nelson, 2005; Stephens & Graham, 2000) or include discussions in the context of mental illness or hallucinations (for example, Bentall, 2003; Sacks, 2012; Thomas, 1997). At the forefront of hearer-centred research has been the Hearing Voices Network. This network has produced user guides to managing voices and collections of hearer accounts (for example, Baker, 2009; Blackman, 2001; Coleman & M. Smith, 2003; Escher & Romme, 2010; Romme & Escher, 1993, 2000, 2012; Romme et al., 2009). As a result, there are now unprecedented opportunities for what hearers experience to be examined from a linguistic point of view in terms of acts of communication that create meaning and build relationship.

This chapter reviews studies drawn from clinical, phenomenological, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and relational therapy research that refer to issues of language in regard to the content of voices. They are selected for their relevance to the four research sub-questions forming the basis of the present study:

1. How do hearers refer to their voices?
2. How do voices use language to interact?
3. How do voices represent the hearer’s world?
4. How do voices evaluate hearers, others, and themselves?

The review reflects each of these questions but rephrases them as colloquial headings to widen the content included. The organisation of this literature review also seeks to acknowledge the chronological development of clinical, phenomenological, CBT and relational therapy research while recognising these are not discrete categories (Thomas et
Recent studies often draw on a combination of these approaches, as in the case of cognitive behavioural relating therapy (CBRT) (Paulik, Hayward, & Birchwood, 2012).

The first research question of how hearers refer to their voices is typically only of a supplementary concern to studies whose main research focus is cataloguing the different types of personified identity of voices in relation to the hearer’s beliefs, overall verbal behaviour of the voice, or the dynamics of the relationship between hearer and voice.

Despite recent interest in producing a typology of voice identity, these do not analyse the informal nomenclature that hearers also use to refer to their voices. In terms of the second question relating to pragmatics, commanding voices represent a major concern of clinical intervention (Birchwood et al., 2011). However, the emotional impact of voices displaying other communicative behaviours, such as criticising and insulting, are becoming widely recognised by studies drawing on social rank theory (Gilbert, 1992). Issues of appraisal (fourth question) are raised in studies which acknowledge that although negative voices may not explicitly direct hearers to perform actions, their use of derogatory language is likely to lower hearers’ self-esteem and contribute to depression. These consequences in turn may lead to hearers complying with commanding voices that order hearers to harm themselves.

Least represented in the literature is a linguistic concern with the role of grammar (third question) as a contributing factor which allows the content of voices to be understood. The rare references to the grammatical content of what voices say (for example, Hoffman, Oates, Hafner, Hustig, & McGlashan, 1994; Nayani & David, 1996) is not considered in terms of how they use words and structures to represent meaning, but solely in terms of formal syntax and morphology.

A formal account of the verbal content of voices from a linguistic perspective is largely absent from this literature. Indeed, the greater part of research over the past hundred years – whether clinical, historical or cultural – has investigated these auditory phenomena to the exclusion of the dynamics of verbal communication. This is partly due to the inherent difficulty in collecting data on experiences that are quintessentially private and which rely on accounts provided by hearers. It may also be the case that the clinical approach to voices discourages an examination of verbal interaction because, given their status as hallucinations, they are by definition held to be false and therefore incapable of engaging in intentional interaction.
The study of voices

Early clinical research into voices is represented by Larkin’s (1979) study of hallucinations associated with schizophrenia. She interviewed ten patients given a diagnosis of schizophrenia during two different phases of their illness: the acute episode and remission. Larkin (1979) asked a number of open-ended questions, based on Lowe’s (1973) set of *form* and *content* descriptors, which focused on the *manner* in which their voices spoke and the *nature* of what they said. In this study, patients’ descriptions of their voices were examined against ten content elements, which were divided into restrictive and facilitative scenarios. These included such negative aspects as the patient’s vulnerability to commanding voices (dependency), verbal abuse (aggression) and threats (self-punishment), as well as positive aspects of the voices, such as companionship, pleasure (entertainment) and judgments concerning other people (evaluation).

Larkin (1979) found that the form and content of auditory hallucinations experienced during acute episodes differed markedly in severity and unpleasantness from those reported during remission. Larkin (1979) suggested that this variation may account for discrepancies in the discussion of hallucinations in previous research. Significantly, in terms of content, during the acute phase voices were more restrictive of interpersonal adaptation, threatening patients and seeking to isolate them from people around them. However, during remission they were more facilitative of interpersonal adaptation, encouraging patients to socially interact with others. In general, Larkin (1979) observed that the facilitative content of her participants’ voices was the more stable of the two. As a result of correlations between several form and content elements during both the acute episode and remission, Larkin (1979) concluded that the voices were fundamentally pragmatic in character, meaning that they were experienced as types of *social action* that could influence how hearers behaved. This finding indicates that any clinical profile of voices needs to take account of the actual or anticipated effects of their interactions on how hearers act in the world, and to assist hearers in developing the insight with which to evaluate their voices.

Notwithstanding Larkin’s (1979) earlier work, Benjamin’s work (1989) is credited with being the first study to consider the content of voices and hearers’ relationships with them in any depth (Hayward & Fuller, 2010; Jackson, Hayward, & Cooke, 2010). She examined the relationships hearers had with their voices along several axes. These concentrated on the dynamics of interpersonal focus, love–hate and enmeshment–differentiation. Benjamin (1989) drew on the grammatical concept of ‘transitivity’ to describe whether their behaviour...
was focused on the other or themselves (object = transitive), or neither (no object = intransitive). All these axes combine to define a multidimensional interpersonal space within which hearers and voices interact. Interactions are expressed as a set of coordinates and plotted on a grid. Benjamin (1989) found that the relationships hearers had with their voices were structured and complex. Interactions with voices made sense in terms of interpersonal behaviour. Neither hearer nor voice behaved in an arbitrary way, and hearers responded to their voices as they would to other people. Indeed, Benjamin (1989) noted that “[i]t appears that all the richness of social interaction can also be found in the internal world represented by the voice” (p. 308).

Benjamin (1989) argued that differences in how patients interacted with their voices were clinically significant. Hostile and controlling voices were associated with diagnoses of borderline personality disorder and major depressive disorder. Friendly voices were associated with bipolar manic disorder. Voices that were both hostile and friendly or did not fit either category were associated with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder. However, Benjamin (1989) found that it was difficult to describe these latter voices in general terms as each hearer’s experience was different.

Benjamin’s (1989) study is remarkable in the literature in that it examines voices as an interaction between two participants. Furthermore, it demonstrates that hearing voices can be described using the language of everyday relationships. Hearers’ experiences are socially more complex than a description of mistaken sensory perceptions would suggest. Hearers also experience themselves in response to their voices. How they behaved is often related to how their voices behave:

… there is interpersonal “rhyme and reason” to the experience of the voice in paranoid schizophrenia. The hallucination does not come toward the patient with random, chaotic messages, and the patient’s response to the perception of the voice is “normal” in an interpersonal sense (Benjamin, 1989, p. 302).

Nevertheless, it still remains to be considered what role language plays in mediating these interactions. A surprising absence of substantial linguistic data applies to Hoffman (1986a, 1986b, 1991) and Hoffman and Satel’s (1993) explanation of voices as unconscious fragments of interrupted discourse planning. They argue that voices arise when the processes by which thoughts are organised into messages are disrupted before hearers are aware of what they were intending to say. These thoughts are later experienced as inner speech that is directed at the hearer. Hoffman (1991) draws on the theories of the Soviet psychologist Vygotsky to argue that the same mental processes are involved in unspoken
self-talk and vocalised speech. According to Hoffman (1986a, 1991) and Hoffman and Satel (1993), voices are more likely to be heard by people who have problems speaking coherently. It is suggested that if hearers could improve their skills in organising their ideas into words, they would hear their voices less often (Hoffman, 1986a, 1991).

Hoffman’s (1986a) ideas have been criticised for a number of reasons. First, it is doubtful that voices are experienced as alien communications simply because they are unintended (Akins & Dennett, 1986; Bentall & Slade, 1986; Gjerde, 1986; Harrow, Marengo, & Ragin, 1986). The argument that any act of speaking needs a plan raises the problem of infinite regress (Akins & Dennett, 1986; Bentall, 2003), which in the present context means that a never-ending number of earlier discourse plans would have been needed to reach the final discourse plan. In addition, it may not even be possible to describe with any exactness in what way anything we say is intended (Harley, 1986). Second, several typical features of voices are hard to explain if hearers are hallucinating their own thoughts (Kinsbourne, 1990). For instance, voices tend to refer to hearers as ‘you’ rather than as ‘I’. They are often repetitive and abusive. They may sound different to the hearer in terms of age and sex. A third criticism is that it is not certain that there is a connection between voices and speech disorder (Allen, 1986; Faber, 1986). People diagnosed with schizophrenia may have one symptom but not the other. Lastly, he gives no examples of what voices say (Jaynes, 1986). Despite his focus on discourse planning, Hoffman (1986a) does not develop his theories through an analysis of the language that constitutes the voices heard.

Yet Hoffman’s (1986a) understanding that voices originate as a form of self-communication opens up many possibilities for examining the role language plays. He states that “VHs [Verbal Hallucinations] are instances of auditory images that are phonetically organised as words” (p. 504)\(^{13}\). However, Hoffman’s definition also needs to take into account the role of grammar in organising the language that is heard. Furthermore, voices are experienced as speech acts, such as orders, advice or comments (Akins & Dennett, 1986). What they say performs a communicative function. Voices therefore have a social dimension beyond the cognitive processes Hoffman describes. Hearers believe that they hear the voices of other people. Alpert (1986) suggests that the error underlying this experience may be “more related to dialogue than discourse planning” (p. 519) but does not explain what he means.

The absence of linguistic data is particularly evident in CBT studies that investigate hearers’ beliefs about their voices in terms of malevolence and omnipotence. These factors have been

\(^{13}\) Equally, some voices are heard without words. These are called ‘nonlexical’ (Alpert, 1986).
held to be more significant than what voices say, but provide very little in the way of interactional data to indicate whether hearers’ beliefs correspond to or are at variance with the verbal content of voices (Birchwood & Chadwick, 1997; Birchwood et al., 2004; Davies, Thomas, & Leudar, 1999; Favrod, Grasset, Spreng, Grossenbacher, & Hodé, 2004; Vaughan & Fowler, 2004). However, it is not clear whether a participant response such as “My voice wants to help me” (Favrod et al., 2004, p. 305) is related to a comment made by a voice, or is primarily the hearer’s own conviction. As Peters, Williams, Cooke, and Kuipers (2012) acknowledge regarding the absence of any reference to voice content in their study, “it may be that voices are believed to be powerful because they profess to be so” (p. 1513). The same indeterminacy applies to Jenner, Rutten, Beuckens, Boonstra, and Sytema’s (2008) study of positive and useful voices. Although the criteria for distinguishing ‘useful’ voices from ‘positive’ is not made explicit, positive voices are exemplified by providing emotional support, while useful voices are associated with taking advisory and regulatory roles in hearers’ everyday lives, such as assisting hearers in their work and even banking. It is for these reasons that many hearers do not want to lose their voices (Jenner et al., 2008).

Notable exceptions to the general lack of reference to language in studies of voices include pioneering research by Chadwick and Birchwood (1994), who discuss ‘imperative voices’ in detail, and Close and Garety (1998), whose studies include extensive tables featuring samples of direct speech that are characteristic of the voices heard. Close and Garety (1998) found that what hearers thought of their voices was directly related to their content. Using a technique called ‘thought-chaining’ in their interviews, they asked hearers questions to reveal links between what their voices said and how hearers felt about themselves. Comments that hearers made about themselves are presented in the same table as the summaries of what their voices said. Close and Garety (1998) report that hearing voices was still a distressing experience notwithstanding what hearers believed about their voices.

An influential study by Nayani and David (1996) suggests that how voices use language to communicate may be related to such factors as frequency, chronicity and perceived origin. For example, voices that were often heard, had been reported for a long time, or were experienced in the hearer’s mind made a greater use of language. These voices either used a wider range of vocabulary or spoke for longer. Nayani and David (1996) report that voices usually spoke no more than 3.5 words, while the longest utterance recalled was 125 words. The voices were categorised in terms of ten different behaviours or qualities which covered verbal behaviour (e.g. command), content (e.g. abusive), emotional tone (e.g. sad) and person (e.g. third person). On average over half of these attributes were exemplified by any
one hearer’s voices. The three most frequently reported interactions were commanding, criticising and abusing the hearer. A large part of what was heard by both males and females were sexual insults and four-letter words. It is on this subject that Nayani and David (1996) make one of the few linguistic observations in this literature. They note that most of these expletives were not simply used as exclamations in their sample. Instead they were specifically directed at the hearer. This was achieved through a change in the word’s morphology or form. By adding the suffix ‘-er’ (e.g. ‘fucker’), voices were more vulgar in their description of the hearer.

A more substantial treatment of voice content was conducted by Leudar et al. (1997). Their focus on the pragmatics of voices plainly recognises that voices exercise agency through what they say. That is, the language they use is purposeful and has meaningful impact. Overall, Leudar et al. (1997) focus on summarising the content of voices with the inclusion of only a few verbatim examples to illustrate their categories. Leudar and Thomas (2000, p. 199) provide several selections from the same study that suggests that their potential for further analysis from both a pragmatic and grammatical perspective is considerable. As the most significant study to-date of how voices interact with hearers, the work of these researchers is reviewed in the next section on pragmatics.

One area in which language carries a major personal significance is in the experiences of people who hear the voice of a deceased family member or close friend (Hayes & Leudar, 2015; Grimby, 1993; Leudar & Thomas, 2000; Rees, 1971; J. Watkins, 2008). However, they may not be openly admitted for fear that they are a sign of mental illness (Grimby, 1993; Rees 1971). These ‘experiences of continued presence’ often bring comfort to people in their grief and can provide evidence for a belief in life after death (Hayes & Leudar, 2015). Equally, if the relationship was problematic, the voices heard may continue to behave as the deceased did while they were alive (Hayes & Leudar, 2015). Conversations with them may help the bereaved face unresolved emotional hurt remaining from their relationship and even assist them with domestic problems (Hayes & Leudar, 2015). For instance, Hayes and Leudar (2015) consider the language used by voices of dead loved ones to offer practical advice and personal comfort as well as the derogatory sexual appraisals (Legg & Gilbert, 2006) expressed by hostile voices. Hayes and Leudar (2015) provide several examples of voice content in the context of their participants’ narratives, such as one man hearing his grandmother telling him where to find the switch for a waste disposal unit:
‘It’s at the back, it’s at the back’ is an informative, acquiring its pragmatic force in the concrete context – Samuel is in his grandmother’s kitchen, with an intention to fix the appliance. The information that the voice carries fits this environment as is indicated by the ellipsis in the voice – the ‘back’ is the back of the appliance, and ‘it’ is something relevant to fixing it. This is the second source of meaning, the relationship of the voice to the immediate environment. The third source is the family history, which is made relevant and consequential in the here and now. These sources combine to provide the voice with meaning and function (p. 7).

Nonetheless, despite voices being clinically recognised as a sensory perception experienced as spoken communication, their constitution as language is the proverbial ‘elephant in the room’ in many studies. Few researchers since Leudar et al. (1997) appear to consider what voices say to be of any investigative value. More recent CBT-based studies such as Peters et al. (2012), Paulik et al. (2012) and Reynolds and Scragg (2010) continue to privilege a questionnaire-based approach, which concentrates on the role of belief to the exclusion of a linguistic description of voices against which it could compare its findings (Birchwood & Chadwick, 1997; Birchwood, Meaden, Trower, Gilbert, & Plaistow, 2000; Chadwick & Birchwood, 1995; Chadwick, Lees, & Birchwood, 2000; Haddock, McCarron, Tarrier, & Faragher, 1999). Even in studies in which participants have been asked to make detailed notes about their voices in diaries (Fowler & Morley, 1989; Haddock, Bentall, & Slade, 1993), little attention was paid to what voices said. Ironically, the verbal content of voices as a substantive phenomenon is replaced by the verbal content of the measures used to interview participants in which they are only permitted to rate agreement for the purposes of statistical analysis.

One possible reason for the lack of research concerning the linguistics of voices is that much of their content is considered to be banal or routine. For example, Leudar and Thomas (2000, p. 53) compare the subject matter of voices with that of inner speech, which is mostly related to a person’s everyday behaviour and immediate concerns. In contrast to the popular perception of voice hearing as the causal factor for violent acts committed by people with a mental illness, Leudar and Thomas (2000) found that “hallucinatory voices influenced the activities of their hearers very much as people influence each other by talking” (p. 53). In other words, hearers were no more controlled by their voices than they were by other people. However, it was partly through their use of language associated with ordinary verbal interactions that voices could be as persuasive.

Having begun this chapter by offering a broad view of the literature on voices, the following sections consider research that relates more specifically to the four perspectives informing the present study. A brief section is also included on recent therapeutic approaches that
explore the relationships hearers experience with their voices. Although little research has been conducted into the verbal content of voices from this standpoint, this area provides a potential focus through which to examine the language of voices in collaboration with hearers and therapists.

Who’s doing the talking?

In this section, research findings that include a focus on the personified form of voices are presented. These studies are mostly phenomenological in their description in that they investigate the features that define the experience of voices. One area of enquiry is the specific identity hearers attribute to their voices. In a review of studies investigating voices from a hearer’s perspective, Holt and Tickle (2014) found that how hearers identified their voices was a major theme to emerge from research. Beavan (2011), for example, considers the identity attributed to voices to be one of the key phenomenological properties of hearers’ experiences. She gives a number of examples to illustrate the variety of ways hearers personify their voices but does not classify them in terms of role or relationship. The lack of further analysis may be due to Beavan (2011) suggesting that names that are functional rather than personal in meaning are frequently “stereotypical” (p. 67), serving as a convenient way of referring to the behaviour of specific voices. In contrast, Mawson, Berry, Murray, and Hayward (2011) found that hearers mostly experience their voices as identifiable personalities. In their study, voices were distinguished in terms of personal relationship to the hearer, for example, family, acquaintances and roles that enable hearers to interpret their voices as meaningful experiences. Their research argues that indeed every interaction with voices contributes to hearers attributing them with a specific identity. The hearers progressively experience their voices as personified entities through the accumulation of verbal exchanges.

Several studies discussed how hearers named their voices. Nearly a quarter of interviewees reported in Garrett and Silva (2003) said their voices had a personal name but no further information was provided about their form. As part of their research, Chin, Hayward, and Drinnan (2009) noted that only about four or five of their nine participants used names to refer to their voices as individuals. They suggest hearers generally avoided referring to their voices by name as hearers were worried that this would encourage their voices to be more dominant. However, they do not consider alternative terms for talking about voices nor do they compare hearers’ preferences for the terms used. Trygstad, Buccheri, Buffum, Ju, and Dowling (2015) recommend that psychiatric nurses ask patients what they would like their
experiences to be called before gathering further information.

In a recent phenomenological study investigating how the auditory characteristics of voices are interpreted by hearers from clinical and non-clinical groups, Badcock and Chhabra (2013) identify different groups of voices heard by both groups in terms of “human, dehumanized, spiritual/ supernatural” (p. 4). Broadly speaking, negative voices are associated with “clinical hallucinators” (p. 4) and positive voices with hearers from the general population. Examples are given of these three categories, with people diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder reporting the voices of actual people known personally or through the media, robots, and God or the devil. By contrast, people without a diagnosis while reporting actual people known to them are more likely to hear a family member rather than a celebrity, people who have died, or angels and spirits. As a result of no further categorisation of the members of these three groups, it remains arguable whether a deceased person is “dehumanized” in the sense that a robot is. Although Badcock and Chhabra’s (2013) study focuses solely on personification as realised through voice identity, their description of the human voice as an “auditory face” (p. 2) allows for a wider application. For example, any reference to a hallucinatory voice may be considered a form of representation of the voice’s existence, if not identity in the strict sense.

Karlsson (2008) briefly refers to the variety of ways in which hearers refer to their voices when participating in focus groups. In addition to remarking on the noticeable absence of the clinical term ‘hallucination’, verbatim examples are cited of expressions of their own making. Participants’ voices are summarised as a whole along a continuum extending from the ‘inner world’ of thoughts to the ‘outer world’ of people (p. 371), but individual accounts are not categorised thematically. Several comments are made concerning one female participant’s use of language, namely her use of prepositions, genitive pronouns and verbs construing her experiences, but no review is presented of other participants.

Although not directly concerned with hearing voices, Rhodes, Jakes, and Robinson’s (2005) systematic analysis of delusional ideation includes the attribution of identity to entities experienced in delusions, some of which may have been heard as voices. First they critique psychiatric systems of classification of delusions before presenting their own categorisation of various types of content experienced (e.g. negative interactions) which are each divided into further sub-categories (e.g. punishment). One category refers to the forms of animate and inanimate entities that are represented in delusions, consisting of three groups, namely ‘object’, ‘self’ and ‘person’ (p. 389). This category is the only one analysed at more than two
levels. The researchers then present several summaries of their participants’ delusions including verbatim extracts from their interviews that are suggestive of voice content. Specific examples of language use, mostly comprising verbs and nouns, are highlighted. They acknowledge that although no “analysis of linguistic features [is presented], yet it is interesting to note the complexity and narrative-like features” (p. 394).

Overall, in studies that catalogue what hearers call their voices, it is their designation as specific entities (e.g. God, alien) that are considered. Colloquial descriptions coined by hearers to refer to their voices are mostly left unanalysed, appearing only in extracts from interviews to illustrate broader themes across accounts. In contrast, this study expands the notion of ‘what voices are’ to include the vernacular references hearers make that provide more personal insights into how they experience their voices. These individual characterisations elaborate what voices mean in terms of the accounts hearers give as against a reductive analysis of voices as identities.

**What’s the talking doing?**

In this section, studies that consider voices as representing a form of communication are reviewed. This perspective understands voices as acting on hearers by what they say. Research in this area has broadly identified several types of voices in terms of how verbal content is realised as a form of interpersonal behaviour. These descriptions form the basis of the typology of voices. In particular, the category of commanding voices is a major focus of clinical research, and so is included as a sub-section of the following review. However, the issue of the significance of verbal content is contested by CBT studies that argue that what hearers believe about their voices is more likely to influence how they react to their voices, not the interaction itself.

It is in an influential early study from CBT that Chadwick and Birchwood (1994) discount the role of language in hearers’ experiences but without declaring what their understanding of language is. Notwithstanding this dismissal, a social-cognitive view would suggest that the relationship hearers describe with their voices derives from the social interactions they experience in everyday life (Reynolds & Scragg, 2010). These interactions in which hearers negotiate issues of power and position are typically mediated through language. Hearing voices is thus considered to be an internalised experience of a form of social behaviour enacted through language as a communicative resource. Indeed, voices continue to be described as functional types of interaction. Subsequently, for example, Birchwood and
Chadwick (1997) divide voices into three groups according to what they say: (1) commands, advice and comments; (2) insults and threats; and (3) commentary (and advice\textsuperscript{14}). However, in addition to the assumption that the meaning of these terms are self-explanatory – for example, the difference between ‘comments’ and ‘commentary’, there is no clarification as to why commands, advice and comments are grouped with each other.

In terms of their verbal behaviour, three types of voices have generally been identified, namely ‘commenting’, ‘conversing’ and ‘commanding’ (Read, Agar, Argyle, & Aderhold, 2003; Siris & Acosta, 2012). These types respectively would appear to correspond to a form of self-talk, dialogue and direct address to take action. The first two are therefore closer to being patterns of interaction while the third is a form of verbal action. Commenting voices are considered “context-dependent” (David, 2004, p. 111) in that they typically refer to activities taking place in the immediate environment. Using these broad distinctions, Read et al. (2003) found that commenting and commanding voices were more prevalent in people who had suffered childhood sexual abuse. Other studies may seem to favour a more functional view by distinguishing between ‘criticising’ or ‘commanding’ voices (Karlsson, 2008). Such categories, however, are often left undefined, unaccompanied by a clarification of the distinctions made, or explained with a circular definition\textsuperscript{15}. The assumption seems to be that the features of such interactions are self-evident and readily perceptible in terms of a popular understanding of language and communication. In contrast, Goodwin, Alderson, and Rosenthal (1971) judged voices to be accusatory according to two criteria. First, such voices said unpleasant things about hearers. Second, hearers believed they deserved to be talked about in this way. Accusatory voices were thus identified in terms of what they said and how hearers felt about themselves. CBT studies employing measures of power relations, however, do not discuss how the language of a command, for instance, constructs or reinforces voice dominance and hearer sub-ordination.

More recent phenomenological studies of voices (Beavan & Read, 2010) broadly categorise content in terms of different communication types but do not acknowledge the role of speech act theory in their analyses. Similarly, Chin et al. (2009) consider the communicative function of voices in their distinction between commands and instructions in their consideration of “strategies employed by the voice” (p. 8), but equally leave other examples uncategorised as “more generally” (p. 8). Overall, the “discursive strategies” (p. 14) they

\textsuperscript{14} Advice is also included with commentary in Table 2 but only with commands in the text of the article.

\textsuperscript{15} For example, “CH [command hallucinations] are characterized, as the term suggests, as commanding the hearer to do something” (Braham, Trower, & Birchwood, 2004, p. 514).
identify are left unaccounted for as regards their relationship to any principles of pragmatics. Another study coded voices into three broad thematic groups: ‘controlling, ‘critical or rejecting’ and ‘threatening’ (Berry et al., 2012, p. 284) based on a “symptom summary sheet” (p. 283) compiled by interviewers. Although general reference is made to voice content, such as voices being controlling if they “told the participant what to do” (p. 284) or the use of pejorative language, there is no further sub-classification with verbatim examples. Furthermore, voice context is considered only in binary terms of its occurrence or non-occurrence rather than degree of frequency. However, individual voices were recognised as possibly behaving across more than one category. Nonetheless, voices are not considered in terms of a hearer’s account in which their proportional representation may indicate a pattern of significance for the hearer. Indeed, Berry et al. (2012) imply a low estimation of the value of language when they consider that a hearer’s interpretation of their relationship to their voices may be more significant “rather than merely (my italics) what voices say” (p. 288).

Another typology of ‘auditory verbal hallucinations’ (AVH’s) has been developed by McCarthy-Jones et al. (2014, p. 229). This typology incorporated commanding or commenting voices and included ‘Own Thought AVHs’ (related to ‘thought echoing’), ‘Nonverbal AVHs’ and ‘Replay AVHs’ (in which earlier conversations appeared to be repeated). These researchers interviewed participants concerning the type of grammatical person voices used and an appraisal of voice content using positive or negative adjectives. However, given the substantial sample size of participants (n = 199), opportunities for analysing the linguistic evidence in this and other large scale studies are limited.

The most substantial analysis in terms of pragmatics was undertaken by Leudar et al. (1997), who classify the verbal behaviour of voices in terms of their own taxonomy of speech functions, namely regulatives, informatives, evaluatives and questions. Each of these categories is methodically itemised with the type of voice heard. For example, regulatives are “voices [that] advise on possible actions” (p. 893). They found that most of the patients and non-patients interviewed reported a regulatory type of directive voice that told them how to manage their daily lives. These informatives gave various kinds of information (familiar, new, bizarre), as well as predictions and explanations. Evaluatives included the use of language to express a range of appraisals of hearers and others, from negative (criticism, insults) to positive (praise). Questions were considered in terms of such adjacency pairs as question–answer and hearers’ reactions but leave the type of question
asked unanalysed. However, from a grammatical point of view, whether questions are open (e.g. ‘what, where’), closed (‘yes–no’), alternative (choice given between two or more propositions), or mood-tagged (e.g. ‘… haven’t you?’) has a bearing on the pragmatics of the verbal exchange. Nevertheless, Leudar et al. (1997) drolly observe that:

The questions voices asked almost always related to on-going activities and functioned as indirect requests. Voices were never reported to ask questions such as ‘What time is it?’, ‘What is the weather like?’ and ‘Who won in the local elections?’ (p. 895).

The fact that voices can generally answer questions asked by hearers presents a challenge to Hoffman (1986a, 1986b, 1991) and Hoffman and Satel’s (1993) argument that voices represent disrupted discourse planning. This is because in theory voices should not be able to respond (Leudar et al., 1997).

Further research discussing how voices use language to communicate was conducted by Leudar and Thomas (2000). They describe hearing voices as “a form of private speech” (p. 131) that is understandable in terms of “the dialogical organisation of human experience, and the mediational use of language as inner speech” (p. 146). Developing the work of Thomas (1997) and Davies et al. (1999), Leudar and Thomas (2000) supply a number of conversations between one hearer, Peg Davies16, and her voice which had been transcribed verbatim into a journal. No other researchers appear to have provided such significant and extensive data. The fact that the journal was continually maintained over an intensive period of a fortnight makes its contents all the more remarkable. Leudar and Thomas (2000) provide a detailed commentary on the dialogic features of the interaction. Thomas, the principal investigator, did not query Davies’ beliefs, as would a CBT practitioner, but engaged with her as an equal. Thomas and Davies talked about her experiences over a fortnight. He asked her to describe her interactions with her voices in terms of the same simple speech acts that would be used to describe everyday conversations, “for instance, ‘ask’, ‘refuse’, ‘order’, ‘ignore’” (p. 134). The main aim was to allow her to talk about her voices “without having them rendered ‘meaningful’ (and meaningless) in psychiatric interpretations” (p. 134).

As the account Leudar and Thomas (2000) are working from is in the form of recalled dialogues, they consider pragmatic properties that extend beyond isolated speech acts. In the opening to their discussion of ‘voice-talk’, they pose the questions of “what kinds of speech are voices?” and “[w]hat sorts of inner speech are voices?” (p. 173). Citing clinical evidence regarding brain activity, they affirm that people not only hear voices but take part in

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16 Davies at al. (1999) was written by Leudar and Thomas in collaboration with Peg Davies.
organised conversations. Hearers and voices are conversational partners. Leudar and Thomas (2000) compare voices to inner or private speech in that what is heard mostly takes the form of regulatory instructions and subjective evaluations of what hearers are doing at the time. Drawing on the theories of Goffman (1981) and other researchers in the field of social behaviour, Leudar and Thomas (2000) also consider voices in terms of the type of speaking role they play. Following Leudar et al. (1997), they use the categories of conversational analysis to describe the form of turn-taking generated between voice and hearer, as in the case of the ‘adjacency pair’ (p. 192) of question–answer. Ordinary language is used and the pattern of interaction is often similar to everyday conversations except in the case where voices issue directives. In these cases, Leudar and Thomas (2000) found that hearers usually disregarded their voices or refused to comply. It is in regard to the debate surrounding voices that tell hearers what to do that we now turn. The argument as to whether voice content or what hearers believe is most likely to influence whether hearers act on their voices is central to how seriously psychiatrists view what voices say. This is particularly the case where voices order hearers to harm themselves or another.

**Commanding voices**

The voices that attract the most concern in the literature are known as command auditory hallucinations (CAHs), or imperative hallucinations (Birchwood et al. 2014; Gerlock, Buccheri, Buffum, Trygstad, & Dowling, 2010; Mackinnon, Copolov, & Trauer, 2004; Wong et al., 2013). They have also been referred to as second-person auditory hallucinations (McInnis & Marks, 1990). The importance of content is most clearly argued in the case of these voices as they are believed to pose a serious societal threat to safety because hearers might carry out their commands. For example, they are popularly believed to be responsible for outbreaks of violent behaviour in people diagnosed with a mental disorder (Leudar & Thomas, 2000; Vilhauer, 2015). Their danger therefore lies in how they use language to influence hearers. Commanding voices are the clearest case of voices being defined according to how they communicate with language, that is, the use of words and grammar to represent meaning and instigate action. It is this individual experience of the interpersonal function of language that forms the basis of their contrast with commenting hallucinations (Read et al., 2003), which typically provide a commentary on current situations and events. However, hearers’ experiences are more complex than the above clinical distinction suggests. For instance, not all command hallucinations directly order the hearer (Byrne, Trower, Birchwood, Meaden, & Nelson, 2003). Hearers may construe a comment made by their voice as requiring some action in response. This construal appears to depend on what
hearers believe about their voices (Byrne et al., 2003). Equally, hearers may act dangerously
without being prompted by their voices (Braham, Trower, & Birchwood, 2004).

Whereas command hallucinations were previously considered in the literature as a whole,
they are now categorised according to the object of violence, that is ‘self-harm’ and
‘harm-other’, and may also include provocations to commit violence that would in all
likelihood involve personal injury, plus more neutral or innocuous commands (‘benign’)
(Barrowcliff & Haddock, 2010; Bucci et al., 2013; Reynolds & Scragg, 2010). Commanding
voices have in particular been associated with self-harm among patients diagnosed with
schizophrenia (Shore, Anderson, & Cutler, 1978). In a study of people with diagnoses of
schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder and unspecified psychotic disorders, the most
common voices were those commanding hearers to hurt themselves (Bucci et al., 2013).

The danger that these voices represent may be exaggerated as their standing is often based
on a small number of sensational cases (Kasper, Rogers, & Adams, 1996; Rogers,
Nussbaum, & Gillis, 1988). Nevertheless, despite inconclusive findings, people diagnosed
with a severe mental illness who report command hallucinations are still considered to be at
increased risk of suicide (Wong et al., 2013). Commanding voices also have legal
ramifications as evidence of their presence may reduce the length of gaol sentences or acquit
the offender of criminal responsibility (Braham et al., 2004). For these reasons, defendants
facing criminal charges may falsely testify that voices provoked them to attack other people
(Braham et al., 2004). Psychiatrists attempt to expose suspected cases of malingering by
asking questions that lead offenders into making outrageous claims about their voices
(Rogers, Nussbaum, & Gillis, 1988).

Although there is little consensus of clinical opinion on the extent to which commanding
voices influence how hearers behave, their significance is unlikely to be totally dismissed
given the risk of hearers complying with commands to self-harm or harm others (Birchwood
et al., 2011; Braham et al., 2004; Bucci et al., 2013). One of the first questions patients will
be asked by a mental health nurse is whether they hear voices telling them to hurt themselves
or another person (Trygstad et al., 2015). Analyses of content suggest that voices are
generally more likely to try to interfere with the way hearers live (Goodwin et al., 1971). For
example, they may prohibit hearers from eating or speaking. Zisook, Byrd, Kuck, and Jeste
(1995) found that nearly as many voices gave non-threatening directions as gave harmful
commands. The type of command heard may also be influenced by cultural and
socio-economic factors. For example, an examination of hospital records last century
showed that commands were more religious and less violent in the 1930s than they were in the 1980s (Mitchell & Vierkant, 1989).

The role of commanding voices was studied by Junginger (1990), who reported that nearly half of the 20 participants in his study had carried out commands to harm themselves or others. The dangerousness of the command, however, was not found to influence hearers as much as expected. In a later study, Junginger (1995) noted that hearers were more likely to carry out commands that were not very dangerous. Even so, around half the patients interviewed complied to some degree with dangerous commands. Two factors in addition to the dangerousness of the command are thought to influence hearers (Junginger, 1990, 1995). The first is the delusional beliefs that hearers have about their voices. The second is their ability to identify who the voices are, which will in turn have an effect on how hearers feel about them. Hearers are more likely to trust voices that are believed to be a familiar human or supernatural agency (Erkwoh, Willmes, Eming-Erdmann, & Kunert, 2002; Hersh & Borum, 1998; Junginger, 1990, 1995; Rudnick, 1999).

Commanding voices have also been studied in the context of the emotional reactions of patients with a diagnosis of schizophrenia and a history of violent behaviour (Cheung et al., 1997). In this study, reports of voices were analysed in terms of their perceived emotional tone and content to establish whether there was an association between violence and command hallucinations. They claim that there were no significant differences between the voices heard by violent and non-violent patients in terms of their formal features. The voices of violent patients were as loud, frequent and real as those heard by non-violent patients (Cheung et al., 1997). However, patients who behaved violently were more likely to be distressed the verbal behaviour of their voices. Their voices often sounded bossy, angry or malicious. They criticised or insulted hearers. By contrast, patients who did not behave violently often found their voices comforting and pleasurable. Nonetheless, Cheung et al. (1997) do not refer to the actual verbal content and the statistical table of voice content does not differentiate between qualitative descriptions (e.g. obscene) and more pragmatic (e.g. guiding) terms.

Since the mid-1990s, CBT research has argued that what hearers believe about their voices affects how they feel and what they do about their voices (Beck-Sander, Birchwood, & Chadwick, 1997; Birchwood & Chadwick, 1997; Birchwood et al., 2014; Chadwick & Birchwood, 1994, 1995; Shawyer et al., 2008). These beliefs may be particularly influential when hearers are deciding how to respond to commanding voices (Birchwood et al., 2011;
Hearers are influenced by how powerful they think their voice is and how much they respect its authority. They worry about what the consequences would be if they disobeyed. The nature of this anxiety depends on how benevolent or malevolent they think their voice is (Beck-Sander et al., 1997; Birchwood et al., 2011). Hearers’ own feelings about their self-worth and sense of control over what happens in their life are important factors too (Beck-Sander et al., 1997; Braham et al., 2004). The content of commands may be more influential than what hearers believe as hearers are more likely to comply with commands to carry out minor actions but resist commands to carry out more serious actions such as self-harming (Beck-Sander et al., 1997; Chadwick & Birchwood, 1994; Junginger, 1995).

Although studies of command voices may categorise voices in terms of the threefold distinction of self-harm, harm other and benign (Barrowcliff & Haddock, 2010; Bucci et al., 2013; Reynolds & Scrugg, 2010), these typically do not include examples of verbal content apart from several illustrations. However, Birchwood et al. (2014) provide a table in which quoted examples of ‘voice commands’ (p. 28) are grouped in terms of provoking violence against self or other, as well as types of crime, prohibitions and threats. Most of these are short imperatives as regards grammatical structure. These are matched by examples of actions hearers committed in response that either complied with or appeased their voices. Despite the general dismissal in CBT research of the role of content in hearers’ experiences, it is clear that most of the acts of compliance and appeasement reported in Birchwood et al. (2014) are directly connected to the verbal content of the voices heard. This finding accords with Barrowcliff and Haddock (2010) who found that the content and type of command were important factors in influencing hearers’ compliance or resistance. This was the one area in which Chadwick and Birchwood (1994) found that the language of the command rather than the belief of the hearer was more likely to determine what action hearers took.

Whether voices issue commands or display other forms of verbal behaviour, the foregoing studies would appear to consider language to be a transparent mode of transmission in which wording and structure play no significant part in constructing the content of what hearers experience. Yet in no other context are voices so clearly identified as agents appropriating the authority to compel compliance. Despite reference to social rank theory and hearers’ beliefs about their voices, the role of language as the means through which power relations are mediated and provocations to act are communicated, which impact on issues of compliance, is generally neglected. This oversight is in contrast to studies of the effects of pejorative language on hearers’ self-esteem and emotions, which will be reviewed later in this chapter. Having considered the attention previous research has given to what hearers
call their voices and how voices interact with hearers, the following section assesses the extent to which the grammatical resources that constitute language itself have been included in accounts of voices.

**How are voices doing the talking?**

This section reviews studies that have used language terminology as a key source of categories for referring to voices. Nevertheless, these studies largely overlook the study of voices as linguistic structures. For example, voices have conventionally been identified in terms of the traditional grammatical category of person according to whether they address hearers directly or talk about hearers or with other voices\(^{17}\) (Schneider, 1959). Studies such as Jenner et al. (2008) include consideration of whether the content of voices varies with the form of person they are heard using. However, Perona-Garcelán et al., 2015) claim that there has been no research as to the reasons for voices being commonly heard in other persons than the first. While voices are clinically referred to in grammatical terms as second or third person, this view often neglects to acknowledge that this choice of pronoun is dependent on the form of relationship voices evince with hearers (Perona-Garcelán, et al., 2015). The grammatical label is thus more meaningfully understood as a signpost of the type of interaction experienced. In other words, the use of ‘you’ to directly address the hearer or the use of ‘he/she’ to designate the hearer as a non-participant in the conversation confirms the underlying pragmatics of the exchange.

Perona-Garcelán et al. (2015) state that, according to the orthodox view, voices should be heard as single word or formulaic phrases. Yet, the opposite is usually the case, with voice content featuring more than a basic use of grammar. Furthermore, they argue that phenomenological evidence demonstrates that “voices have personality and their own history” (p. 268) and are responsive to what happens to hearers and what they say and do. Indeed, they are reflective of the language of the social interactions in which hearers participate on a daily basis (Perona-Garcelán et al., 2015). However, this present study suggests that more significant than the use of second and third person pronouns is a description of the pragmatic function of voices and the role of grammar in construing meaning through the modelling of experience (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, 2014).

One research project that concentrated on issues of language (Hoffman et al., 1994) did so very narrowly, restricting its attention to a semantic analysis of the content of voice

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\(^{17}\) This distinction, however, is less grammatical than pragmatic, as it pertains to issues of “participant positioning” (Leudar & Thomas, 2000, p. 187).
utterances, and only provided a small number of illustrative ‘soundbites’ with which to support its findings. The researchers asked four patients to write down what their voices said. They found that the lexical cohesion of what participants heard contributed to their belief in the existence of an alien speaker. Similarly limited was a study by Read and Argyle (1999) of the psychiatric records of patients who were sexually or physically abused as children. They provide several quoted examples of voice content, mostly in the context of command hallucinations. However, their descriptions are limited as less than half the case notes they referred to had included details about verbal behaviour, leading the researchers to note the “paucity of information on symptom content” (p. 1470) in the records they consulted. Chin et al. (2009, p. 8) make ad hoc reference to examples of conation and comment adjuncts in their hearers’ accounts but do not otherwise analyse how hearers represent agency and positioning in specific linguistic terms.

Measures for assessing the ‘linguistic complexity’ of voices may be solely based on the elementary distinction between isolated words, groups of words, sentences and conversations (Stephane et al., 2003, pp. 187, 192; Trygstad et al., 2015, p. 23) with no further definition. Twenty characteristics were identified overall by Stephane et al. (2003) that included linguistic features but these were limited to such basic categories as grammatical person and length of utterance, and a very simple classification of the type of interaction\(^\text{18}\). They found that stereotypic voices were associated with short utterances whereas those that spoke in longer utterances demonstrated “systematized content” (p. 185).

However, in their study, the definition of linguistic complexity and content is neither informative nor detailed. More scope for identifying the language used by voices is offered in the Auditory Hallucinations Interview Guide (AHIG) developed by Trygstad et al. (2015), which includes basic questions regarding the use of personal pronouns for referring to hearers and themselves (p. 23) in addition to voice utterance length. Hearers are also asked to give examples of what their voices say, as well as answering questions about verbal behaviour, such as whether their voices give any commands or make any critical comments (pp. 23–24). However, it is not clear how this information can then be combined to create a voice profile.

A communicative approach is taken by Demjén and Semino (2014), who analyse a published written account of hearing voices for linguistic patterns in the way the author describes his experiences. One of the reasons for their choice of material was to privilege the

\(^{18}\) That is, hearing but not responding, answering voices back and engaging in conversation.
voice hearer’s retelling as a continuous narrative rather than as a series of isolated answers to interview questions. They consider a small sample (n = 49) of examples in terms of voice identity, speech act and speech frame. Their study would appear to be the only one in which the representation of speech is foregrounded. In particular, they pay attention to occurrences of direct speech as well as the type of verb used by the voice hearer to introduce reported speech as part of his written narrative. They found direct speech was used in only 14% (n = 7) of representations of voice content. They suggest this low percentage may be due to the voice not being heard as a distinct verbal utterance in which specific words are recalled. Possibly given the small sample set, they did not further analyse the choice of speech frame in relation to the type of speech act represented. Nor did they analyse the speech content of the voice itself in terms of wording, particularly in relation to how voices represent action in the world.

As well as arguing that the voices reflect interactions hearers have had with other people, an alternative view is that voices may enact a form of intrapersonal communication. Perona-Garcelán et al. (2015) argue for their reconceptualisation as “a state of consciousness in which the self is dissociated into different positions or perspectives” (p. 264). Drawing on the work of Fernyhough (2004), they propose that hearing voices is a form of mentally perceived interaction between unintegrated aspects of the hearer’s psychology in which their own thoughts and self-talk are mistakenly attributed to another person. These intersubjective communications are described as displaying a range of pragmatic features that are consistent with everyday conversation in the external world. The state of coherence people associate with a ‘monologic’ sense of identity is attained through a congruent ‘dialogic’ dynamic between a multiplicity of different psychological functions. In this way, a “narratively structured self” (Perona-Garcelán et al., 2015, p. 268) is progressively developed and sustained. However, when this interactive network is disrupted and fragmented, for example because of early trauma, these researchers argue that it may be experienced in the dissociated form of separate voices that are experienced as ego-dystonic figures.

The subjective experience of hearers is the focus of research reviewed in the next section that highlights how the content of what voices say affects the emotions of hearers. The role of language is most evident in the use of words that carry positive or negative meanings that concern the hearer. Such evaluations and judgements are clear examples of how voices act on hearers through the personal attitudes they express. Although they may not instigate action in the way commanding voices may, research has indicated that negative voices are associated with depression and self-harm.
What feelings and opinions does the talking express?

Studies that consider the role language plays in how voices position themselves vis-à-vis hearers tend to pay the closest attention to issues of wording. In addition to their focus on the pragmatics of ‘voice-talk’, for example “voice-directives” (p. 198), Leudar and Thomas (2000) discuss the behaviour of “voice-evaluatives” (p. 198), which appear to mostly appraise hearers’ character and actions. It is in this context that Leudar and Thomas (2000) explain the Schneiderian (1957) category of ‘commenting voices’ as referring to voices that comprise various forms of judging remarks. Whereas directives demand compliance, appraisals require agreement with their supposed truth-value.

Studies such as Gilbert et al. (2001) that focus on the emotional impact voices have on hearers recognise the importance of their verbal content but may not collect a detailed set of specific examples. Nevertheless, Legg and Gilbert’s (2006) gender-based study of the relationship between voice and hearer examines more methodically how language is used. They consider what voices say in terms of shaming behaviour, and to what extent this reflects the use of pejorative language in ordinary social interactions between the sexes. Drawing on research into the evolution of the concept of shame, they refer to four areas that are commonly targeted: “(a) conformity, (b) prosocial behaviour/selfishness, (c) sexual behaviour/attractiveness and (d) status competitive behaviour” (Greenwald and McGuire, 1998, as cited in Legg & Gilbert, 2006, p. 518). As insulting is a common practice for shaming others in daily life, Legg and Gilbert (2006) interviewed male and female hearers about insulting voices to confirm if their thematic content reflected gender differences between hearers and their voices. Insults were assigned to one of four categories: sexual, non-sexual, warnings and commands. In contrast to previous studies, warnings were also included for analysis. Direct speech examples were provided to illustrate each category.

This system of classification, however, presents several concerns. First, the categories are drawn from two separate domains, with one pair dealing with thematic content and the other with pragmatic function. As a result, the two sets of categories are not mutually exclusive, and content would appear to be more readily identifiable than function. For instance, several examples could be assigned to more than one group, such as commands with overt sexual content. Legg and Gilbert (2006) acknowledge in the case of non-sexual derogations that some of these may relate to sexual themes. A second concern is that the functional distinction between warnings and threats was not made clear, with several warnings arguably constituting direct threats to the hearer’s security. Legg and Gilbert (2006) admit
that they were unsure how warnings were a form of insult. Warnings were largely included only because they were spoken by a voice that was generally insulting. Providing a more complex account of the relationship between different types of content and function remains an area for future research (Legg & Gilbert, 2006). A third concern is that given the importance of commands as a category of voice, no sub-categorisation is attempted to identify the main types of action hearers are compelled to perform. Legg and Gilbert (2006) reason that the examples represent a variety of mild to strong directives that would require information about the emotional tone of the voice to clarify the function. Nevertheless, in the discussion of the default category of non-sexual derogations, Legg and Gilbert (2006) further analyse the wide-ranging examples of voice behaviour to identify three key themes: disparagement of physical appearance, swearing and name-calling, and denial of competency and value.

Other researchers, Fenekou and Georgaca (2010), argue that how hearers react to their voices is directly connected to voice content as well as their own beliefs. They provide numerous examples of voice content with a frequent use of direct speech quotes grouped according to their probable communicative behaviour. However, these are scattered across hearers’ accounts in order to illustrate the diverse behaviour of voices rather than to develop an account of individual hearer’s experiences. Moreover, the rationale for grouping voice content was not explained, leading to a loss of significant pragmatic distinctions, as in the case of prohibitive directives being classified as acts of guiding and advising (Fenekou & Georgaca, 2010, p. 137). Three groups of insulting comments are recognised, namely “intellectual ability, physical appearance and sexual orientation” (p. 137), but again there is no comparison of these themes among participants. In addition, no further analysis was made of the language attributed to voices.

The four perspectives used to organise the foregoing review of previous research culminate in the overarching question of how hearers represent their voices. As the methodology of this study draws on social phenomenology and linguistics to describe how language functions as a communicative resource for generating intersubjective meanings through social interaction, the role of language in construing relationship is central to this research. Therefore, the final area of the literature to be reviewed is that which focuses on improving the relationships hearers experience with their voices.
How does talk create relationships?

A recent research development in analysing voices focuses on how talk creates relationships. In particular, the findings and practices of relating therapy mark an important shift from the cognitive model of voices developed previously. In the context of such research, the functional approach taken to voices in this study may be of benefit. Research indicates that the language of voices is comparable to the interactions hearers experience in ordinary life with other people. For example, Thomas, McLeod, and Brewin (2009) studied the extent to which the verbal dynamic of the voice-hearer relationship resembles that of ordinary social communication. They suggest that not surprising hearers should interpret their voices in accordance with their daily experiences of human interaction, especially if they experienced their voices as “real others” (p. 412). They considered hearers’ experiences in terms of interpersonal complementarity, that is, communication as a reciprocal exchange. This was modelled in reference to two axes – one representing hearer-voice and the other representing action-reaction. Similar to Leudar and Thomas (2000, p. 5), Thomas et al. (2009) found that voices were typically repetitive or limited in content, and so did not display an extensive range of verbal behaviour. In contrast, hearers were more likely to talk to their voices as if they were engaging with another person despite the restricted nature of the responses received. Thomas et al. (2009) conclude that voices do not offer hearers the same rich communicative repertoire as another human.

Despite the clinical construction of voices in terms of hallucinatory symptomatology, researching voices from a psychological perspective has progressively gained traction (Hayward, Denney, Vaughan, & Fowler, 2008). As a result of the growing number of studies examining voices from within an (inter)relational context (for example, Birchwood et al., 2000, 2004; Hayward, 2003; Hayward et al., 2014; Paulik et al., 2012), language as a form of social practice is therefore well-placed for furthering an understanding of voices as interactive communicative events that both model the hearer’s world and behave interpersonally. Insights from the perspective of language as a form of social action would complement the developmental approach taken in recent years to how hearers relate to other people in their lives as well as to their voices (Hayward et al., 2014). For example, if the level of distress a hearer experiences is associated with their resistance to their voices as a result of their beliefs, the suggestion of an ‘approaching’ or ‘accepting’ mode of relating to voices (Hayward et al., 2014) could be supported by a strategic understanding of the role language plays in maintaining communication (Hayward, Overton, Dorey, & Denney,
2009). As Thomas et al. (2009) recognise, “an interpersonal relationship (is) made up of many interactions” (p. 413) and the same is arguably the case in terms of hearers’ and their voices. Nevertheless, the notion of ‘relationship’ between hearers and their voices has been shown to be a problematic construct (Chin et al., 2009) as hearers may not wish to associate their persistent experiences in relation to their friends and family.

Conclusion

Although Fernyhough (2004) in his introduction alludes to a potential association between psychology and linguistics in providing an account of voices, relatively little attention has been paid to their verbal content. This is despite the widespread acknowledgement that the behaviour voices display is often associated with inter-relational themes of power and dominance. Yet this dynamic is to a large extent obtained through how voices use language to organise action, represent meaning and manage relationships (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The generally piecemeal treatment of what is constitutively a linguistic phenomenon is a limitation in clinical research.

Arguably, a major part of the problem lies in the presumed absence of a model of language that unites its pragmatic and grammatical resources within a functionally effective framework. Although the pragmatic aspect of hearing voices has recently been recognised, it would appear that researchers assume grammar has little to offer, and that investigations of a pragmatic nature are necessarily carried out as an isolated endeavour. However, an approach that combines a pragmatic approach using speech act theory (Austin, 1955/1975; Searle, 1969, 1976) with a functional model of grammar – such as Halliday and Matthiessen’s (1999, 2014) – collapses the traditional distinction between pragmatics and syntax, and is able to describe how language is used by voices to act on hearers and represent meaning. Furthermore, such a model incorporates the linguistic resources for identifying how language is used to express attitude through the use of evaluative language (Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005). Used in conjunction with Schutz’s (1962, 1967, 1976) theories on intersubjectivity and multiple realities to recognise how hearers use language to refer to their experiences, these domains provide the research tools for accounting for how hearers use language to name voices, and voices use language for interacting, representing and evaluating. The next chapter now outlines the methodology developed for this study that addresses the lack of linguistic data in the literature concerning how hearers refer to their voices and how voices use language to communicate with hearers.
3 Methodology

This chapter outlines the principles underlying the present study and the methods used in addressing the overarching research question through the lenses of four sub-questions. The chapter falls into four main parts. The first deals with the qualitative design of the research framework and how it aims to create a conversational space in which to engage hearers and elicit personal accounts of their experiences. This is then followed by information concerning the recruitment of participants, the development of interview protocols and questions, and the location and procedure for the recording of interviews. The third part explains the transcription of interviews and coding of interview data. Lastly, the linguistic methods of analysis used to investigate each of the four research sub-questions are explained: lexical analysis of terms used to refer to voices, pragmatic analysis of voice behavior, grammatical analysis of voice content, and appraisal analysis of voice attitude.

Research question and sub-questions

The research question is: How do people who hear voices represent their voices?

The sub-questions provide a focus of a detailed analysis of the language attributed to voices which is fundamental to this research. These are:

1. How do hearers refer to their voices?
2. How do voices use language to interact?
3. How do voices represent the hearer’s world?
4. How do voices appraise hearers, others and themselves?

Accordingly, the methodology adopted by this qualitative study takes a functional approach to describing the linguistic behaviour of voices. First, a lexical analysis is carried out regarding how hearers refer to their voices. Second, how voices use language to interact is examined in terms of pragmatics. This analysis also takes into account what grammatical form hearers use to present the speech of their voices, that is, as a verbatim quote or as a summarised report. Third, how voices represent the hearer’s world is described using the tools systemic functional grammar. Fourth, the evaluative language voices use is analysed
using appraisal theory. These sub-questions and their relevant tools for analysis are outlined in Figure 4. Each of these tools for analysis are explained in detail in this chapter.

**Figure 4** Research sub-questions and tools of analysis

### Research design

This study is qualitative in design (Burns, 2000; Neuman, 2003; National Health and Medical Council [NHMRC], 2007). A number of features distinguish qualitative from quantitative research, as follows. Data is gathered through social interaction with participants in everyday settings rather than through structured questionnaires. Sample size is potentially important but as a qualitative study does not profess to yield objective data or facts that can be generalised to the wider population, the priority is to understand cases on their own terms according to a range of criteria that are particular to qualitative research (Huberman & Miles, 2002). Hence, checks on reliability and validity do not apply in the usual sense due to “the subjective nature of qualitative data and its origin in single contexts” (Burns, 2000, p. 12). For example, a well-attested practice in phenomenological studies is the trust researchers place in the accounts they are given (Nayani & David, 1996, p. 178). Accordingly, questions are typically open-ended to avoid prescribing how participants talk about their experiences (Nayani & David, 1996, p. 184). This approach has been recently described by Hayes and Leudar (2015) in terms of ‘narrative biographic interviews’ which
are:

[designed to provide in-depth access to informants’ accounts of their experiences … requiring] the relative nondirectiveness of the interviewer in the initial interview and focused questioning in any follow-ups. Informants are asked to tell the researcher about themselves in relation to the research theme. They then tell their stories with minimal intervention … We chose this method of interviewing as it recruits the everyday activity of storytelling (see Sacks, 1992) and thus holds higher ecological validity than more structured interviewing approaches. The aim of the method is to minimize procrastination of informants’ responses by allowing them to spontaneously introduce their own language, terminology, and meanings with minimal constraint by the interviewer (pp. 4–5).

Thus, the value of qualitative research is that it gives an account of human behaviour that is concerned with how people individually “interpret and make sense of their experiences” (NHMRC, 2007, Ch.3.1). It is rich in its use of description and detail as the goal for the researcher is to describe and interpret how people behave by understanding the meaning of what they do from their informants’ own perspective (Burns, 2000; Neuman, 2003; NHMRC, 2007). This approach requires entering the participants’ world on the participants’ own terms to learn firsthand about their experiences. J. Watkins (1993) was one of the early researchers in this area who thus reflected that:

I soon learnt how important it is to acknowledge and respect the beliefs and experiences of the person who is hearing voices. I found that unless one is prepared to listen and respond sensitively and empathically, it is unrealistic to expect people to disclose fully the more intimate and personal details of their experiences. These details reveal that often the experience of hearing voices is richer and more complex than is usually realized (p. 76).

Insider expertise is considered to be as important (if not more) than specialist knowledge. Indeed, the domain of expertise has recently been argued by Woods (2013) to encompass both hearers as “experts by experience” (p. 265) and clinicians as “experts by profession” (p. 265). Acknowledging the lived experience of hearers contrasts with the conventional reductive view of hearers as possessing “poor insight” (Garrett & Silva, 2003, p. 454).

Qualitative methodology is particularly appropriate for the group of participants needed for this study. Its underlying principles respect the vulnerable position that many hearers are in and is sensitive to the sense of powerlessness that they may feel (Shawyer, Mackinnon, Farhall, Trauer, & Copolov, 2003). The stigma that is attached to hearing voices makes it difficult for hearers to talk about their experiences. However, many people who hear voices want to speak to people who will not judge them. Such conversations may even help them to cope with their voices (Escher, 1993; Stephane et al., 2003; Trygstad et al., 2015). Talking with hearers and analysing their accounts of their interactions with voices literally means
taking the hearer’s word for what their voices say. It is the most direct way of showing that other people are “genuinely interested in what the voices have to say” (Escher, 1993, p. 50). Their participation in qualitative research may be one way to raise their self-esteem and restore a sense of control over how their experiences are interpreted.

The qualitative methodology adopted in the present study takes hearers and their contributions as the research focus in several important ways. First, it aims to reduce the distance between researcher and participant. Qualitative research acknowledges that the researcher is a co-participant. A study such as this of how voices communicate is an intersubjective undertaking developed with hearers in the context of a shared approach to making sense of their experiences. Second, learning about voices by listening to hearers requires that the researcher “adopt the role of ‘acceptable incompetent’” (Burns, 2000, p. 404) by putting aside or suspending their own views or reactions to understand and witness to how hearers individually experience their voices. Previous studies drawing on theories of social constructionism, such as Goldsmith (2012), recognise the need for researchers to ‘bracket’ their worldviews and approach discussions concerning the experiences of others with openness and curiosity. Nevertheless, the ideal of the faux-naïf researcher is a fiction (Beavan, 2011) despite the efforts to the contrary and a self-awareness of behaviour that could influence participants during interviews remains a continual concern.

Third, this study considers the involvement of hearers to be integral to understanding what it is like to hear voices. Put simply, voices cannot be investigated independently of the person who hears them. Furthermore, qualitative research recognises that participants are entitled to take an active role in guiding the research. They are stakeholders in how the study progresses and their involvement is essential for ensuring the relevance of the study to their lives (Crichton & Koch, 2007). Fourth, recent studies feature the hearer’s perspective as a significant factor in how findings are presented (Beavan, 2011; Fenekou & Georgaca, 2010; Holt & Tickle, 2014, 2015; Kalhovde et al., 2013; Karlsson, 2008). It is for such reasons that the methodology for this study takes Schutz’s (1962) concept of intersubjectivity as its impetus (see Ch. 2).

In addition, the methodology associated with qualitative studies recognises the value of talking with informants in a non-clinical context to understand the individuality of their experiences. J. Watkins (2008, p. 106) in reporting the findings of a survey\(^\text{19}\) observes that patients questioned in their homes were more likely to admit to hearing voices than when

\(^{19}\) The survey was conducted by Falloon (as cited in J. Watkins, 2008, p. 106).
interviewed in a clinical setting. Similarly, in his study of cultural patterns of communication associated with psychiatric assessment in Borneo, Barrett (2004) recommends that researchers be sensitive to the culturally salient places in which clinical interviews unfold and the type of conversational interaction normally associated with talking in such settings. Owing to ethical reasons it was only possible to talk to one hearer in a home environment, as her parents were also involved in the interview. Locations were chosen on the basis of convenience and as participants were used to travelling to either the Mental Illness Fellowship of South Australia (MIFSA) or their place of psychiatric treatment, interviews were held at these sites. One of the reasons for asking hearers to participate over a series of interviews was to provide them with reasonable conditions for talking about their voices from their own personal perspective with little attempt from the researcher at controlling the content of responses. Furthermore, each interview was seen as further developing a shared understanding in which referring to previous interviews helped to create an established context for later disclosure (Fleming, Giadys, & Robb, 2013).

Nevertheless, investigating what hearers experience is problematic on a number of levels. For instance, even the definition of what hearers experience may be routinely conceptualised too concretely as a private, if pathological, parallel to the normal sensory perception of an external auditory phenomenon. As Jones (2010) observes, “the metaphor of ‘hearing voices’ has encouraged a literal interpretation of the experience, resulting in the sidelining of internal voices” (p. 204). By contrast, Leudar et al. (1997) found that:

All our informants freely used the phrase ‘to hear voices’ and on detailed questioning they all agreed that the experience they used it for was: verbal … Thus, all the informants were judged as voice hearers on the basis of the information elicited in this part of the interview, not, for example, on the basis of hospital records (p. 888).

Given the indeterminate nature of the phenomenon being studied, there is also a risk that researchers are only able to analyse data that is recognised by the research instruments they use. As a result, hearers’ experiences may be constructed by researchers in terms of their categories while participant responses that refer to experiences that are too bizarre in their phenomenology may be excluded for not meeting research criteria.

It was made clear from the outset that the researcher did not have a clinical background and that interviews therefore would not be formal meetings with note-taking. Therefore questions about hearers’ experiences used ordinary language and eschewed clinical terms (Hayes & Leudar, 2015; Kalhovde et al., 2013). When participants drew on clinical language, they were often asked to define their understanding in their own words.
Participants were encouraged to speak without concern about being interrupted or their contribution curtailed (Burns, 2000; Fitzgerald & Leudar, 2010; Hayes & Leudar, 2015). In this regard, the present research was guided by Leudar et al.'s (1997) understanding of what interviewees were being asked to provide.

A part of everyday conversational competence is to report to somebody talk which took place elsewhere. For example, we commonly report arguments we had with others. This being so we asked our informants to report on the talk which typically takes place between them and their voices, with examples ... with the voice hearer informing the interviewer about the experiences only available to herself or himself (p. 888).

The theories of Schutz (1962) are thus invoked in this study to recognise the interplay of different realities that come into contact when talking with people who hear voices.

In designing the interviews it was also important to consider that this study was taking a linguistic perspective from which hearers could reflect on the behaviour and meaning of their voices. This focus is situated within the broader context of research that seeks to develop shared understandings with hearers about their voices (Holt & Tickle, 2015). For this reason the systemic functional model of linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) was adopted for the analysis of grammar and appraisal as it is sensitive to the aims of qualitative research. It originated partly in response to the anthropological work of Bronislaw Malinowski (Bloor & Bloor, 2013; Eggins, 2004; Halliday, 1985b), who pioneered the ethnographic description of behaviour and language use in terms of the context in which they are observed (Malinowski, 1935, 1956, 1979). As a result, whereas many qualitative studies organise their qualitative accounts in relation to themes exemplified by voices across hearers (Fenekou & Georgaca, 2010; Kalhovde et al., 2013; Mawson et al., 2011), the present study considers voices within the individual narrative accounts of each hearer. In this way a ‘voice profile’ for each hearer is mapped using the references to the linguistic content of voices from the accounts that evolved during interviews.

**Recruitment of participants**

Ethics approval (Royal Adelaide Hospital Protocol No. 060515) was obtained at the commencement of research from the Royal Adelaide Hospital Research Ethics Committee, which incorporated the requirements of the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee. Participants were recruited in the Adelaide metropolitan region through a series of announcements placed in the Mental Illness Fellowship of South Australia (MIFSA) newsletter (printed and website). Wording was changed to more informal language in response to feedback from one participant, Shirley, and advice from Martin and Sue,
facilitators of the MIFSA *Talking Heads* voice hearers’ group. Participants were also solicited through professional colleagues of the principal supervisor, who described the study to patients considered suitable. Seven people consented to participate out of the total of eight who responded to the announcement. Although one participant had not heard his voices for five years prior to the commencement of interviews, he was included in this study with his wife, who still heard voices, as he could recall the verbal content and behaviour.

All potential participants met for an initial interview in which information was given and questions answered about their involvement. Information sheets with consent forms were supplied (see Appendix 1) and potential participants were given the opportunity to discuss the research with family, friends or treating psychiatrist before giving their signed consent. Potential participants were not eligible for selection if they:

1. were acutely psychotic;
2. were detained under the South Australian Mental Health Act;
3. were deemed by a treating psychiatrist to be at risk of harming themselves or others;
4. had poor impulse control;
5. had significant intellectual retardation;
6. were unable to provide informed consent due to their mental state;
7. were deemed by their psychiatrist to be unsuitable as their involvement in the study could compromise their treatment or recovery;
8. had an organic brain syndrome;
9. had been given a primary diagnosis of substance abuse.

All participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time, especially if experiencing adverse reactions from talking about their voices. All information was kept confidential and personal information, such as names of participants (hearers, partners, family and psychiatrists) were changed, using names suggested by participants or invented by the researcher, as were the names of a certain institutions to protect privacy. At no time were participants told about each other, nor was any information disclosed in interviews with individual participants passed on to their treating psychiatrist, family or friends.

Participants were initially asked to keep a written record of what their voices said. Several hearers intermittently noted down voice content but as this was not consistently observed, all participants were advised as per research protocol for this study that they did not need to continue with this activity if they were experiencing difficulty. As two participants later explained, they thought this would be difficult to do because at the time a person is hearing
voices, they are trying not pay attention to them (Joan & Darby 3.107–111, 284–300).

**Participation of hearers**

Seven hearers with a clinical history of hearing voices consented to participate in this study – four women (Joan, Shirley, Amy and Victoria) and three men (David, Darby and Mark) (see Table 1). Joan, Victoria, David, Darby and Mark were told about my research by their treating psychiatrists. Shirley and Amy heard about it through the Talking Heads group at MIFSA. As Joan and Darby were married, they were interviewed together. The potential for Joan and Darby to influence each other’s account is duly acknowledged, as in the case where participants consented to be interviewed with a family member or psychiatrist. However, rather than being considered problematic, such communicative behaviour is illustrative of how talking about voices is situated in social interactions and several examples are included in the following data chapters for comment. More meaningful is the recognition that the accounts given by Joan and Darby are produced through a collaborative process in that they share the telling of their stories. Their personal accounts both merge and separate in that one may speak for the other, or interpret what happened with their partner’s voices in alignment with their partner’s interpretation or in reference to their own lived experience. This adds further layers to how they speak about voices as their accounts are mutually influenced and individual interpretations may have their source in their own as well as each other’s interpretations.

Nevertheless, for the purpose of analysis, the scope of categorisation has been narrowed to include only those references that Joan and Darby use to signify their own experiences and not their partner’s. This highlights as far as possible their personal preferences for what they call their experiences. As there is no standard model or neutral account format for how people talk about voices (for example, spoken monologue, written diary entry, one-to-one interview, group discussion), this study does not assume the existence of ideal conditions within which hearers give their accounts. Indeed, every occasion in which a hearer talks about their voices takes place within a specific context in which their account is co-constructed as an intersubjective interaction (Schutz, 1962, 1976).

Given that this study does not attempt to relate the voices heard to specific mental disorders, participants are not listed here according to their psychiatric diagnosis. Indeed, several participants had been given a range of diagnoses over the years. Furthermore, a table

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20 See also Appendix 3 for the inclusion of personal reflections concerning a selection of interactions between hearers and other participants.
displaying information about participants’ voices in relation to their diagnoses was not considered appropriate due to emerging recognition of the non-specificity of voices for particular diagnoses (Bentall, 2003, 2006; Goodwin, Alderson, & Rosenthal, 1971; Longden, Madill, & Waterman, 2012).

**Table 1** List of research participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>No. of interviews</th>
<th>Interview no. &amp; other participants</th>
<th>Brief description of voice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interviewed with Darby</td>
<td>Hears negative voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirley</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>#4 Geoff (partner)</td>
<td>Used to hear negative male voices. Now hears children and adults (mostly positive female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>#3 Carol (partner)</td>
<td>Used to hear negative voices; now hears one negative voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>#4 Dr S. (psychiatrist)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Hears negative voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darby</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interviewed with Joan</td>
<td>Used to hear benign voices 5 years before interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>#4 Barb &amp; Andy (parents)</td>
<td>Hears voices of family and friends which she repeats aloud and converses with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>#5 Dr F. (psychiatrist)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Hears his own voice (‘thought echo’)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These participants mostly associated the onset of their voices with events in their lives that were either distressing, sexually abusive, violent or stressful. Joan started hearing voices after having a miscarriage with her second baby. Shirley and Victoria were sexually abused as children. Shirley suffered ongoing abuse from her father but Victoria was raped in her family home by an intruder. Amy has heard voices since she was five years old but did not disclose any more information. As a teenager, David had witnessed friends die in violent circumstances over several years. Darby did not give specific details but explains that he became ill as an adult having worked for nearly twenty years in banking. Mark was a psychiatric nurse and associates the onset of his voice with the stress he experienced as a result of workplace conflict. Further biographical details introducing the participants are given in Appendix 3.
Participation of psychiatrists and family

Interviews with psychiatrists were secured through two participants only (David and Victoria). In the other cases, interviews with psychiatrists were not conducted as a result of: one participant’s early withdrawal from the study due to ill health; psychiatrists declining to be interviewed; and a participant’s feelings of unfamiliarity with their new psychiatrist. As regards family members, David and Shirley were once interviewed with their partners and Victoria was once interviewed with her parents. Interviews with the married couple Darby and Joan were considered to include each other’s perspective. In other cases, interviews with family were precluded due to withdrawal or reluctance on the part of the participant.

Interviews

Altogether, 22 interviews totalling nearly 15 hours were conducted with the seven voice hearers between August 2008 and June 2012 (see Appendix 2). As I was working full-time, interviews were spread over a four-year period. Interviews lasted an average of 40 minutes, and were conducted at the request of participating hearers at MIFSA, their treating psychiatrists’ office or the City Clinic to comply with personal safety requirements. The first interview was with Amy. In an attempt to normalise the experience for her, she was interviewed in the activities room of MIFSA. However, as Amy found it difficult to concentrate in this open space with the ambient noise around her, subsequent interviews were held for all participants in enclosed rooms. The only interview held at a residential location was with Victoria and her parents, which was conducted in the family home, following the Occupational Health and Safety recommendations in all home visits provided by the Department of Psychology, the University of Adelaide. The timing of interviews was organised by phone according to participants’ availability and researcher’s schedule. Each interview was recorded using two devices dependent on the consent of participants. An MP3 player with lapel microphone and video camera with table microphone were used in tandem to provide mutual back-up in the event of technical problems. Although David declined to be filmed, the video camera was used with the lens cap on so that the interview could still be recorded for sound.

Interviews were open-ended and guided in approach (Burns, 2000) to allow hearers to choose which aspects of their experiences of voices to focus on. This was to reduce the priming effects of questions – such as those used in structured interviews – and in acknowledgment that hearers were the authorities with lived experience of hearing voices (Buccheri, Trygstad, Buffum, Birmingham, & Dowling, 2013). As a result, questions such
as “Can your voices predict the future?” (Garrett & Silva, 2003, p. 447) were avoided so that accounts consisted of content chosen by hearers based on what they felt was important at the time to tell. Repeated references by participants to the same instance of voice content were all included in analysis as this was taken to signify that such verbal behaviour was a prominent feature of their experiences. A similar observation was also reported by Trygstad et al. (2015) in that their participants wanted to retell their first experience of hearing a voice a number of times. However, any indication that a hearer’s response was a repetition of specific words used by the researcher during interviews led to their response being discounted.

**Transcription**

I transcribed all interviews myself so as to be as familiar as possible with the content and dynamics of the conversations. Both audio and video recordings were consulted during the transcription of interviews. Although both provided good quality stereo sound, several minor gaps in transcriptions occurred owing to the overlap of turns or unclear articulation.

All transcripts begin with a brief setting of the context of the interview. Each speaker turn is given a number. If a speaker’s turn is briefly interrupted and their subsequent turn appears to be a resumption or continuation of their previous turn, the numbering from the former turn is retained and indicated by the abbreviation ‘cont.’ (‘continued’). Overlapping speech is indicated by marking where the interrupting speaker breaks into the conversation and placing simultaneous speech parallel, as in this extract from Interview 4 with Victoria in her family home with her parents Barb and Andy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>207</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Victoria: They heard me talking to myself (Keith: Aaah) and that was</td>
<td>I couldn't</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Andy:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209</td>
<td>51cont.</td>
<td>Victoria: probably</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210</td>
<td>52cont.</td>
<td>Andy: say even that to a great</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Barb:</td>
<td>See well that's it see</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The marks used in the transcriptions are summarised in Table 2.
Table 2 Transcription marks used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.</td>
<td>Pause signalling end of unit of speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>Addition of new unit of speech without pausing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>End of word missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–</td>
<td>Abrupt change in content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…</td>
<td>Short pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>….</td>
<td>Long pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘ ’</td>
<td>Single speech marks for quoted thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“ ”</td>
<td>Double speech marks for quoted speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____</td>
<td>Word underlined for emphasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↑</td>
<td>Rising intonation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(adapted from Jefferson, 2004)

Capital letters are only used at the beginning of a turn, in speech following the orthographic use of a question mark to signal the asking of a question, or after the orthographic use of an exclamation mark to signal a remark carrying an exclamatory force. Listener feedback is generally enclosed in brackets – for example (Mmmm) – if it does not interrupt the main speaker’s turn. Occasional words are underlined to signal emphasis but otherwise intonation is not marked as phonological cues are not relevant to this study. For reasons of space, line numbers are not supplied when an excerpt from a conversation between two or more people is cited but the speakers’ names are provided.

Initially, I attempted to transcribe each interview before the next was conducted with the same participant. The transcript was then to be sent to participants to read for two reasons. The first was intended as a means of including participants in the present study by demonstrating the transparency of the qualitative research process and its collaborative basis. The second was to ensure that a valid and reliable transcription of hearers’ experiences was confirmed through respondent validation (Burns, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), whereby researchers continually seek confirmation of an understanding of events that is endorsed by their informants. This validation took the form of participants being invited to reflect on what they said in the previous interview. This example of stimulated recall also
acted as a means of establishing trust in the process (Fleming et al., 2003). As well as giving participants the opportunity to further clarify how they interpreted their experiences, the disclosures of one interview were brought into those of the next. In so doing it was recognised that experiences were not left behind but their interpretation was revisited and renegotiated.

However, this process could not be consistently carried out with all participants primarily due to the amount of time required for transcription before the next interview could take place. Furthermore, several participants found the layout of an unedited transcription difficult to read or had not read it before we met again. As there was insufficient time to produce a simplified version, a CD copy of the interview was initially given to participants instead. But as one had problems playing it on their equipment at home and another did not like listening to the sound of their own spoken voice, it was decided to abandon this procedure for the remainder of the study. To reduce lengthy periods between meetings, participants agreed to my suggestion of scheduling interviews without receiving a transcript of the previous interview beforehand. Nevertheless, copies of transcripts were initially used with Amy, Victoria David and Mark and parts of our conversations were prompted by references to what they had spoken about in an earlier interview. In the cases of Joan, Shirley and Darby I did not send out transcripts or recordings due to initial concerns I had about the possible strain it might cause.

**Approach to direct and indirect speech**

Given the focus of the study on the language attributed to voices, it was important to consider the use of direct and indirect speech by hearers to represent the verbal content of what they heard. Accordingly, all references to voice content were divided according to their direct and indirect speech forms so as to separate the analysis of verbatim wording from their summarised report. The former is arguably closer to the original experience while the latter is a reformulation. As no other study reviewed makes this formal distinction, some explanation is warranted to demonstrate the complexities of conducting a linguistic analysis of extracts from conversations for which no recording exists, as in the case of a person hearing voices recounting their experience. Analysis would be less complicated if there were no need to take indirect speech into account. As Leudar and Thomas (2000) lament:

> If only one could record conversations between voices and their hearers, transcribe and analyse them … So one has to work with references to voice-talk in conversations and other activities (p. 175).
How participants in this study talk about what their voices say takes a number of forms. It may be foregrounded as a repetition of a specific utterance in ‘real time’ in which the hearer takes on the speaking role of the voice (direct speech). Alternatively, hearers stand outside the speech event by referring to it in the role of reporter. Indirect speech presents a more abstract version of an utterance in that the core message is extracted with minor or major changes to the wording. Often the illocutionary force is identified using a reporting verb, as in *Amy 1.49, 394* ‘they threaten to broadcast my inner reality’. There are also cases in which one recounting frame subtly shifts into another. In these cases, the hearer may begin by reporting what they recall a voice saying but then take on the speaking role of the voice without marking this change. Equally, the content of what comes within the scope of indirect speech can be ambiguous (Garbutt, 1996) and it may be unclear whether what is reported is being explicitly attributed to the voice or implied through association. In this study, it was not always clear if participants were referring to an actual voice or were rendering their experience into a verbal form to explain the underlying sense of meaning. Furthermore, participants’ comments about themselves, particularly if negative, may be linked to derogatory remarks made by their voices but not expressly repeated in interviews.

Despite the linguistic convention of distinguishing speech in terms of quoting and reporting, direct speech is arguably as much a form of report as its indirect counterpart21. Traditionally, indirect speech is considered less reliable and the person reporting more accountable as the original wording has in the normal course of events probably been altered without consultation with the speaker. By contrast, direct speech confers its own responsibility as there is the expectation that the words quoted are accurate and correctly attributed. However, such exactitude may only be ostensible and the use of direct speech is in itself of course no guarantee that the wording is verbatim. Indeed, it is unlikely that everything participants cite is a straightforward representation of what they heard. Such a simple one-to-one correspondence would be limited to short utterances whose phrasing was vivid enough at the time to be memorable. Rather, citations of voice talk range from reconstructions (verbatim wordings) to reformulations (implied wordings) to even ‘coinages’ (unprecedented wordings) in which hearers attempt to find words for a sensory experience that is not conventionally auditory. This challenges the assumption that samples of what hearers quote or report are unambiguous representations of earlier speech. In some cases, it is possible that voices as communicative experiences may be constituted as speech events in the act of

21 Huddleston (2002c, p.1023) distinguishes between of ‘direct reported speech’ and ‘indirect reported speech’.
hearers giving them language when talking to another. That is to say, some experiences of hearing voices may only become verbal when they are spoken of. Through the act of being talked about, voices become ‘worded’ and ‘grammared’ by hearers mediating as spokesperson by proxy. In this way, hearers do not merely quote or report their voices but may be actively involved in generating the pragmatic meaning and linguistic form of their voices.

However, the essential strength of direct speech is that it allows hearers to take on the role of their voice. The voice becomes the ‘figure’ or character, and the hearer becomes the ‘animator’ (Goffman, 1981) or performer. Hearers face, that is, are turned towards, themselves in the person of their voice. In so doing, hearers temporarily suspend their own ego identity by identifying with their voices. The hearer steps out of their current person, place and time, and becomes the persona of their voice. In short, the hearer is now the voice:

Amy 4:53, 362–365 and there’s ones in the corner saying “Huh look you can’t take – cope with this stress=you can’t cope=go on rip off the microphone=you can’t cope” and stuff like that you know.

Referring to what voices say in the form of a direct quote is the closest hearers can get to bringing voices into the conversation for others to hear. Through direct quotes hearers access their voices and take on their role however momentarily. Such an undertaking is not only grammatical. Participants in this study speaking in the person of the voice sometimes accompanied their accounts with marked changes in vocal and emotional expression. On these occasions, they were willing to let their voices speak through them. At no time did a participant speak to me on behalf of their voices or identified with their voices as though in a ‘possessed state’. Nevertheless, the act of replacing the narrator’s voice with that of another speaker requires the suspension of the speaker’s identity and the invocation of another’s (Goffman, 1981). We might expect that such an act could on the one hand evoke feelings of distress depending on the emotional state of the hearer but on the other hand be more readily used if the experience of their voice was still vivid.

By contrast, the grammar of reported speech constitutes a spoken interaction as a heard spoken interaction through the use of narrative language to frame or embed other language as speech. This process is co-generative in that it is reflexively produced through:

… the dynamic interrelationship of … the speech being reported (the other person’s speech) and the speech doing the reporting (the author’s speech). After all, the two actually do exist, function and take shape only in their interrelation, and not on their own, the one apart from the other. The reported speech and the reporting context are but the terms of a dynamic interrelationship (Vološinov, 1929/1973, p. 119).
In indirect speech, the reporting speaker has the option of maintaining their “own deictic origo while indicating a shift of alignment towards the subjectivity of the reported speaker” (Garbutt, 1996, p. 10). That is, the reporting speaker can both assert their role as standing outside the original time of speaking but still characterise the content and meaning of what was said without acting as proxy for the reported speaker. In contrast with direct speech, the reporting stance of indirect speech affords hearers a point of reference hearers from which to stay grounded in their own sense of ‘me’, ‘here’ and ‘now’. They maintain their ego identity as distinct from that of the voice. Hearers are outside what their voices say in terms of its production but inside in terms of its emotional effects and pragmatic significance. They can exercise choice in deciding how to frame what their voices said in terms of its impact and significance.

Notwithstanding such distinctions, the question arises as to whether the words alone are enough. Should an analysis of language include indications of how the hearer repeated what the voice said was spoken or what gestures the hearer used in interviews? Should anomalies in pronunciation or the contraction, elision or omission of words be represented, not to mention deviations from the accepted standard? Such questions draw attention to the fact that no attempt to directly portray speech can be taken as a fully representational record of what was spoken. Its portrait of language use can only stand as a referential token of the communicative act.

Coding

The software program NVivo10 (QSR International Pty Ltd, 1999–2014) was used to manage and organise interview data for coding. First, words that hearers used to refer to their experiences were identified and coded. Following this, all examples of voice content were identified and coded in terms of speech frame (direct or indirect speech), before being analysed as regards speech act, transitivity and appraisal. Each of these analyses was systematically carried out as separate treatments of the data. All analyses are grounded in the language of each hearer’s account as recorded and later transcribed.

As with Demjén and Semino’s (2015) study of a published written account of one hearer, the current data set consists of all examples of voices speaking. However, as more than one participant was involved in the current study and hearers naturally varied in the number of examples they gave during interviews, the different types of name, speech frame, communicative function and transitivity pattern are considered proportionally rather than
For each hearer, the number of times a hearer uses direct speech to represent their voices is considered as a percentage for that hearer. Hence, comparisons made between hearers make no claim to frequency of use but indicate proportionate use. Pie charts display data for the whole group. Bar charts present a profile of each hearer’s voice. The latter can be compared to military service ribbon bars. These ‘voice ribbons’ show the types of ‘service’ language performs in the accounts of hearers.

Although the models of grammar and appraisal developed within SFL provide extensive analytical criteria, it is acknowledged that not only may some cases be indeterminate (Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005; Thompson, 2008) but that categories themselves are the result of:

…a combination of common sense and grammar: common sense to distinguish the different kinds of ‘goings-on’ that we can identify, and grammar to confirm that these intuitive differences are reflected in the language and thus to justify the decision to set up a separate category (Thompson, 2014, p. 94).

As a result, there is often no simple correspondence between for example the meaning of a verb in a real-life context and its grammatical categorisation (Bloor & Bloor, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Thompson, 2014). Resulting variations in analysis have understandably attracted concerns from other research disciplines that “our practice does not meet the scientific requirement of ‘repeatability’: any two coders should produce the same analysis of the same text” (O’Donnell et al., 2008, p. 65). However, SFG differs from traditional formal grammars in that its prime concern is how language functions with the resources of grammar to communicate meaning in social contexts. This is in contrast with formal grammars which provide an account of grammar in terms of word classes and syntactic structures in which language is analysed using decontextualised ‘specimens’ without regard to meaning (Martin et al., 2010). The potential for including the respondent validation of coding (Burns, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was not possible within the ethics submission protocol approved for this study. From a methodological point of view, respondent validation would be problematic given that the categories used were deductive in origin and specific to SFL. As a result, the grammatical and appraisal analyses conducted in this study were revised a number of times as more data accrued to ensure that the coding categories were representative of their membership. In contrast with previous studies of voice content (e.g. Leudar et al., 1997) that were similarly obliged to conduct their data analysis independently, frequent examples are included in the following chapters to substantiate the choice of coding. Furthermore, tables are provided in the Appendices with examples (see Appendix 7) to clarify the categories used.
In addressing the four sub-questions pertaining to naming, interacting, representing and evaluating, coding took a different focus and form in each case. These are explained in the next sub-sections in turn.

1 How do hearers refer to their voices?

Transcripts were analysed for the words hearers used to refer to their voices and given a preliminary coding. These were typically noun groups consisting of either a single noun or a series of words featuring pre- and/or post-modification – for example ‘demonic voices’ and ‘chatter in my head’ respectively. The nouns that hearers used were first categorised according to their apparent source. For example, words such as ‘symptom’ or ‘auditory hallucination’ were classified as clinical terms notwithstanding their use by a non-clinician as such words belong to the medical lexicon although in popular use. The case of Shirley’s use of ‘alter’ is problematic as its acceptance by mainstream psychiatry is controversial. However, as a term specific to dissociative identity disorder, albeit popularly used by hearers such as Shirley to consciously distinguish their experiences from those associated with schizophrenia, it has here been categorised with more conventional psychiatric designations.

Forms of identification were progressively grouped into five broad types, namely: personal identity (name given by hearer), personal identity (name given by voice), hearer’s own description, use of the generic term ‘voice’ and clinical terms. Only the category of ‘hearer’s own description’ was further analysed to produce thematic groupings. Whereas the transitivity and appraisal frameworks are closed systems in terms of their typology, this is an open category in that the range of potential types of description used by hearers are countless. As the process of identifying categories (for example, Communication, Sound, Evaluation) was an inductive one, respondent validation (Burns, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) would have ensured the reliability of the groups to which these were assigned. However, the approved ethics submission protocol did not allow for the further involvement of hearers in confirming the data analysis. As clinical terms are categorised separately, there are some grounds for classifying Amy’s references to her voices as ‘demons’ being, technically speaking, a theological term. Equally, the term ‘demons’ may also indicate in part how she subjectively evaluates the moral or transpersonal nature of her experience. However, the decision was taken to attribute its origin to the voices themselves as Amy’s use appears to be influenced by the explanation they give of their ordained function. Such an example serves to show how what hearers call their experiences is shaped by a combination
of influences, including cultural, perceptual and personal factors.

In the process, overall groupings and individual categories were continually revised, with lone items forming minor categories reassigned to more substantial ones if appropriate. The categories themselves are exemplified through the members that constitute them, with each category progressively built up as new examples were added or removed. As the scope of this particular analysis is limited to the representation of voices using content words with a lexical meaning, only a selective description of the use of such grammatical words as personal pronouns (e.g. ‘my’) is included.

Analysis is limited to the number of times a hearer refers to their auditory experience by a specific noun group, such as ‘voice’, ‘demon’ or by a personal name, such as ‘Michael’. This is distinct from counting how many times a specific voice is referred to, as this would therefore include personal pronouns (e.g. ‘it’). What is of importance in terms of this sub-question is what hearers call the experience they hear. Cases of ellipsis where the noun is not stated but can be assumed from the immediate context are included for analysis, as in the following example:

**Darby 2.2**  
Um I-I-I haven’t had any **voices** and-and (He turns to Joan) oh Joan’s had a few (____)

The terms used by family and treating psychiatrists are also provided in Appendix 5, but are not discussed beyond occasional acknowledgement for reasons of space.

**2 How do voices use language to interact?**

To identify how voices use language to interact, first the transcripts of recorded interviews were analysed for occurrences of hearers recounting what they heard their voices saying. As each instance was identified, it was initially coded according to the grammatical category of speech used – namely, direct or indirect speech. Double quotation marks indicate what appears to be direct speech. Such a distinction has been made on the basis of both grammar (e.g. pronoun use and clause structure) and phonology (e.g. vocal tone and intonation). However, there are instances where the grammatical form of direct speech cannot be attributed with any great certainty, such as in cases where the use of personal pronouns or verb tense could be used in either direct or indirect speech. In such ambiguous instances, consideration of any surrounding references to what voices said and listening for phonological cues in the recorded interviews have provided guidance given “the absence of auditory quotation marks” (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999, p. 1118).
Quotes (direct speech) and reports (indirect speech) were first analysed in terms of their grammatical structure to identify the number of clauses\textsuperscript{22} used. This process entailed identifying whether a clause was a ranking clause, that is, an independent or dependent clause, or an embedded or rank-shifted clause. Sentences that consist of a series of ranking clauses, that is, a clause complex, constructed through the use of parataxis (coordination, e.g. ‘and’) or hypotaxis (subordination, e.g. ‘although’) are analysed as separate clauses. For instance, this representation of voice content as a quote from Victoria is a clause complex consisting of three independent clauses linked by ‘and’ and one dependent clause (underlined) projected by the verbal process ‘told’. The sign || is used to show the clause boundaries.

Victoria 3:76, 361-362 “That was really careless || and you shouldn’t have gone || and I told you || you shouldn’t have gone”

In the following quote of voice content given by Amy, ranking independent clauses are in **bold** and ranking dependent clauses are **underlined**.

Amy 3:70, 316-317 “**oh yeah but you wish** || you could’ve burnt them down there=**you’d like** || to see the fire”

The independent clauses in the above example grammatically project the content of the wish and desire as a dependent ‘that’ clause and ‘to’ infinitive clause respectively. These latter clauses are therefore referred to as projected clauses or projections (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, 2014).

Once all instances of references to what voices said were classified as either direct or indirect speech and the number of clauses they contained were calculated, each quote and report was then classified according to its general speech function. Initial analysis was made using Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2014) basic categorisation of speech functions in terms of: a) the dynamics of the exchange (initiating role) and b) the type of object that is the focus of communication (commodity exchanged). Table 3 summarises this division of speech functions.

\textsuperscript{22} The term ‘clause’ is preferred to ‘sentence’ as it is a more precise unit of grammar as well as the fact that a sentence is often made up of more than one clause.
Table 3 Speech functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity exchanged</th>
<th>Initiating Role</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give</td>
<td>Demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goods-&amp;-Services</td>
<td>Offer</td>
<td>Command</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(adapted from Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014, p. 136)

The axis of exchange covers demanding and giving while the axis of the commodity exchanged consists of goods-&-services (material product or the performance of an action) and information. It is the intersection of these two axes that yields the four principle speech functions of statement, question, command and offer.

These speech functions prototypically have their matching grammatical equivalents. Table 4 uses examples from interview data to illustrate each speech function.

Table 4 Standard speech function – Mood correspondence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech function</th>
<th>Mood system</th>
<th>Direct speech example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>David 3:96 “They don’t know what they’re talking about”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Interrogative</td>
<td>Shirley 2:62 “Who’s she?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command</td>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>Joan 1:62 “just tell her to f- off”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer</td>
<td>Modulated interrogative</td>
<td>e.g. “Would you like some help?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(adapted from Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014, p. 136)

However, such form–function specificity is an idealised paradigm (Garbutt, 1996; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Huddleston, 2002b) rather than an actual correspondence as other grammatical alternatives for each speech function are possible. This is particularly apparent in the case of commands. If commands were only identified on the basis of the use of the imperative, many instances of voices attempting to influence the hearer’s behaviour would be subsumed under statements. Indeed, the range of interactions collected under statement was so diverse in terms of communicative impact that a finer analysis was needed to appreciate the different uses that voices put language to.

One point of departure from Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) is that the term directive has been retained as a superordinate category term following Searle (1976) and Huddleston (2002b, p. 929), while command is reserved for a forceful and hostile type of directive. This
distinction allows for the inclusion of more benign cases such as acts of encouragement and suggestions. In addition, although there are many attested examples in the literature where voices unequivocally order hearers to commit aggressive and violent actions, a large number of instances exist in which voices use less covert grammatical structures.

Each of the four speech functions of statement, question, directive and offer was further analysed in terms of the speech behaviour or communicative activity exemplified, such as accuse or encourage. Some cases were typical of their category while a few were ‘outliers’ that could conceivably be differently allocated if it had been possible to call on hearers for their assistance. As Searle (1976) remarks, “any taxonomy that deals with the real world is likely to come up with borderline cases” (pp. 8ff.). On the whole, however, the approach in this study has been to reduce rather than multiply categories to avoid diluting the analysis. Most types of speech act are therefore grouped into behavioural domains to avoid presenting the reader with a long list of isolated items. For example, accuse, blame and criticise are organised into one category to acknowledge their shared function of attributing negative actions and qualities to another person.

As a result, in view of the approved ethics submission protocol for this study, the interpretations given of what voices say has had to confine itself to my third-party analysis without the benefit of respondent validation from participating hearers. As with the study carried out by Berry et al. (2012), voice content is primarily examined from the voice’s perspective in terms of apparent communicative function rather than from the viewpoint of hearers in regards to the perceived emotional effect, although these are not necessarily mutually exclusive. This therefore limits the present analysis to the illocutionary force (Leech, 1983; Levinson, 1983) of voice content, that is the apparent function of the language used, rather than the attribution of a psychological interpretation of the thematic content (Hardy et al., 2005). Equally, as all examples of voice content were given in the context of open-ended interviews (Burns, 2000), the verbal behaviour of voices is also discussed in Appendix 3 in relation to hearers’ accounts of their experiences.

Furthermore, this study recognises that the distinctions and classifications made within a speech act framework segment are an expedient means for managing what is an amorphous mass of communicative behaviour (Hasan, 2009, p. 173). Any attempt therefore at a systematic classification into a taxonomy of discrete functions is a fundamentally disputable separation of behaviour that is essentially non-divisible. Leech (1983) observes not only that “(Searle) admits that there is ‘enormous unclarity’ in the assignment of utterances to
Illocutionary categories …” (p. 177) but that there is the risk that “the categorical ‘pigeon-holing’ of speech acts … simply regiments the range of human communicative potential to a degree which cannot be justified by observation” (p. 177). The naming of a speech act as a means of formulating the illocutionary force of an utterance is at best an ‘inexact science’ to be practised with care. As the identification of an individual example of speech content as a particular speech act is open to the influence of researcher bias, a glossary with explanations (see Appendix 6) is appended to clarify the rationale for distinguishing between categories, such as threats and warnings.

This study initially adopted Searle’s (1976) classificatory framework but consistent with Verschueren (1999) I found that a number of speech acts could be assigned to more than one overarching category. An alternative was to classify the verbal content of voices following Leudar et al.’s (1997) model of regulatives, informatives, evaluatives and questions (see Chapter 2). However, the advantage of Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2014) taxonomy is that their system of speech functions is produced through the pairing of the commodity exchanged (goods-&-services or information) and the initiating role of the speaker (demand or give). In addition, their distinctions can largely be grammatically aligned (see Table 4). Accordingly, in this study regulatives have been interpreted as a sub-category of directives so as to allow the inclusion of harmful commands. Although the speech function of statement could have been sub-divided into informatives and evaluatives, a number of speech acts – such as accuse, blame, criticise, reassure, threaten and warn – arguably cut across both these categories. Furthermore, as SFL offered the resources for a separate analysis of appraisal (Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005), I decided to analyse the use of evaluative language more in terms of appraisal than pragmatics.

Therefore, owing to the methodological difficulties presented, voice content was separated into common speech acts – what Leudar et al. (1997) call “voice individuation by conduct” (p. 891) – but not subsumed within a superordinate class other than those of the basic speech functions of statement, question, directive and offer. Because a complete speech act is often realised as a combination of clauses, the total number of speech acts identified is fewer than the number of clauses analysed. The decision to discuss the function of language at the ‘ground level’ of the speech act is a common practice in formal grammars and communicative treatments of language (Biber et al., 1999; Collins COBUILD English Grammar, 1990; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Scrivener, 2011; Wilkins, 1976). It is also found in the profession of acting in terms of ‘actioning’ a film or play script to identify a character’s motivation (Caldarone & Lloyd-Williams, 2011). Furthermore, this approach
allows for a richer discussion of findings in accord with “the primacy of a detailed analysis over fitting experiences into categories” (Hayes & Leudar, 2015, p. 11).

In sum, in addition to the grammatical type of speech frame used (i.e. direct or indirect speech), quoted and reported examples of voice-talk were classified according to their general speech function (i.e. statement, question, directive or offer) and in terms of their specific speech act (e.g. accuse, encourage) based on a plausible interpretation of their communicative impact.

3 How do voices represent the hearer’s world?

Clauses that were often combined to produce entire speech acts are individually analysed using the taxonomy of categories of SFG (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999; 2014) to investigate how voices drew on the resources of transitivity to represent action in the hearer’s world. A deductive approach was taken in that the verbs in each clause were matched to one of the transitivity process types provided by SFG – namely material, behavioural, mental, verbal, relational and existential. As acknowledged earlier in this chapter, coding may vary among researchers according to their analytical criteria (O’Donnell et al., 2008). For instance, in the case of deciding whether to code a verb as behavioural, on the one hand, or mental or verbal on the other, researchers may be governed either by the lexical meaning of the verb or the grammatical structure in which it is used (O’Donnell et al., 2008). However, any attempt at mapping ‘meaning’ will be misleading if the categories used are considered to be “rigid types” (Rhodes et al., 2005, p. 396).

As language is a complex system for making meaning, the processes which transitivity identifies will have thresholds that are less solid boundaries than weaker concentrations of meaning. Analysis will necessarily include a certain ‘fuzziness’ (Halliday, 2014; Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999; Matthiessen, 1995; Thompson, 2014) that recognises indeterminacy of meaning, as well as the use of metaphor. Indeed, it is argued that such ambiguity “is not an artefact of the way we describe the system” (Halliday, 2014, p. 217) but is intrinsic, even essential, to language as a resource for making sense of the incessant phenomena that constitutes our existence. As many of the linguistic terms used within SFG will be unfamiliar to the general reader, tables are provided for each process type with an example of each category (see Appendix 6). Furthermore, categories are exemplified using the results presented in Chapter 6.
4 How do voices appraise hearers, themselves, and others?

The fourth stage of analysis concentrates on classifying the language voices use to make subjective assessments of hearers, as well as other people and voices themselves. All examples of evaluative language were identified and coded using the appraisal framework developed by Martin and Rose (2007) and Martin and White (2005). As in the case of a transitivity analysis, an appraisal analysis is a deductive process. Every clause attributed to voices was analysed for the use of language which signalled the voices’ attitude in terms of the three main appraising categories of Affect, Appreciation and Judgement. After preliminary allocation, each category was routinely revised and the data further sorted into the sub-groups that constitute these overarching groupings. However, in the present study only Judgement is mapped in more detail. This is because it is the only category which is divided by its developers into two further levels, namely Social Esteem and Social Sanction with their respective sub-divisions (see Appendix 8).

Because of the scope that words have for ambiguity, the context in which some words are used often permits their allocation to more than one category. There may be overlap between these as one category may invoke the other. For example, an emotional reaction to a situation may carry an implicit moral judgement in the choice of language used. In addition, a sentence or even noun group with a sequence of adjectives may feature combinations of these domains. Such intersections are particularly true in the case of distinguishing between evaluations expressing Appreciation and Judgement (Martin & Rose, 2007). Moreover, the scope of evaluation is largely cumulative (Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) Evaluation is often not isolated to individual words but permeates discourse as a whole. It influences the choice of other words and even the grammatical structures used. The effect of evaluative language may not be solely limited to discrete words. The tenor of the surrounding text is therefore likely to be affected in subtle ways.

As a result, it may be more accurate to say that all language exists along a cline of evaluation but for the purposes of analysis a decision needs to be made concerning what to allow to remain below the threshold. However, such a boundary is less a perimeter than a margin in which debatable cases will arise. These problematic instances need not be excluded as they offer useful points for discussion that highlight the complex nature of what hearers experience. Although such factors can make the task of analysing appraisal a challenging one, the process of classifying the language of evaluation and the interpretations offered highlight the rich and complex nature of hearers’ accounts.
Summary

In summary, this chapter has explained in detail the qualitative methodology that informed the generation of data through open-ended interviews with seven voice-hearers. The four research sub-questions were used to explicate the framework for the coding and analysis of the data. The next four chapters presents the results of the data analysis in terms of each of the four research sub-questions. Each chapter begins with an overview of the results before providing details for each hearer. Data is displayed either in bar charts or pie diagrams. For convenience, bar charts are readily viewed from bottom to top following the key. Pie diagrams are best viewed clockwise from the top following the key. A summary is given at the end of each chapter describing the main findings. The following order for hearers was assigned at random: Joan, Shirley, David, Amy, Darby, Victoria and Mark. The next chapter examines how these people refer to their voices.
4 How do hearers refer to their voices?

This chapter investigates how hearers use language to refer to their voices. In particular, it examines the specific words each hearer uses to name their experiences. Clinical studies mostly privilege their own terminology, as in the standard use of ‘auditory (verbal) hallucination’, although recent research taking a client-centred approach commonly uses ‘(hearing) voices’. Nevertheless, there has been little research concerning how hearers refer to their experiences (Karlsson, 2008). Grammatically, the class of language identified for analysis is that of noun groups. These may range from a single noun to more complex groups involving pre- and post-modification (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002), that is, additional words and structures that add further information or specify the referential meaning more precisely. Some 1,479 instances of hearers referring to their voices have been identified and categorised. Such an analysis contributes to this study’s overall aim of presenting a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of hearing voices by concentrating on how hearers recount their lived experiences to another person.

Two overviews are presented with graphs displaying analyses for participants as a group. The first classifies what hearers call their voices in terms of five broad categories identified. The second focuses in more detail on the types of personal descriptions hearers provided during interviews. Each hearer is then discussed in turn so as to develop a profile of the way language is used in context (see Appendix 5 for more details). Owing to the need for conciseness, citations to extracts are mainly supplied in the form of interview, turn and line numbers which direct the reader to the full transcripts in Appendix 4. Following an overview of the types of references each hearer uses, a more detailed analysis of the category of ‘hearer’s own descriptions’ is provided. Words in bold indicate language that has been identified as references to voices.
Overview of how hearers refer to their voices

To discuss what form of reference hearers select when talking about their voices, five categories were developed by reviewing the interview data (see Table 5).

**Table 5** Descriptors hearers used to talk about their voices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Personal identity (hearer)</td>
<td>Proper nouns (e.g. Michael) coined by hearers to give their voices a personal name, or descriptive titles (e.g. the Brave one) that characterise an essential quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Personal identity (voice)</td>
<td>Personal names or any other form of self-identification as above that voices use to refer to themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Hearer’s own description</td>
<td>Any noun groups that hearers use in the course of interviews to refer to their voices which reflect a personal interpretation (e.g. interfering conversation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 ‘Voice’</td>
<td>Use of the word voice alone or as part of a noun group (e.g. a jumble of voices)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Clinical</td>
<td>Terms that are formally used in clinical contexts (e.g. symptom) or vernacular ways of referring to clinical concepts (e.g. all the psych issues)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every instance in which hearers referred to their voices using a noun group was initially categorised in terms of one of the above broad groups. The chart below displays what proportion each category represented across hearers as a group.

---

23 Total percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.
24 Charts are inserted in the text and do not appear in the list of figures due to their high number.
Comparisons of frequency of use among hearers are not measurable given the freedom for hearers to use personal pronouns in place of noun groups as well as the differences in number and length of interviews. The aim of displaying the specific terms hearers used in charts is to highlight the overall and individually preferred patterns for describing voices. For example, personal patterns of language use indicate to what extent hearers’ references to their voices were situated within a clinical paradigm or developed in relation to their own individual understanding of their experiences. These personal interpretations may extend to according their experiences a personal identity or adopting their voices’ own terms of self-reference. As the term ‘voices’ itself overlaps clinical, community support group and hearer domains, not to mention its use as a default form of reference in media reports and public discussion, it has been grouped separately so that its usage does not inflate any other category.

The general term ‘voice’ is clearly the most used form of reference, accounting for nearly half (46%, n = 688) of all specific designations using a noun group. However, just over a quarter (27%, n = 403) of the total number of references appear to be personal descriptions of hearers’ own making. Most of the other types of reference are clinical (15%, n = 218) in origin, while the giving of a name by hearers to their voices accounts for only 8% (n = 114). The adoption of terms voices use about themselves represents the remaining 4% (n = 59).

Overall, Joan, David, Amy and Darby typically refer to their auditory experiences as ‘voices’. Shirley’s preference for the term ‘voice’ slightly exceeds the use of her own descriptions whereas Victoria relies on ‘voice’ to a substantially lesser extent than her own
ways of talking about her experiences. The few times where Mark uses the word ‘voice’ is in relation to his distinctive experience of hearing the sound of his own voice echoing his thoughts. Conversely, Mark is the only person who predominantly refers to his experience within a psychiatric paradigm, while Darby has recourse to only two terms that are formal or clinical in usage. After Shirley is given the diagnosis of dissociative identity disorder (DID), she refers to the more psychological terms ‘alters’ and ‘multiple personalities’ around a third as much as she uses ‘voices’.

Shirley, David and Victoria are the only participants who use personal names to identify their voices but in David’s case this represents some humorous byplay with a friend as a way of ridiculing his voice. However, whereas Victoria associates her voices with specific people in her daily life, such as Justin, her ex-husband, or her mother and father, Shirley names her voices herself as a way of identifying a key element of their emotional impact, as in the case of ‘D for Denial’\textsuperscript{25} ( Diary 3, 11). Although Shirley is the only one who describes hearing voices self-identifying with an actual name, Amy’s frequent reference to her voices as demons or spirits appears to have been motivated by what they claimed about themselves. As a result, it was decided that, despite these supernatural terms still appearing to be part of her personal schema for interpreting her voices, they are arguably not as suggestive of an original or ‘unprocessed’ view of them as ‘tricky little buggers’ (1.57, 491–492) for instance.

All participants, however, draw on a more open-ended range of descriptions to talk about their voices in their own way. Whereas all the other forms of reference predated interviews, the personal descriptions hearers provided range from potentially ‘rehearsed’ phrases, in that they may well have been used in previous conversations with their psychiatrist or family and friends, to more spontaneous descriptions coined in the actual context of the interview. Eight general categories were identified in the present analysis, with a ninth, Stereotype, being proposed to recognise Amy’s concern at how her experience can become a limiting ‘label’ that diminishes her self-esteem and potential for leading a life ‘beyond the voices’.

\textsuperscript{25} Single quotation marks are used for references hearers make to their voices. Double quotation marks are later used to quote what voices say.
The most common way for participants to describe their voices concerns various forms of communication (43%). These interpersonal acts subsume, of course, the sensory experience of sound but references to voices as a merely auditory experience were relatively rare (4%). Ascribing voices with personhood (17%) or explaining them as mental activity (14%) were the other noticeable forms of description overall. References to voices as an aspect of the hearer’s self—occurred only in a limited number of contexts (4%). Arguably, such a form of reference does not readily lend itself to representing voices as active participants in hearers’ recounts of their experiences. However, that is not to say that it does not conceptually inform how hearers may now explain their voices. For example, Shirley clearly interprets her voices in relation to her diagnosis of dissociative identity disorder, in which voices, or ‘alters’, are claimed to represent fragmented parts of the ego split off due to emotional trauma.
Darby, Victoria and Mark proportionately describe their voices as acts of communication the most consistently, although in Darby’s case his total use of personal descriptions for his voices is very low compared to that of ‘voice’. Shirley makes the most reference to the personhood of her voices, which would seem to be in keeping with her willingness to give them personal names and epithets. Describing voices in terms of mental activity is quite widespread with the exception of Joan. On the other hand, talking more generally about voices as a form of experiential phenomena appears to be helpful for Shirley and Amy, as well as for Joan considering the few times she describes her voices in her own words.

**Joan: ‘The voice is the last thing . it starts with a thought’**

Joan primarily refers to her experiences as a ‘voice’ or ‘voices’ (83%, n = 64). In terms of proportionate use, she is exceeded only by her partner Darby (93%, n = 70). Joan varies in her use of ‘voice’ in the singular and plural. In our first interview she comments that ‘its (unclear) a couple but I don’t really identify them as separate , it’s like a voice in my head’ (1.60, 223–225). Joan only rarely supplements ‘voice’ with additional information, such as when classifying them in terms of moral quality or supernatural origin (‘demonic’ 1.238, 679), spatial location (‘internal’ 1.180, 540) or sensory type (‘auditory’ 1.180, 540). On several occasions she variously includes voices with ‘delusions’ and ‘thoughts’ (1.13, 51–52), which suggest a more clinical tone. These have the overall effect of rendering her experiences as impersonal and remote phenomena despite being recognised as male and middle-aged in tone (1.55–60, 216–224).
Although she describes her voices as ‘demonic’ (1.238, 679) following Darby’s introduction of the term, and one particular voice as ‘an evil one’ (1.62, 227), she does not actually refer to them as demons despite being threatened with hellfire. Whereas Amy explains her voices as instruments acting on God’s behalf, Joan defines them as symptoms that result from her feelings of anxiety and stress in social situations (2.7, 15–17; 2.16, 39–40; 2.18, 45–47), including the informal Bible study groups. Feeling anxious in social situations is recognised as a trigger for hearing voices (Fowler & Morley, 1989). During our interviews there was a sense in which her use of ‘voice’ was an attempt to put some distance between herself and the emotional distress they caused:

1.242, 686–689  I don’t actually look at them as a personality (.) because what I hear is-is quite frightening and I…..(She briefly closes her eyes and lets her breath out) I don’t know I…to me it’s a reality (.) what they’re saying is correct (.)

At one point in our first interview, Joan describes her experiences as a cognitive process in which her voice develops out of negative thinking (1.52, 202–211). The voice itself is neither the onset nor the endpoint but a critical midway signpost in which a prior mental activity is verbalised and heard. The further significance of this development is that she sees it as part of a syndrome in which the voice itself is not necessarily the problem but rather its role as an indicator of a harmful set of social behaviours. Joan later develops this description, as well as making a distinction between different experiences of hearing voices:
I think it starts as a thought\textsuperscript{26} and then it turns into internal voice and then it turns in-into a auditory voice... like a stage—do you know what I mean? um a progression

In our second interview, Joan introduces a new element into her account of how voices develop, namely emotion:

No it just happens... it just creeps up on you... I don’t—I just—the thoughts produce the voices—the thoughts produce the feelings that produce the voices

Joan here shifts the emphasis away from the auditory features of voices and associates them with an emotional value that originates with a thought, especially a negative one. The importance of this series of descriptions is that, rather than isolating voices as a pathological symptom, Joan situates them as one of a sequence of behaviours that progressively overwhelm her personal sense of reality until they reach a sensory threshold and are perceived as an externally spoken communication. Arguably, the voice would not have the effect it does if it were not for the preceding cognitive and emotional stages that absorb Joan in her own mental processes. Joan restates the train of events some ten minutes later, adding ‘episode’\textsuperscript{27} (2.164–173, 472–490), or precipitating event, as the preliminary condition. She further explains that this process is not necessarily transitory but one that gradually intensifies:

Yeah I—I think it was a thought... (Joan moves her hands with each step to show how her experience develops) the episode...the thought...the emotion... and the voice... the voice is the last thing it starts with a thought

A few minutes later, I ask Joan if she distinguishes between her voices and the talk she hears around her. She answers that she is often not aware that she is hearing voices at the time of their occurrence. She repeats the same developmental sequence but this time uses more clinical and causative term ‘trigger’. In addition, she now refers to an unclear phase (‘a grey area’ 2.204, 583) that follows the initial stimulus and precedes her awareness that this has affected her thinking\textsuperscript{28} (2.204, 581–587). This results in the basic sequence ‘the trigger the thought the emotion the voice’ (2.204, 582–583). Voices are the product of a developmental process that occurs within a specific social context and manifest as a sensory reaction to stress. However, this appears to be less a series of discrete stages than an escalation of preceding content to a more salient level. It is when Joan realises that what she is hearing is out of context with what is happening around her (2.46, 117; 2.106, 273) that she becomes

\textsuperscript{26} Italics here and in the following extracts are used for the purpose of highlighting.

\textsuperscript{27} Joan’s use of ‘episode’ from the video recording appears to refer to its general meaning, as in ‘incident’ or ‘occurrence’, although she does use ‘episode’ in the clinical sense in another interview (3.57, 140).

\textsuperscript{28} Joan refers to this ‘grey area’ again in 3.103.
more conscious of their activity.

Joan’s account is distinctive for situating her voices at the end of an extended sequence beginning with a stressful situation that triggers negative thinking and distressing emotions which then develop into hostile auditory perceptions. Her use of ‘voices’ is less in relation to a discrete phenomenon than to the climax of a personal narrative describing an accumulation of mental processes that coalesce into a spoken communication. Her voices as a sensory perception are not always immediately perceptible as they are often not distinct from the domains of context, thinking and emotion from which they irrupt. This interrelationship is also suggested in Joan’s occasional collocation of voices with ‘thoughts’ and ‘delusions’.

On the other hand, the references to ‘voices’ discussed above indicate that Joan uses this generic term to interpret her auditory experiences within a developmental pattern that distinguishes their occurrence from other mental phenomena.

The transition to hearing a voice becomes a key indicator of the pathological status characterising her thoughts and emotions as early ‘warning signs’ (1.52, 205) and symptoms of illness (1.52, 207). Clinical terms (8%, n = 6), such as ‘part of the psychotic depression’ (2.128, 331–332), are used to objectify her lived experience as a depersonalised component whose significance exists only in relation to a defined condition. The few descriptions (9%, n = 7) of her own devising are negative, and either represent her experiences in terms of verbal (‘interfering conversation’ 2.53, 150–151) and non-verbal (‘like background noise’ 2.116, 290–291), sound to impersonal objects associated with insecurity (‘trouble’ 2.140, 368) or delusion (‘things that aren’t real’ 3.6, 17).
Shirley: ‘I don’t like the word hallucination’

Shirley mostly uses ‘voice’ (39%, n = 158) but this is followed relatively closely by her use of her own personal descriptions (33%, n = 136). The remaining references are nearly equally divided between names she appears to have coined for her voices (11%, n = 43) and her use of clinical or popular terms (13%, n = 52) specifically used in the context of dissociative identity disorder (DID), namely ‘alter’ and ‘multiple personalities’. In addition are a notable number of references to her voices by name (5%, n = 19) with which they appear to have identified themselves. Shirley’s readiness to adopt these personal names would seem to be linked to her interpretation of her voices as dissociated emotions as a result of childhood sexual abuse.

The importance Shirley gives to her voices is clearly evident in her choice of personal names within the interpretive framework she adopts after her diagnosis with DID. She actively encourages dialogue with her alters in her daily life and this is reflected in her choice of descriptions that foreground her experiences in terms of Person, Phenomenon and Communication. These different types of description suggest that Shirley experiences and interprets her voices as entities which are more than auditory perceptions in that they embody a meaningful emotional core that can be personally related to through interaction.

In our first interview and in the four impromptu audio recordings Shirley made soon after, she uses ‘voice’ as a generic form of reference. When I asked her if I was correct in referring to her experiences as voices, she answered that ‘That’s what I use’ (1.13–14, 193–194). This usage is particularly marked in her first diary entry where the attributes of size and strength
refer to both the personality characteristics and auditory features of her voices:

**Diary 1, 14–16** and I felt like the little voice just disappeared and I felt stronger=like I felt like I’d somehow connected with um the bolder voice=the stronger voice

So intense is the emotional nature of these experiences that she attributes them to ‘the feelings of this small weak person’ (Diary 1, 7) and likens the resistance of ‘the little voice’ to ‘the bolder voices’ as ‘like watching – almost watching um two different identities um communicating and within myself’ (Diary 1, 11–13). Although Shirley mostly uses ‘voice’ to deputise for a range of ways for identifying her experiences, in the following extract ‘voice’ is used in the conventional sense to refer to human speech rather than the auditory phenomenon as a whole:

**2.62, 317–318** I’ve got one little girl Olivia who’s about eight I think she doesn’t talk much um so hearing her voice doesn't happen very often

Shirley’s identification of her voices is a very significant feature of her account and constitutes evidence of her motivation to develop a meaningful interpretation of and personal relationship with her experiences, despite the revulsion she sometimes feels as a result (Diary 3, 48–49). It is in her third diary entry that she first names her voices, with references to their significance taking up much of the five-minute long audio recording. Here, she describes her experiences as being primarily characterised by various personal behaviours and identities rather than auditory features. Shirley also relates how she heard a new voice whose only words were the self-identifying “And I'm Susie and I’m his victim” (Diary 3, 25–26).

The second and subsequent interviews are notable for her introduction and increasing use of the alternative term ‘alter’ following her recent diagnosis of DID. However, she still slightly preferred the continued use of ‘voice’. Shirley continues to add to her list of named voices in subsequent interviews. Her use of names is often accompanied by recounts of her experiences which are construed in terms of each alter’s personal idiosyncrasies (2.62, 314–325). These descriptions contrast with accounts such as David’s, for example, who initially refers to his voices in relation to volume level rather than psychological behaviour (1.6, 14–18) and whose use of the name Horace is meant to ridicule rather than epitomise. In our final interview, with her partner Geoff, most of the references to alters (8 out of 10) are made by him. Furthermore, he shows willingness to support her explanation of changes in her behaviour as evidence of their personalities, thereby adopting Shirley’s preferred framework for interpreting her experiences in terms of their individual psychological characteristics.
Shirley explains that sometimes she visualises people who are introduced to her by name (2.40–42, 201–211). At other times, her attempts at organising a rollcall of her voices does not yield immediate results (3.92–94, 517–529). In addition to the use of such proper names as ‘Michael’ (2.42, 213) and ‘Olivia’ (2.62, 317), descriptive titles, for example ‘the Brave One’ (Diary 3, 15–16), are also assigned to identify specific voices. There appears to be some flexibility here, as in the case of the ‘Calm One’ being renamed ‘Earth Mother’ to take into account this alter’s interest in ‘yoga and aligning your qi’ (3.59, 318–321). Personal names would appear to have been provided by Shirley’s voices while descriptive epithets are more likely to be of her own devising.

Although Shirley and her former husband were lay leaders in a Pentecostal church (1.46–48, 487–493), during our interviews she refers to her voices in terms of their symbolic function and does not appear to currently experience voices that are Christian in content. This contrasts with Amy, who also comes from a charismatic church background but believes her voices to be demons and spirits sent by God. Shirley started hearing voices when she was still actively involved in her church and was unsure at the time if one of them was ‘God’ (1.48, 493–494). It was only as she slowly came to realise that God wouldn’t be constantly berating (1.48, 496) her that she began to doubt her attribution.

Shirley occasionally ascribes roles to her alters that are supervisory in nature and concern how ‘within (her) system’ (2.42, 211) they positively act to look after her. These references to ‘a protector (…) a gatekeeper (…) my watcher’ (2.100, 575–576) all occur in our second interview after her diagnosis of DID and may reflect peer discourse concerning the function of alters. This could also be the case for ‘system’, which she also uses several times (2.117, 656, 659, 661) in reference to a book she had read by Robert Oxnam, entitled A Fractured Mind.

What is singularly important about Shirley’s use of these personal names is that they enable her to approach the therapeutic work of learning to live with her childhood trauma without becoming totally overwhelmed by the associated emotional pain. Shirley can talk about her personal trauma ‘in the third person’ (2.91, 513), thereby keeping the emotional pain of her childhood abuse at some distance. The emotional distance also needs to be bridged when she is ready to take on for herself the pain they have carried by coming to acknowledge and relate to these ‘broken and-and (…) very damaged’ (2.89, 488–489) parts of herself.
However, Shirley’s own more extempore descriptions coined during interviews are over twice the number of the personal names, titles and roles that appear to have been formulated or developed beforehand. A substantial proportion of these (40%, n = 55) represent her experiences as people. This accords with the prominence she gives to the personal psychology of her alters in her attribution of individual names and evocative titles.

Despite Shirley’s willingness to refer to her voices by name or attribute, she primarily uses the non-committal compound determinatives (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002) ‘someone/body (else)’ (n = 21) and ‘anybody/everybody’ (n = 13) when referring to the performance of an action by a specific but unnamed agent:

1.8, 84–86 so obviously most of my life I haven’t had a lot of self-confidence because there’s (She quickly points to the left side of her head) always someone telling me I’m useless

Shirley has recourse to such grammatical ‘place holders’ when attempting to describe an experience that does not strictly conform to a clearly heard voice but which embodies an indefinable sense of personal communication:

1.10, 152–153 instantly there was – it wasn’t a voice per se but I knew somebody was talking

This pattern is particularly evident in our first interview but changes with the introduction of descriptive titles (‘the Brave One’ Diary 3, 15–16) during the recording of her audio diaries before being supplemented with the use of personal names after her diagnosis of DID:

In addition, Shirley uses the impersonal ‘something’, as in ‘something been going up there’
(She gestures again to the left side of her head) *(1.12, 191–192)*, only rarely when emphasizing her experiences as mental activity rather than an interaction with her alters. More significantly, the vacancy of personal meaning inherent in ‘something’ is cited by Shirley in the following extract as typifying a clinical reductionism that denigrates her experiences as being nothing more than a brain malfunction:

1.33, 372–380 Um the ad that you had in the MIFSA website talked about auditory hallucinations and I saw that and I don’t like the word hallucination *(Keith Okay)* and because I was in a different place then I looked and I thought ‘oh no he’s researching the wrong thing.’ I’m not interested and I didn’t contact you a year ago because of that one word um because to me that means it’s not real. it means there’s a – *something* in my brain that’s uh making me see things in essence or hear things but the equivalent and I didn’t like that so um for me it’s sort of um it’s—it’s real in that I know they’re there

Shirley coordinates references to both static and dynamic aspects in which the two domains respectively represent personal emotions and impersonal activity *(2.94, 535–539)*. In addition, Shirley’s use of ‘*everybody*’ suggests a sense of inclusivity in which her voices are a society coexisting within her own person:

2.72, 374–376 that was definitely not a good-good idea= *everybody inside* was not happy with that and the more I tried to do it the more there was *uproar* and just *mess inside*

This sense of a multitude or crowd is further implied with the auditory sense of ‘*uproar*’ denoting loud outrage, and ‘*mess*’ signifying an emotionally chaotic state involving heterogeneous elements. This can lead to a confusion of identity in which Shirley is not sure who she is speaking for. In such a situation, the speaking subject disintegrates and is vulnerable to intrusion from elements that are dissociated from the ego syntonic personality:

3.70, 413–415 there are people who understand me um who understand when sometimes I say "we" instead of "I" who understand what it's like to-to be in the middle of something and to have *someone* come in

According to Shirley, the goal in psychotherapy is for this fragmented mass to be consciously assimilated so that her separate alters become a community of being. This means accepting that her identity is a composite or plurality in which each of her alters comes to belong to her. In a sense, her personal individuality then becomes not that of a homogeneity of self but one of interrelationship *(2.113, 634–640)*.

A further twenty references are more specific in their identification, often describing her voices in terms of age and sex, as in ‘an eighteen-year-old boy or man’ *(2.42, 210–211)*, ‘like a teenage boy’ *(Diary 3, 21)*, and ‘this little boy’ *(2.62, 322–323)*. These young male
alters are typically associated with confidence, protection and strength. Very young children, including an alter called Baby who is a baby (3.42, 235–236) and ‘Little Scared One’ (2.32, 184), are emotionally very vulnerable and insecure. As Baby is too young to speak and can only experience basic emotions (3.52, 286–292), Shirley interacts with her by cuddling a soft toy to encourage her to express herself through Shirley’s own behavior (2.58, 302–303; 3.48, 249–253). On one occasion, Shirley found herself involuntarily making sucking noises like a baby wanting her bottle (3.48, 249–281). As she did not have anything appropriate in the way of baby food to give herself, she made use of baby doll’s dummy to help calm Baby down completely (3.52, 295–306).

Shirley also refers to her voices using more abstract or general representations, for instance ‘two different identities’ (Diary 1, 12), ‘separate little personalities’ (3.6, 22), and ‘different people in me’ (1.37, 420–421). While the first two depersonalise her voices, at the same time they emphasise the distinctiveness of her voices in that they display a recognisable individuality suggestive of a sense of self. In addition, her conception of her voices as ‘person/people’ (n = 7) allows Shirley to explain how her own emotional behaviour is affected by the feeling tone associated with their appearance:

1.37, 437–439 I feel emotion attached to these people and I feel when they – when certain you know certain voices come in because they can make me feel a particular way (.) it’s almost like it’s another person and I can be feeling fine and they’ll come across and I’m not and then they can go again and it’s okay and because my emotions change so much with different voices

In relation to this interpretation of her voices as personal presences, Shirley draws on a number of descriptions to represent her experiences in terms of human attributes and emotions. These are the second largest category (18%, n = 24) of extempore description in her account. Their grammatical form as noun groups construes her voices as types of phenomena that conceptualise character traits. Included are unspecified, disruptive and desirable feelings and images, such as affects (‘emotions’ (n = 11; e.g. 3.36, 197–198) and ‘anger’ (n = 5; e.g. 2.58, 295–296)), subjective qualities and behaviours nominalised as abstract attributes (‘that strength’ (n = 1; Diary 3, 17), ‘that braveness’ (n = 1; Diary 3, 17), ‘resistance’ (n = 1; Diary 3, 5)) and metaphoric representations – for example, ‘this wave’ (n = 2; 1.16, 211 & 217) and ‘rumblings’ (n = 1; 3.16, 99).

Shirley often describes her voices as intense, invasive feelings that she sometimes has difficulty distinguishing from her own. Her voices may be experienced as a combination of an influx of affect and verbal communication:
I’m still aware but there’s this emotion and this (She raises both hands up to her face and moves them around) mental uh conversation I suppose going on in my head.

Shirley also experiences her voices communicating through her writing as well as in the speech she hears. The emotions experienced are mostly negative and this affective energy may build up until she channels them through her therapeutic use of a journal:

words like "I hate her" or you know "she’s a bitch" and all this sort of stuff so real anger coming out and they just express that on the paper so

At other times she is not prepared for the strong emotions that may irrupt and disorientate her. Shirley relates how she heard a voice demanding that she give her full attention to the emotional turmoil building up inside with her voices rather than worrying about her husband (2.58, 292–302). This key component of emotion appears to be a meaningful bridge between her experiences of hearing spoken communications and her engagement with her voices as alters with their own particular traits, even in the absence of a personal name to call them by (3.61, 328–348).

References to voices as acts of spoken communication (14%, n = 19) are the third most substantial type of extempore description. In addition to describing her voices in terms of ‘conversation’ (n = 15), Shirley also includes the more expressive ‘argument (in my head)’ (4.29, 104; 4.146, 538). These descriptions foreground Shirley’s experience of hearing her voices as an apparently two-way interaction. This may be perceived as taking place without her participation due to their frenetic behaviour, although it is not clear if she hears all sides or just one (1.29, 343–347), or with her participation as when there are discussions about what to wear or she is questioned about what she will say to me during our interview in the form of a ‘practice conversation’ (4.104–106, 380–386). A term such as ‘conversation’ may seem surprising and even counterintuitive but when considered in context it can be seen how this description connects to Shirley’s experiences. Indeed, referring to an experience as a ‘conversation’ rather than ‘voice’ is a profound interpretation which highlights Shirley’s experiences as one of shared exchange between both hearer and voice.

**David: ‘Making it into a person uh I don’t know if that’s the right thing to do with it but if it works’**

David primarily uses the generic term ‘voice’ (77%, n = 88) across our four interviews but on occasion refers to what he hears by the sarcastic name of Horace (10%, n = 11), which a
friend had coined as a humorous form of coping strategy for David. Noun groups are the other resource David uses to the same extent to convey his own interpretations (10%, n = 11). Clinical terms are only used several times (4%, n = 5) in total.

David only refers to his experiences using terms influenced by psychiatry on two occasions, referring to his voices as *audible hallucinations* (1.4, 4; 2.223, 644). In fact, this is the first noun group David uses to identify what he hears. It is not until our second interview that David speaks of calling his voice Horace. This information was given in response to my asking David to repeat the details of a conversation with his friend Jack when David’s voice was making a fuss about his efforts to dig a hole at his partner’s property:

2.55, 142–150 well he knows he calls it Horace (I start laughing) the voice Horace he calls the voice Horace and he’ll go “well Horace” you’ll have to excuse my language he said “well well whether he fucking likes it or not we’re going to dig this trench and we’re going to dig it this way and if he doesn’t like it he can just go (I think David makes a rude gesture here) himself and so it—it was good and we had a bit of a laugh about it and I – he said “well you start doing this and I’ll do this” and so he got me simply to start doing that and yeah the voice just kind of disappeared up its own behind

The very Wildean choice of name onomatopoeically designates David’s voice as an irksome buffoon:

2.258, 731-735 my friend Jack he when he said – it’s one of those names you’d never name a kid but (He starts laughing) the – but it you know i-i-i-if – it would always be the obnoxious rela-relative Horace it’s got that way you know it’s got that feeling about it you just think ‘ceeuuh’ (He laughs)

The use of the personal name Horace is significant in this study in that it is the only example
of a specific form of reference that was coined by another person. David’s account gives some indication of how certain aspects of the raw phenomenon of hearing voices coalesce through the hearer’s sharing of their experiences with other people. As a result of its adoption by David and his partner Carol, the stigma of talking about Horace is not only lessened but its occurrence characterised as the intrusive presence of an annoying and ineffectual family member. Such support from his partner Carol, his mother and close friends helps to compensate for his inability to discuss his experiences with his elderly father and teenage daughter (1.57, 194–206) as well as dealing with common misconceptions about people suffering from mental illness (1.97, 336–345). However, he is not a member of a support group and has only met one other person who also hears voices (1.59, 208–210; 1.83–89, 303–319).

One person who was not aware of the nickname was his psychiatrist, Dr S. When I mention the existence of a name, David is clearly embarrassed:

| 4.64 Keith | I know David’s told me that when you talk about your voice it has a name | is that something | ? |
| 4.65 David | Oh yeah | I've never discussed that with (Dr S. expresses interest and they both laugh as David tries to speak) it's just one of those things you know you're talking to a psychiatrist you think you don't really (He breaks into laughter and Dr S. chuckles) but uh yeah a friend named it once when it was really bad and kind of stuck (Dr S: Right) called it Horace | (He laughs a bit nervously) yeah one of those you know |
| 4.66 Dr S | Horace okay |
| 4.65cont. David | I – you just don't think this is the thing to tell a psychiatrist (He again laughs nervously) |
| 4.67 Keith | Can I ask why? |
| 4.68 David | (He breaks into laughter as he tries to speak) I've got no idea |

Despite the relaxed and conversational tone that was apparent between Dr S and David in the fourth interview, David was clearly uneasy concerning the disjuncture between this way of talking about his voices ‘at home’ with his partner and friends, and in the consulting room with his psychiatrist. There had been a noticeable demonstration earlier in the interview of Dr S’s professional expertise in his use of standard clinical terms (see Appendix 5), for example ‘(auditory) hallucinations’, ‘symptoms’, and ‘(brain) disorder’ in addition to ‘voices’, that served to divest David’s experiences of its subjective content for discussion as an impersonal pathological phenomenon.

At the time I wondered whether David giving his voice a name would be considered by Dr S as investing it with a concrete reality that could be counterproductive to treatment. The act of naming moves his voice from being objectified as a clinical symptom to being personified as an individual personality with motivation and agency. This could be seen as a warning sign
that David was beginning to ascribe it with other human attributes rather than depersonalising it. However, treating David’s experience of his voice as if it were a person allows David to normalise Horace’s behaviour with his friend Jack. In contrast with the conventional view in psychiatry that personifying a voice runs the risk of according it material reality (for example, Aschebrock et al. 2003). David believes that his voice is actually resistant to being concretised in such a prosaic way:

2.67 David (...) but when he calls it Horace it just kind of – we just both crack up and (He breathes in) we you know it’s giving it substance and it doesn’t like that if if that makes sense?

2.68 Keith Tell me more
2.69 David (He sighs) Um when it gets found out like when he calls it Horace and we talk about it and we almost make it into the third person you know I’m here Horace is here and Jack’s there it uh yeah it acts like a petulant little ch-child and sometimes it’ll start erring and umming like I did through this

2.70 Keith When you say you’d um given it substance | can you say
2.71 David | Mmm almost giving it—giving it um body you know you’re almost making it into a person uh I don’t know if that’s the right thing to do with it but if it works

It is a matter for speculation whether this is because the social act of naming a voice encourages its informal representation in casual conversation. In any event, referring to his voice in ordinary human terms would appear to be effective in thwarting its ability to communicate (1.36, 130–132; 2.30, 74–77). In addition, the choice of name is clearly an apt one in David’s view (2.256, 727–739).

What the name Horace says about the character of David’s voice allows for development in the context of later casual conversations with friends. However, although Horace appears to have his own personality (1.126–128, 455–464), David has no interest in developing his relationship to it and his profiling of Horace’s character is clearly far removed from Shirley’s intimate description of her alters. Further meanings in view of subsequent experiences may come to accrue around what makes David’s voice particularly Horace-like, or may even in time warrant a change of name if different. Moreover, David’s stressful experiences are reinterpreted in terms of shared ongoing humour that acts as a show of support and solidarity (Eggins & Slade, 1997) and which may help to allay feelings of isolation. In fact, his friend Jack encourages David to bring Horace out into the open where he can be interacted with:

2.151 David I was explaining to Jack what it was saying and he talked to it (He starts laughing)
2.152 Keith Can you tell me a bit more about that?
2.153 David Yeah well he-he’s good you know he says – he knows he can’t hear him – he can’t yeah but he-he-he goes – he’s very good he uh he goes along with it and talks to it and “just tell me what it’s saying and I’ll tell it to f- off” and yeah it
was-it was-it was a good afternoon we had (He starts laughing)

Although David’s partner Carol knows about the nickname, she does not make substantial use of it herself in our interview. However, she does imply that the social context for its use is one of ridicule (3.92–94, 285–290).

Nevertheless, the term David uses the most frequently is ‘voice’ (77%, n = 88), which further allows him to qualify its characteristics in terms of age and sex, as well as human qualities such as mood (1.28–29, 93–102), that then may prompt references to Horace’s behaviour. This usage sometimes appears suggestive of the loud volume that he often experiences, which often leads David to describe his voice in terms of noise level and accompanying distress (1.6–8, 8–25). On one occasion, David embroiders on his use of ‘voice’ so that it becomes part of a mock designation that parodies its gloomy and ominous character as ‘the voice of doom’ (1.51, 170).

After the exchange in which the nickname Horace was brought out into the open, Dr S confirmed that ‘voice’ was the default term but adds the definite article ‘the’ which acts to label David’s voice as an impersonal and independent entity in contrast to ‘your voices’ (4.46, 173).

4.69 Keith How do you talk about voices then together?
4.70 Dr S Oh fairly abstract (.) “what’s the voice do?”
(...)
4.73 Keith And what do you call it? Is it a voice or do you use o-other words?
4.74 Dr S The voice | The voice yeah yeah
4.75 David “What’s happening with the voice?” (David Yeah) uh “Is it getting at you a bit?”
4.76 Dr S (David Yeah) “What’s it saying?”

Only some 10% (n = 11) of David’s references to his voice are descriptions of his own formulation and these are evenly spread over a handful of categories. This places him with Darby (7%), Joan (9%) and Amy (10%) who are the lowest users of terms reflecting their personal experience within the context of the interviews.
Mental concepts (‘core belief’ 2.10, 31, 33 and ‘belief structure’ 2.10, 30) construing organised impersonal constructs at war with his ordinary human existence are cited in a journal entry he wrote when feeling suicidal while negative Evaluations (‘problem’ 1.55, 191; 1.97, 337 and ‘something that’s there that you wish wasn’t’ 1.83, 302–303) directly represent his voice as difficult and undesirable. Descriptions signifying Sound (‘a whisper or a out loud noise’ 1.8, 35), Communication (‘something telling you – talking to you all the time’ 1.97, 345), and Person (‘third party 1.115, 408 and ‘a person’ 1.29, 99) portray David’s voice as either the auditory phenomenon itself or its personified source.

Amy: “We’re demons and we’re coming from you”

Amy’s use of ‘voice’ represents some two-thirds (65%, n = 194) of the total number of noun groups she chooses to refer to her experiences. The remaining third is almost equally divided among forms of identification originating with her voices, descriptions of her own devising and clinically associated terms. Perhaps most striking is the percentage of instances in which she appears to defer to her voices’ self-identification as ‘demons’ and ‘spirits’ (13%, n = 40). This reference to her voices as a type of entity differs from Shirley, the only other participant that identifies her voices, who refers to her voices by individual names. Amy’s own personal descriptions (11%, n = 32) are proportionally comparable to David (10%) and Joan (9%). These are equalled by her use of clinically related references (10%, n = 31).
Amy’s substantial use of ‘voices’ as her primary form of reference (65%, n = 194) is conspicuous for the overall absence of modification, for example in the form of evaluative adjectives, with which to appraise their character. As a result, the terse designation of ‘the voices’ suggests an identifiable, well-established if featureless entity that is a constituent of her world. However, she supplements this usage with a significant form of identification that appears to derive from her voices, namely, ‘demons’ and ‘spirits’, that she may use in preference:

3.57, 277 Keith  You can touch the | voice?
3.58, 278 Amy    | Mmm yeah well the spirits yeah yeah

For Amy, demons appear to represent a distinctly sinister intelligence rather than a mere synonym for or sub-category of voices. Although she uses both ‘the voices’ and ‘demons’ in succession, her use of the latter seems to connote a powerful force which can be too insidious to control once invited:

2.49, 267–269 I don’t talk to many people about the actual ins and outs of demons (.) I talk about the experience of having voices but not the actual ins and outs of it

2.51, 273–276 especially if it’s people who experience demons or voices as well sometimes they can get a bit agitated if you talk about the demons and lo-lots of who-who he-hear voices don’t actually like talking about –

It is not clear whether her references to demons and spirits are a case of Amy adopting her voices’ form of self-identification or her own interpretations of what she experiences and believes her voices to be. It may well be the case that they are both, in which Amy’s beliefs are aligned with her voices’ stated identity. In the circumstances, however, it was decided to
categorise these forms of reference as originally deriving from her voices as they plainly refer to themselves as supernatural forces (3.31, 164–166). Nevertheless, not all of Amy’s references to ‘demons’ have been counted as some of these occur as part of her explanation about the cosmic origins of demons (2.44, 241–247). These would thus appear to be closer to her theological beliefs than references to her auditory experiences.

Although Joan, Darby and Victoria also attribute a religious meaning to their voices (negatively in Joan’s case but more benignly in Darby’s and Victoria’s), Amy’s experiences are embedded within a complex personal understanding of the world in which she is constantly assessed by demons with consequences for innocent people around her. In our first interview, Amy explains that the occult identity of her voices developed with early maturity and her growing involvement in evangelical Christianity (1.13, 106–110; 1.57, 454–462). As she grew older, their suprapersonal role began to develop and differentiate wherein ‘the voices took on a strong spiritual identity and divided, two totally opposite explanations just by their existence’ (1.21, 150–151). The more hostile group threatens to punish others if she breaks the secrecy surrounding their existence while ostensibly more benevolent voices explain that she is being tested by God (1.21, 149–162). For the most part, however, the circumstances in which her worthiness is put to the test is continually rigged in their favour. Amy is invariably cast as the victim, as when promised respite if she obeys their demands to ‘let the evil out’ (4.18, 59) by cutting herself.

In referring to her voices as demons, Amy invokes powerful notions relating to divine retribution for her supposed failings and inadequacies. Many of the examples she gives of what her voices say support this reading in which she feels she is being tested and punished. As a result, Amy’s single reference to her voices as ‘tricky little buggers’ (1.57, 491–492) is not only a rare flash of humour but one of the few foregrounded uses of evaluative language. Otherwise, the sense of malevolence that calling her voices ‘demons’ and ‘spirits’ evokes, especially as a form of designation adopted from her voices, are profound indications of the vulnerability, blame and fear that have oppressed her:

3.31, 164–166 “we’re doing this (Amy closes her eyes for a moment) w-we’re” no the voi-
“we’re demons and we’re coming from you and we’re doing this therefore it
must be your fault”

Although Amy accepts they are part of her mental illness, she still continues to believe they are demons (3.76, 378–280) with distinctive attitudes and behaviours of their own.
Amy’s own descriptions mostly focus on their sensory perception as experiential phenomena (n = 11). Sound (n = 5) and mental activity (n = 5) also feature as alternative categories for representing her voices in more impersonal terms.

Amy’s designation of her voices as types of sound depersonalises them from being agents of malicious behaviour to mere noise marked by plurality and incoherence. For example, when she is severely ill her voices tend to deteriorate into an amorphous ‘background rabble’ (1.43, 340–341). While she generally experiences her less distinct voices as a ‘babble’ (1.47, 369, 379), several voices have developed as she herself matured from being ‘screaming yelling things’ (3.68, 307) to displaying signs of ‘intelligence’ (3.68, 309).

In terms of mental activity, Amy suggests that it was because of the acknowledgement by the facilitators of the Talking Heads group and shared discussion with other hearers (1.21, 176–208) of the reality of her lived struggle with voices that they could then be objectified as ‘perceptions’ (1.21, 189) and ‘concepts’ (1.21, 195). This reconceptualising of voices was not to discount their occurrence but to enable hearers to reflect on their significance within the context of their own beliefs about their lives. This is made clearer with Amy’s use of the more warm-blooded term ‘experience’ (n = 10), in which both her voices and her humanity are held in tension as she tries to work at developing a ‘partnership (…) with the voices’ (3.74–75, 374 & 376) rather than suppressing them.

In acknowledging and even accepting the suffering associated with her voices, the demons also become forms of ‘experience’ (e.g. 1.21, 178–179), or aspects of her own lived reality which affirm her respect for and belief in herself. Amy has little hope that she will ever live
without the voices (1.3, 37–38), and is even apprehensive about what life would be like in their absence (1.3, 54). However, for her to deny them would be to diminish her own integrity and determination to lead a fulfilling life that is not dominated by them:

1.21, 210–211 that’s sort of – that’s where I’m at at the moment that’s where I’m headed – trying to do at the moment is to live beyond the limitations of the voices

Amy’s use of the more neutral term ‘experience’ allows her to shift attention away from personifying her voices as demons and spirts (1.3, 8–15) and instead focus on re-evaluating her voices as ‘phenomena’ (1.21, 182) that she can recognise as ‘part of my mind’ (3.76, 392) and ‘not my whole existence beyond the label’ (1.21, 204). Viewing voices from this perspective also enables her to feel less isolated from other hearers. In the following extract, Amy’s use of ‘experiences’, in the context of talking about her voices at the Talking Heads group, allows for the collocation ‘share’. This sense is reinforced by the use of the inclusive ‘our’ which suggests a community of belonging and acceptance:

1.21, 139–140, 178–179 & 199–202 (Amy reads from what she had written over the noise of plates and cutlery being put out on the kitchen counter.) ‘(…) We were encouraged to share our experiences, not suppress them (…) Okay our experiences are beyond that of the general norm but what I thought was reinforced by the group was that we were all individuals with our own individual experiences but none of us either more or less than the other

Voices by their very nature are not accessible to others but hearers like Amy feel that they are able to affirm their humanity through recounting what they have suffered. Indeed, Amy’s references to ‘experience’ suggests that the raw phenomenon of the voice has become a lived aspect of her personal life history, thereby making it possible for Amy to tell her story to others.

Another word Amy collocates with ‘experience’ is ‘real’. Even though the reality of what people believe about their voices may be debated, the actual perception of voices as a personal event lived by the hearer cannot be denied, whatever the medical opinion is concerning their veracity:

1.25, 217–218 & 220–223 (It was the) First time…first time it was accepted that it was an experience not necessarily um something that needs to be suppressed (…) it was always you know um try to control them don’t listen to them you know they’re not real well even though I know you didn’t experience voices=I experience (.) to me they’re a real experience

Hearing voices as an experience suggests that a person’s very being or self, and not merely their senses, has processed their occurrence, and that the event has become part of their
accumulated knowledge of themselves and the world around them. In short, voices as an experience are real by virtue of having been lived. But, more importantly, for Amy it is through the acceptance of her experiences by others that she feels that she can ‘move beyond my reality into the joint reality’ (3.76, 383–384) shared with hearers and non-hearers alike.

Amy uses clinical language to refer to what her experiences are called in text books or in the hospital settings in which she first worked (1.3, 8–10) and later was treated. In this way she contrasts her private drama in which divine punishment is meted out by demons with the explanatory model provided in the exterior world of medical science. In fact, the disjuncture between the two is too great despite her training as a nurse for Amy to use the language of the one to name the other (2.10, 47–55). Later, Amy explains that the reductive use of clinical language served to alienate her and denigrate her experiences. She contrasts the use of language in her voice hearers’ group to establish the interpersonal values of rapport and respect rather than to reinforce the institutional values of authority and expertise (2.68–73, 362–375):

2.73 Amy: Oh doctors um nursing staff family members you know “they’re not real they don’t exist they just-” – even-even when they say they’re just hallucinations | um because yeah just hallucinations
2.74 Keith: | Okay just hallucinations?
2.73(cont.) Amy: yeah and because if you look at what a hallucination is that’s something that doesn’t exist you know so they’re saying you know it doesn’t exist so um with the hearing voices group they acknowledge that we hear voices

Amy finds some reassurance to the seemingly random nature of her voices by citing one famous person whose functionality was not compromised by biological factors:

4.45, 313–315 I mean science stills says it’s due to a chemical imbalance but then um what about Winston Churchill—did he have a chemical imbalance? Was he a schizophrenic? He heard voices.

Indeed, the historical stature of the person she refers to affirms the ability of humans to transcend the arbitrariness of their neurochemistry.

**Darby: ‘They’re only voices’**

Darby almost solely refers to his past experiences as ‘voices’ (91%, n = 70). Not only does he not call his voices by any personal names or titles, but also uses the fewest clinical terms (3%, n = 2). Numerically as well as proportionately, Darby provides the fewest examples of descriptions of his own (6%, n = 5). It is unclear whether this bears any relation to his being the only participant who no longer experiences hearing voices, having not heard voices for
Darby gives a briefer account than Joan concerning the onset and development of his voices in terms of their sensory perception (2.215, 616–618). He further confirms the developmental relationship between thinking and hearing voices when he explains how he was often only aware in retrospect that he was experiencing voices once they were clearly audible. The onset of Darby’s voices appears to have developed under the threshold of consciousness until their growing sensory prominence finally alerted him to their presence. Such experiences were typically associated with episodes of mania (1.45, 167–168). Darby came to understand with hindsight that his manic behaviour was the result of acting on impulses and thoughts that were progressively perceived as audible instructions from his voices but without knowing it at the time (2.225, 647–657; 2.228, 664–672):

2.225, 655–657 all of a sudden they become very distinct (Joan: Mmm) and that’s a voice and then you recognise it as a voice and it’s not a thought anymore

2.227, 668–670 I-I don’t always recognise that I have got voices because you’re so – become so engrossed in-in-in the-in what the voices telling you

A distinguishing feature of Darby’s account is his minimisation of the reality of voices. The refrain of ‘they’re only voices’ (e.g. 2.106, 276) typically occurs when he is reassuring Joan that she has nothing to worry about as her voices cannot harm her (3.106, 279). In fact, he is the only participant who ever refers to his experiences as ‘only voices’. Darby explains how
this realisation had the effect of granting him a greater capacity to live with his voices. This
tolerance was mediated through his ability to distinguish what he heard from the stories they
were telling him. Instead of believing in the reality of what he was told by his voices, he
learned to recognise that they were no more than a sensory phenomenon, one moreover that
lacked any kind of agency (2.187, 532–538). His divesting of his voices of any substance is
further suggested in the absence of evaluative adjectives modifying the noun group.

In addition, possibly as a result of his diminishment of their importance, he resorts to only a
few descriptions (6%, n = 5) of his own devising. Nonetheless, several of these suggest a
global interpretation of his voices as acts of communication.

These are references to his voices not only telling ‘fanciful stories’ (1.88, 284) but being
themselves an ‘interesting story’ (2.94, 244) or ‘pleasant stories’ (2.125, 325). These
references to his stories suggest he took a very passive role and that the overall effect was
mesmeric. This element of story is reflected to some degree in Joan’s contrast between the
‘exciting and adventurous and interesting’ (1.242, 710) voices Darby experienced and the
menace of her own. Although his voices at times would instruct him to go to churches to
receive a blessing, it would equally appear that Darby would listen entranced without being
required to take any action or get involved (2.94, 243–256). When the thrill of setting out to
receive a blessing was denied him because of being in hospital, his voices continued to
enthral him with religious themes (2.96, 247–251). Unlike Amy, whose voices claim that
people around her were deceiving her, Darby’s voices invested other patients with major
significance by identifying them as central figures from the gospels (2.96, 249–251). Such
experiences kept him ‘totally engrossed’ (2.96, 248) in a world of make-believe.

With hindsight, Darby’s voices now seem insubstantial but domineering nevertheless (1.231, 662–663). Equally, the sense of pleasure they gave him as ‘the thirteenth disciple’ now starkly contrasts with his feelings of inferiority compared to the apparent self-confidence of the professionals in his church home group. But in his relationship to Joan, his support and the patience he gained from personal experience have enabled her not only to develop insight into her voices (3.93-94, 216–226) but develop their own openness to communication with each other (2.50, 130–138).

**Victoria: ‘I know there’ll be a time where I’ll talk to God and God won’t talk back and that won’t worry me’**

Victoria is the only participant whose recourse to references of her own description outweighs all other categories, including ‘voice’ (32%), representing nearly half (46%) of the total. Most of the remaining references (17%) comprise her own personal identification of her voices. Proportionally, this latter group also exceeds David (10%) and Shirley (14%), the only other participants who unambiguously name their voices of their own accord.

Victoria’s account is highly social in that her voices represent family and friends, or figures that are significant to her, such as God and well-known politicians. Victoria makes it clear that she did not invent the names (4.173–174, 649–659). Her use of names attests to the convincing character of her voices as substantive people with recognisable personalities (2.17, 91–99) which are congruent with her everyday experiences of their actual
Most of the other voices she identifies are those of her ex-husband or ex-boyfriends. These are either abusive (5.23, 62–65) or affectionate (1.65, 327). Victoria often makes no distinction in our interviews between the people the voices sound like and the people themselves, which sometimes I find hard to follow (1.62–65, 314–331). Her identification of her voices often appears to be connected with unsuccessful conversations she has had with other people (1.83, 403–404; 4.56, 225–234) or her emotional reaction to world events (1.38–40, 212–223) or personal situations (3.10, 15–17) that are concerning her. Because Victoria talks to her voices she not only refers to them by their personal names but recounts interactions in which these are possibly also used as vocatives (direct forms of address). This is particularly applicable in the case of God when she says her prayers before going to sleep (2.8, 35–40). Proportionally, Victoria (17%, n = 59) and Shirley (16%, n = 62) refer to their voices more often by name than any other participant. However, unlike Shirley, Victoria’s voices are mostly drawn from daily life, with the notable exception of God.

In our opening interview, Victoria explains that she started hearing voices soon after she was sexually assaulted in her bedroom as a child by an intruder (1.9, 20–23; 4.42, 176–179). She had begun praying aloud at night to help overcome her feelings of fear. She identified the first voice which spoke to her as that of God because it was while she was praying that she heard it and would continue to do so from then on. Despite believing that she is in communication with a supernatural agency, Victoria’s experience of God is quite earthy and pragmatic (3.25, 77–83):

3.25, 80-81 and God just said “Yep no worries Victoria=we’re mates=I’ll take care of that for you”

Unlike Amy, Victoria’s references to God are not associated with notions of being put to the test. Instead, her experience of God as a voice is more that of a kind if bland gentleman who assures her that he will look after those she loves (1.59–62, 306–314). However, it later emerged that it was the voice of God that told her to free the refugees detained at Baxter. As much as Victoria’s experiences of communicating with God have been

29 Baxter detention centre is over 300kms north from Adelaide and approximately 15kms from Port Augusta. It was established in 2002 by the Howard government (Liberal party) as a facility in which asylum seekers to Australia were forcibly detained.
mostly benign, and even a continuing comfort (3.27, 85–90), she is tired of a repetitive behaviour that not only affects how she lives her life but separates her from the more socially acceptable experiences of those around her (3.33–35, 112–124):

3.33, 114–115 I know there’ll be a time where I’ll talk to God and God won’t talk back and that won’t worry me

Patterns of interaction could be quite complex with a diverse range of conversational pairings that sometimes Victoria was only a party to, and then for a time solely comprising her:

4.47, 197-199 my voices were talking to God and God hearing me and me hearing God and then for the space of I think a year I sat in front of a mirror=talked to myself

Her voices all display ‘personalities (that) are quite real and quite human’ (1.83, 401–402). Conversations with voices personifying actual people in her life often display a reality which makes them compellingly believable (2.17, 94–99) while others clearly differ from the people they are based on (1.65, 323 & 329–332). She estimates that when she was very ill she heard ‘about fourteen different personalities’ (3.89, 420–427), including her parents and former boyfriends, talking one after the other. When I queried Victoria’s use of ‘personalities’ rather than ‘voices’, she saw them as terms inclusive of each other:

3.92 Keith You’re saying personality rather than voice |
3.93 Victoria | Yeah it’s—it’s a voice but it’s a personality as well each voice you hear has a personality of its own (.) it can be an aggressive one=it can be a nice one=it can be…it just depends on I guess the voice (.) like I’ve often contemplated whether I had a split personality disorder because they do – my voices do have personalities (.) they do have – and very different personalities

Because Victoria experiences her voices as people she knows, her social interactions in daily life become complicated by the emotions aroused when talking with her voices. Although some conversations with her voices can act as a rehearsal for later actual socialising (2.8, 35–40), Victoria is distressed by their introverted nature. Another function they appear to serve is as a means of resolving distressing or inconclusive interactions that have taken place earlier with friends or family members. In these conversations with herself Victoria both speaks to and speaks for the voice corresponding to the actual person she has been talking with. However, such compensatory ‘retakes’ or recapitulations with an alternative outcome do not then lead to Victoria resuming the actual interaction to rectify how the situation has been left. Instead, the substitute conversation with her voices is experienced as a real-time continuation (4.56, 228–234). In particular, she is disturbed at how they may substitute for the genuine experience of engaging with other people who can offer her real relationship
(2.8, 33–55).

As regards descriptions of her own making, most of the noun groups further construe voices as acts of communication (74%, n = 118).

Victoria talks about both conversations with her voices and her voices as conversations. For instance, in terms of the former, it was due to encouragement received from her voices about some pieces of jewellery she had made that she decided to go to TAFE\textsuperscript{30} \((1.90–91, 428–431)\). Sometimes, a specific voice often becomes secondary to the act of communication itself. Indeed, both Victoria and her voice as individuals become subsumed into an interpersonal activity that entails mutual exchange \((1.66–69, 338–345)\). Furthermore, she is also able to circumvent the need to identify a voice as an entity by solely referring to her experience as the focus of a two-way cooperation. Here, ‘conversational’ implies that what is jointly generated enfolds the separateness of those involved \((2.28–29, 173–200)\).

Her use of ‘conversational’ \((5.27, 79–80)\) confirms that her voices are far more than auditory phenomena but are active turn-takers in and contributors to a communicative act from which she is inseparable. This is a profound distinction from being referred to as merely ‘voices’. As an experience of shared communication, describing her voices in terms of reciprocal acts of spoken interaction emphasises her own participation, albeit unwillingly when she was very ill. When her voices were less severe, Victoria’s reference to conversations suggests a routine reliance on her voices in which they filled a personal need for emotional support and

\textsuperscript{30} TAFE (Tertiary and Further Education) is a provider of vocational tertiary courses for adults in Australia.
companionship. In fact, conversation is described as a key factor through which Victoria’s sense of a relationship with them developed (1.83–88, 401–413).

Victoria’s experience of the conversational exchange is highly complex as she also verbally identifies with the voices who personify the people in her life. She becomes her voices in interaction with herself, experiencing herself through her voices as both hearer and speaker. Victoria in this sense is not so much spoken to as talked through (1.13–18, 48–65):

1.13, 48-51 sometimes it’s uncontrollable where the voices in my head come out of my mouth and it’s like (She moves both hands to and fro in front of her mouth) two conversations I’m having with myself and I can’t control it

1.18, 61-65 on my long walks I’d just hear chatter in my head the whole time then after a few years of not being medicated it became…double conversations while I was talking like my head would say something and I’d say something back but it would all come out of my mouth at the same time

Victoria’s references to ‘head’ encapsulate the functions of thinking, hearing and talking, as well as construing this part of the body that is identified with the mind as one that is independent of her control. The head thus becomes a separate, active entity whose physical and hierarchical relationship with the body as whole has been severed. As a result, it is experienced as a dangerous rogue element, a dissident constituent of one’s physical and mental economy that has become radicalised. However, although the head sometimes appears to act as a dominant personality, it is really the mouthpiece of the voices inside (1.20, 87–89; 1.28, 142–143; 4.163, 618–629). She thus represents her ability to perceive and evaluate reality as being disconnected from a cohesive relationship with the rest of her personal experience. This alternative to ‘voices’ or ‘conversations’ may be influenced by how others referred to the apparent source of her behavioural issues (4.163, 626–629). Here the head both stands for a specific part (region of the brain) generalised to the whole, and by the same token diminishes the person as a homogeneous entity to the level of a faulty body part. As a metonym for the control centre of the person, it further suggests an area inaccessible to another person’s understanding:

2.45, 445-448 it’s a bit strange but you know you (she lets out a sigh) … it’s all (she shakes her head and lets out another sigh) … it’s so hard to explain (.) it’s just really is because it’s so confusing to be (she raises her hands towards her head) inside my head (.) to try help someone else see inside my head
Mark: ‘It’s my constant companion’

Mark clearly situates his experiences of hearing a voice within the psychiatric paradigm. Nearly two-thirds (63%, n = 106) of the noun groups used to refer to his voice are clinical in origin, with the remaining third (33%, n = 56) appearing to be more illustrative of his own personal interpretations. In fact his opening response to my question ‘Can you tell me about what you hear?’ in our first interview lasts five minutes and involves a dense combination of both clinical language (e.g. ‘auditory phenomenon’, ‘tangential thinking’) and formal terms for types of communication, such as ‘dialogue’ and ‘commentary’, which have been adopted by psychiatry (1.4, 12–21).

It is ironic that considering what Mark hears is the sound of his own voice, he is the only hearer whose use of ‘voice’ is almost negligible (3%, n = 5), preferring to use clinical terms to describe an experience that is arguably more personal as regards phonology than for any of the other participants. For the most part, he uses ‘voices’ in regard to other people’s auditory experiences (2.18, 61–63) but not his own. He prefers to compactly summarise his experience in clinical terms as an ‘auditory phenomenon’ (1.4, 5–7) and ‘an internal dialogue’ (1.4, 14–15) in which he hears the sound of his own voice (4.7, 20). He emphasises that he does not experience it as an external voice (1.4, 38–43; 2.164, 491–495) but as a ‘commentary’ (1.4, 17) that is closely associated with events and concerns in his life, particularly if they are a source of anxiety or stress. However, despite the currency of the term ‘commentary’ in psychiatry for designating types of voices (APA, 2013), Mark’s voice does not merely describe his actions but engages in a range of speech acts that interact.
with his activities and emotions.

Mark also refers to his voice as a ‘thought echo’ (1.18, 107) in which what he thinks is repeated aloud as ‘an auditory echo’ (1.20, 114). Hearing his own voice echoing his thoughts appears to subsume the common experience of thinking aloud (2.12–14, 42–46). Mark several times refers to the rapidity of his spoken thought processes as a form of assault, using such terms as ‘a barrage or a bombardment of ideas’ (2.31, 119). However, it would seem that the echo is only heard when thinking is experienced as a mental activity in the form of inner speech. He did not report hearing his voice while talking to me (1.135–136, 432–433) but it appeared to remain as ‘background noise (…) a constant phenomenon’ (1.138, 435). Associated with these thoughts is a strong ‘emotive component’ (1.49, 182 & 189) which assumes a more recognisably vocal form when it verbalises ‘nihilistic thinking’ (1.12, 89) and is a feature of post-traumatic stress disorder (1.49, 187–189). These are ‘typically uh focused on the ‘I’’ (1.88, 292–292), and their grammatical construction in the first-person (1.63, 233–236) may account for the lack of commands. Mark is very specific about the clinical origin of his voice and does not subscribe to any delusional beliefs concerning it reflecting the ‘controlling influences of others’ (1.83, 282–284)

1.86, 289 They are my own thoughts my own-my own voice

Given his previous work as a psychiatric nurse (2.131–133, 409–417), Mark appears to take a professional interest in his voice, such as wanting to clarify such distinctions with his psychiatrist as to whether the voice he hears was a ‘pseudohallucination’ (1.4, 23–43). Furthermore, he typically draws on the psychiatric lexicon himself to describe the behaviour of his voice. For example, he describes how his voice becomes distressing when it is ‘congruent’ with his thoughts and emotions but ‘incongruent’ in terms of exaggerating any anxiety and stress he is experiencing as uncontrollable feelings of pessimism and gloom (2.27, 102–107; 2.64, 198–200) leading to ‘suicidal ideation’ (2.199, 602–603).

Generally, Mark’s preferred mode of talking about his experiences is to move between specific clinical terms and formal categories of speech, but with the former being used twice as often. On the other hand, the latter account for over half of Mark’s total number of apparently self-generated references. The remaining are mostly taken up by descriptions that focus on Evaluation, Sound, and Mental activity.
The category of Mental activity in particular demonstrates Mark’s creative sense of description in contrast to his substantial adoption of such conventional clinical terms as ‘loosened thought association’. This occurs in our second interview in his reference to the sudden intrusion of audible thoughts that clashed with the line of thinking he was actively pursuing:

2.32 Keith Yes when you talked about nonsense can you give an example of any nonsense that you hear?
2.33 Mark Aah uh sometimes I might uh – (Mark mutters to himself) nonsense nonsense – oh it’s just a-an irrelevant thought which is just suddenly clanging – comes over – I call that ‘clanger’ ‘clanging’ (He starts laughing)
2.34 Keith Why’s it called that?
2.35 Mark Uh clanging other words that process is-is suddenly derived without any context to it
2.36 Keith Comes out of the blue?
2.37 Mark Clang yeah I call the ‘clanger’ so I call that uh nons-nonsensical nons-nonsense-sensible uh thinking process uh I don’t really don’t go into questioning where or why that come from – I’ll come dismiss it

This onomatopoeic coinage\(^3\) is of course sound-based but its core meaning appears to be a type of thought that is jarring because of its irrelevance or absurdity, hence its categorisation as Mental rather than Sound.

In contrast with the patient interviewed by Leudar et al. (1997, p. 891), although Mark represents hearing the sound of his own voice echoing his thoughts as an impersonal phenomenon, he still relates to it in terms of his own person rather than as an ‘external voice’ (2.159, 483). Furthermore, his experience of his voice construes his sense of self as a

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\(^3\) It is possible that Mark’s use of ‘clanger’ may be related to the word association disturbance known as ‘clang association’ (Othmer & Othmer, 2002) in which the sound of a word triggers the use of other words that rhyme but are unrelated in meaning.
dialogical process that is interactive in its dynamic (Fernyhough, 2004; Perona-Garcelán et al., 2015). As a result, when Mark analyses his experiences, his combination of formal terms to describe the connection between his thought processes and the emotions they provoke makes for a complex account:

1.41, 151-154  it’s—it’s something (Mark uses both hands quite animatedly now) of concern which … which translates into a monologued sort of dialogue the two are I believe inextricably connected (.) I may be wrong but it’s the way I feel it

His voice as ‘dialogue’ appears to be related to hearing his thoughts about situations causing him stress and worry (1.45, 168–173; 2.14, 47–48). In the course of our two interviews, he elaborates his experience in terms of a range of incongruous relationships in which language strains to accommodate his descriptions. In addition to monologue and dialogue (1.41, 153), other pairs of terms that are not so much opposites but complementary in Mark’s experience are thought and emotion (1.130, 417–420), qualitative and quantitative (1.118, 393–394) and ‘self and I and what you call “the other”’ (2.121, 386), which for me wrestle in a headlock of conflicting meanings:

1.124-130, 409-420   it’s like a marriage couple (…) (He takes a breath) Ah…..Well the sentiment also accompanies- accompanies thought and the thought accompanies the emotion (…) the quantitative yes that’s the thought the dialogue the qualitative component is the emotive factor that accompanies that like a married couple (.) They are – the two go together I do not separate

The inability to separate what is ‘inextricably connected’ (1.41, 154), the impossibility of distinguishing between what is ‘part and parcel of one with me’ (2.14, 45–46) run through Mark’s account in defiance of his recourse to clinical terms. Psychiatric nomenclature stand like conspicuous signposts on sharp bends in the road but the winding connections of associations in between are disorientating.

Mark makes a more surprising departure in our interviews when he evaluates his ‘auditory phenomenon’ in familiar, almost affectionate terms as ‘a constant friend (.) it’s my constant companion’ (2.9, 23) before relating his voice more intimately still to himself (2.105, 349–362):

2.109, 360-362   but the point is I have become used and familiar with-with that dialogue so I find it hard to envisage uh a world without it…it’s become part of me…

Having been formerly identified as an impersonal perceptual object in our first meeting, Mark here characterises the voice he hears as a close form of relationship. From being merely a sound that was both separate and nonhuman, he now emphasises its connection to him through its personal proximity and reliability. Earlier he explains the active role his
voice is taking in originating and dictating ideas for him to write down like a scribe:

2.11, 26-27 Well it’s um at the moment it’s like um how would you say – what’s the word – a dictator-dictatium or would you – what’s the word?

For the time being his voice is playing a constructive function in helping him to formulate the content and wording of the business project he has been working on (2.9, 23–30).

There is no one way for Mark to fully capture the complex nature of his experiences. Instead, he moves confidently among the different ways he has of referring to his voice, alternating between clinical, interactional and more personal forms of description. Arguably Mark’s use of clinical terminology serves to maintain his self-esteem by reminding him, as well as me, of his previous work as a psychiatric nurse (2.131–133, 409–417). This connection enables him to explain his personal experiences from the rational knowledge base of a professional, and so distances him to some extent from the stigma of also being a patient.

Mark’s tolerance of his voice has increased as it has become more recognisable and predictable. His admission in no way diminishes the bleak emotions and stressful thoughts that are often associated with it. However, his comments do suggest that underlying his experience is a sense that in coming to terms with its behaviour he has accepted both its positive and negative aspects as integral to his self-identity. This acceptance appears to be different to earlier experiences in which he identified with his experiences to the degree that he did not realise he was involuntarily thinking aloud but assumed that they were ‘a response to worry and concerns in my life’ (1.6, 54–55).

During our two interviews, I came to sense the importance for Mark of clinical and abstract language that serves to mark him out as a health care professional rather than a patient. His knowledge of the medical lexicon and discussions with psychiatrists signal that he is still a card-carrying member of the community from which he was painfully excluded. I began to appreciate that speaking with authority on his experiences was instrumental in helping to restore his self-respect given the humiliating treatment he experienced at the hands of a profession that he feels should not knowingly have put his mental health at risk.

Nevertheless, I find it hard to break through his use of intellectual terms for talking about his experiences to get to him as a person. It is as if he expects such words in their very concept-laden sense to do all the work of explaining for him (or obviate the need for further discussion) when I am trying to engage with him personally to understand his story rather than the concepts behind the categories.
The variety of descriptive language Mark uses serves to illustrate how he draws on two different sets of interpretive frameworks. With analytical explanations Mark attempts to identify and objectify his experience as discrete elements that can be accounted for in isolation. Although these features of his account exemplify the “illness/symptom narratives” identified by Chin et al. (2009, p. 12) to reject a sense of relationship with voices, Mark does not solely frame his voice within this paradigm. When he speaks from his own original experience, he has recourse to metaphors and analogies that allow him to clarify its personal meaning and significance. Mark’s relationship with his voice, which he readily acknowledges as ‘part of me’ (1.106, 345; 2.109, 361–362), is one that he cannot imagine living without. Similarly, Nayani and David (1996) found that hearers became attached to voices they had heard for a substantial time. Pathological terms combine with formal categories of communication, for example ‘monologue’ and ‘dialogue’, to produce an account that is dense and often obscure but occasionally relieved with such simple figures of speech that give a more human insight into how he relates to his lived experience.

**Summary**

The present analysis maps the range of interpretations hearers draw on in their efforts to make their experiences understandable to themselves and communicable to others (see Appendix 5 for more information). The examination of the noun groups hearers use to refer to their experiences provides meaningful insights into how they represent these phenomena. This is especially evident in the individual formulations that arose in the context of interviews. Even the use of the generic term ‘voice’ allows for a variety of nuanced modifications, associations and distinctions. In addition, hearers vary markedly in their adoption of clinical terms. By and large, hearers in this study do not refer to their experiences in relation to a generalised, pathological paradigm but as sensory manifestations that carry personal significance.

Key findings include:

1. Nearly half (46%) of the total number of references to what hearers experienced involved the term ‘voice’. Just over a quarter of references (27%) were expressions of their own making. Victoria (46%) and Shirley (33%) included the highest proportion of self-generated descriptions in their accounts. Victoria is the only participant whose own informal references exceed her use of ‘voice’ whereas Mark’s recourse to clinical terms (63%) far outweighs those of any other participant. Only Shirley and Victoria identify
their different voices by name with substantive entities or actual people. In David’s case, his use of a name is a way of mocking his voice.

2. Participants differed in how they generally construed their voices: supernatural forces (Amy), sub-personalities (Shirley), self-conversation (Mark and Victoria), stress indicator (Joan), butt of in-group humour (David) and engrossing stories (Darby).

3. Nine themed distinctions emerged, with the largest groups identified being forms of communication (43%), followed at some remove by person (17%) and mental activity (14%). All participants referred to their experiences as acts of communication but Victoria, Darby and Mark proportionally made the most prominent use of this description. Only Darby does not refer to his voice as an identifiable person or being. Joan is the one participant who wholly defers to more clinical-sounding terms when describing her voices as forms of mental behavior, providing no vernacular descriptions of her own.

4. The majority of participants made use of five or more of the nine thematic categories in descriptions of their own devising. Shirley’s account is the most wide-ranging in its use of idiomatic references, featuring all but one of the themes identified (8), followed by Amy and Mark (7).

5. A number of different frameworks are invoked to interpret voices that broadly speaking span from Darby and David’s outright denial of their significance to various attributions of functional meaning for the others. In the cases of Joan and Amy, negative religious associations are central to their understanding of their voices. For Shirley, Victoria and Mark, on the other hand, their voices represent a diverse set of experiences which often appear to enact an interiorised social world characterised by interaction and negotiation as well as emotional disruption and connection.

Nevertheless, such glimpses into how hearers refer to their experiences are of limited value. A fuller representation is afforded by a detailed analysis of the language participants use to quote or report what they hear their voices say. The next chapter examines how voices interact with their hearers.
5 How do voices interact with hearers?

This chapter examines each hearer’s account for specific instances where the verbal content of voices is formulated. A total of 757 individual clauses, independent, dependent and embedded were identified and coded. From this data set, 596 sentences were classified according to one of the four speech functions: statement, directive, question and offer. The latter figure is lower than the clause count as more than one clause may combine with another to form a complete speech function. Equally, a single speech function may include linked speech acts (Legg & Gilbert, 2006, p. 525), as in the case of statement comprising a prohibition followed by a threat. Speech functions were then analysed in terms of speech act and compared within groups to either confirm or reassign their classification.

The results in this chapter are organised in two parts: the data as a whole and then detailed data for each participant in turn. First the total distribution of speech functions is followed by a summary of the overall distribution of speech acts organised according to the speech function category in which they occur. Discussion of the pragmatics of each type of speech act follows the order of statement, directive and question. No examples of the speech function of ‘offer’ were recorded. To recognise the contribution made by the grammatical constructions of direct and indirect speech, speech acts are further categorised according to their framing as quotes and reports respectively. The overall analysis thus allows for a dual consideration of each utterance in terms of its interpersonal function as a communicative act and the grammatical form chosen by the hearer to construct what they heard as either a quote or a report in their account.

This framework of speech functions is then used to present data for each participant’s account of their voices. An overview of the speech functions featured and their component speech acts is presented before examining examples of the use of speech acts by voices. The distinction between direct and indirect speech is again used as a means of organising the data to allow for observations concerning the role of quotes and reports in hearers’ accounts (See Appendix 6 for further details).
Overview of how voices interact

In terms of Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2014) framework, the speech function most frequently represented in hearers accounts was statements (70%, n = 418). The only other speech function that was substantially used was directives, accounting for a quarter (25%, n = 147) of the total. The remainder consisted of a small number of questions (3%, n = 18) and minor clauses (2%, n = 14). As minor clauses typically function as an ellipted (abbreviated) form of statement, they are added to the category of statements in the following analyses. Hearers provided no instances of the fourth category – offers – where a voices is heard offering to provide an object or perform an action for the benefit of the hearer or another person. In Victoria’s case, however, on two occasions a voice (God) arguably responded to her request for help with an offer (1.46, 245; 3.25, 81). These have been interpreted as confirming or reinforcing his consent to do what she had asked.

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32 Total percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.
Statements & minor clauses: speech acts

Of the ten broad categories of speech acts proposed, the largest combined group is that of claims and justifications, representing a quarter (26%, n = 111) of the total number of statements and minor clauses. Overall, hearers’ accounts give prominence to references to voices laying claim to knowledge about the situation hearers are in and the behaviour of other people they are interacting with. These are invariably negative in content or factually questionable. Subsumed within this group are claims that voices make about themselves which justify their actions or apparent inaction.
Overall, the grouped speech acts of the hearers are: accuse, blame and criticise (18%, n = 77); insult (17%, n = 73); and plot, threaten and warn (15%, n = 64). The behaviours referred to in hearers’ accounts are mostly bullying and hostile, ranging from verbal attacks on the hearer’s personal character and abilities to intimidating remarks concerning their physical safety, as well as cases in which voices profess to predict only dire consequences for any action hearers undertake. Together, with the addition of complaints and protestations (3%, n = 11) and spurious claims and self-justifications (26%, n = 111), these negative speech acts account for over three-quarters (79%, n = 336) of the references in the form of statements and minor clauses attributed to voices. Voices are therefore overwhelmingly represented in terms of allegedly superior knowledge, judgemental attitude and aggressive behaviour. However, a number of speech acts are less negative in their apparent intent, such as acknowledge, express emotions, self-assert, announce and identify (14%, n = 53), as well as a small proportion of positive examples of voice content, that is consent, allow, praise, encourage and reassure (9%, n = 37).

Of the more prominent types of speech act in individual hearer’s accounts, claims clearly features in Darby’s account (41%, n = 7) and Amy’s (41%, n = 70), with the addition of justifications. Insults are plainly evident in David’s (56%, n = 38) and Joan’s (30%, n = 6) references to their voices while Shirley (30%, n = 25) and Amy (22%, n = 37) include examples of accusing, blaming or criticising. A substantial proportion of the accounts of Joan (30%, n = 6) and Amy (26%, n = 44) variously contain examples of hearing their voices plot, threaten or warn. While Amy’s account is clearly indicated across these major categories, Victoria’ account is the most diverse (with the possible exception of Shirley), containing an even distribution of speech acts in smaller proportions. On the other hand, the accounts of Darby and Mark are conspicuous for including no samples of hearing their voices behave in any of these hostile ways.
Statements & minor clauses: speech acts (direct speech)

The form of speech frame for representing statements shows that the distribution of speech acts represented through direct speech closely resembles the distribution of speech acts represented through the combined use of direct and indirect speech (see chart above for Statements & minor clauses: speech acts [grouped]).

The accounts of individual hearers, with the exception of Darby, follow a similar pattern in that the distribution of speech acts (statements) using direct speech resembles the overall
distribution of speech acts (statements) using both direct and indirect speech.

**Speech acts (indirect speech)**

Although a less rich picture emerges in the use of indirect speech, the categories of speech act highlighted above are also evident despite the lower numerical total of individual speech acts reported. Nonetheless, compared with direct speech, more indirect speech is used to report claims and justifications (32%, n = 47); accusations, blame and criticisms (20%, n = 29); and threats and warnings (25%, n = 37). There was less preference for reporting (10%, n = 15) than quoting insulting remarks (21%, n = 58).
A generally less complex account of hearers’ voices is apparent in the use of indirect speech for individual hearers. However, a number of potentially suggestive differences in the use of speech frame are noticeable. The most obvious are: Darby’s singular reliance on indirect speech while Mark is the opposite; the greater proportion of threats and warnings (41%, \( n = 5 \)) and acts of identification (33%, \( n = 4 \)) in Joan’s account; and a higher representation of negative interactions in Shirley’s. The accounts of Joan and Victoria are the least limited in range, with Victoria including a small number of positive interactions.
**Directives**

**Speech acts**

By virtue of their overall speech function, directives would readily align with Berry et al.’s (2012) thematic category of controlling voices. Distinctions in type and degree of intervention enacted by voices are revealing. For instance, a substantial proportion of all directives referred to are regulatory in function (44%, n = 65) in that hearers were told how to act across a range of different situations. This finding accords with Leudar et al.’s (1997) identification of ‘regulatives’ in their analysis. The attempts at behaviour control identified in this study cover such trivial actions as Shirley being instructed as to what she could wear on the one hand to undertakings that require a greater commitment of energy, as Victoria being ordered to release refugees from detention. However, in addition to these are orders to perform actions that precede explicit directives to self-harm, which have been classified as commands. The logical opposite of incitements to act, namely prohibitions, were referred to nearly half as many times (20%, n = 30). Together these account for nearly two-thirds of all references to directives. Specific commands to harm either oneself or another were referred to less frequently or repeatedly, accounting for 18% (n = 26) of the total. These include general provocations for hearers to take their own life, such as those recalled by David, to more specified commands, as in Joan’s account. In contrast, a range of positive forms of directive, including giving advice or reassurance, represent some 15% (n = 23) overall.

![Directives: speech acts (grouped)](image)

Regulatory directives feature across all hearer’s accounts, with prohibitions the second most widespread. In Darby’s case, all references to his voices fall into these two categories, while
regulatory directives form the greater proportion of any type of directive referred to by Amy and Victoria. Mark only refers to regulatory directives. References to commands to harm are particularly prevalent in Joan’s and David’s accounts. Joan’s account is notable for including references to her voices inciting her to insult other people. Although Victoria includes only a few specific examples of commands to self-harm, she is the only hearer who appears to have acted on them. In terms of hearing positive directives, only Shirley and Victoria speak of their voices behaving in a recognisably supportive manner, while Amy’s examples of reassurance are rather ambiguous in function.

Speech acts: direct speech

Some 59% (n = 87) of the 147 directives identified are represented as direct speech. The distribution of speech acts across directives in a quoted form is comparable to the overall distribution of speech acts across directives using both direct and indirect speech. The only notable differences are the preference for commands to self-harm and the positive behaviours of advising and reassuring to be quoted while the opposite holds for prohibitions.
Similarly, the distribution of speech acts across hearers represented through direct speech is comparable to the total pattern of directive speech acts using both direct and indirect speech.

**Speech acts: indirect speech**

The difference in terms of the pattern of distribution of speech acts functioning as directives that are represented as direct speech with those represented as indirect speech is less pronounced. In particular, regulatory directives are comparable proportionally across both types of speech frame. Prohibitions mostly tended to be reported with some variation for all
other types of speech act.

Differences are more conspicuous when distributions are compared across hearers, although the substantially lower number of reported directives should be borne in mind. Nonetheless, a distinction was evident in the cases of Joan, Shirley and Amy between their use of direct and indirect speech. For instance, Joan shows a preference for reporting prohibitions and regulatory directives. By contrast, most noticeably, Mark provides no indirect speech examples of directives. Beyond these cursory comments, however, the number of reported directives is overall too low to suggest any further tendencies apart from noting that Darby’s and Victoria’s preferences for quoting or reporting speech acts functioning as directives are more evenly distributed. Moreover, they are the only hearers who use indirect speech primarily to represent directives.
Questions: speech acts (direct speech)

Questions account for 3% (n = 18) of the total number of communications attributed to voices, with two-thirds of these involving voices asking for information (67%, n = 12). Cases where questions appear to primarily function to provoke hearers through the use of sarcasm or intimidation, often without requiring an answer, have been categorised as performing more of an interpersonal role (33%, n = 6).
Although Mark was available for only two interviews, questions feature more noticeably in his account than in those of hearers who were interviewed four or five times. Furthermore, all seven questions he recalls clearly exemplify a deductive process that reflects Mark’s concern to find rational and practical answers to his problems. By contrast, the one or two questions cited by David, Amy and Victoria are overtly negative in purpose. Shirley refers to her voices asking questions of both types but primarily of the informational type. However, unlike Joan and Mark, the questions she hears presume that she can supply the missing answers herself. In her case, the apparent ‘information gap’ exists on the side of her voices, not on hers or in part.

The two major categories of questions are made up of a small number of speech acts. Informational questions are classified by the terms ask/give information, query and suggest/explore. These all represent alternative forms of eliciting information. The general category of provoke is used to capture the overall function of questions used to needle and disturb hearers. All of the interpersonal questions identified (33%, n = 6) are negative in their apparent intent to cause emotional distress.
Informational questions, on the other hand, represent a more varied usage. The acts of asking for information (22%, n = 4) to be supplied and querying a proposition (22%, n = 4) as a way of testing its truth value are the most represented, followed by examples of a more exploratory and reflective enquiry (17%, n = 3) that signify the process of formulating ideas. The solitary example of giving information is provided by Joan in the form of the question stem “Did you know that…?” (2.20, 55–56) which ostensibly asks a question but in point of fact is used to inform.

Mark’s voices are the most constructive in their use of questions to help clarify his behaviour and elicit new ideas. The questions David, Amy and Victoria refer to are all forms of sarcastic taunting. Shirley’s voices for the most part appear to lack the knowledge she possesses and so do not use questions to exert power but to admit ignorance and even presume trust.

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33 Double quotation marks indicate direct speech (i.e. actual quotes) while single quotation marks indicate indirect speech (i.e. hearer’s report).
Grammatically, in terms of their construction most are open questions (61%, n = 11) formed with the use of a ‘wh-’ question word. The remaining 39% (n = 7) are closed polarity questions using the primary auxiliary verbs ‘be’ or ‘do’. The fundamental difference between the two being that open questions do not initially determine the type or extent of answer required (Huddleston, 2002b, p. 853). The person answering is in theory allowed greater freedom or scope to respond in order to provide content the enquirer is lacking. Closed polarity questions explicitly indicate that a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer is required although this constraint cannot be enforced and may be met with an answer that is comparable in length or content to that for a ‘wh-’ question.
Importantly, the grammatical division between open ‘wh-’ and closed polarity questions does not necessarily align with the functional division of information and interpersonal questions. This is evident in this study in the rhetorical use of open ‘wh-’ questions to provoke hearers. Although grammatically these questions appear to invite the exchange of information, they arguably function to embarrass or silence the hearer rather than to initiate dialogue. Equally, the use of closed polarity questions to query and introduce new information appears intended to open up and develop interactions with hearers.

![Question: grammatical form](image)

Having considered each of the speech functions in turn, especially in regards to the particular speech acts pressed into service, how these speech functions are personally

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experienced by each hearer is now discussed.

**Joan: ‘They often give instructions rather than opinions’**

Joan foregrounds a higher proportion of threats and warnings, acts of identification and insults than found across the group of participants. These three types of speech act occur in equal amounts, constituting nearly a third (29%) each of the statements she attributes to her voices. Although statements constitute a substantial part (40%) of her account, directives represent over half (53%) of all examples of voice content. The largest group are commands to self-harm (44%) followed by prohibitions (32%). These two speech acts are also proportionally more dominant in Joan’s account than in those of the group of hearers as a whole. In terms of speech framing, she marginally prefers to represent her voices through direct speech. This is particularly evident in her references to commands to self-harm, which are all quoted.

**Speech function overview**

Over half (53%, n = 25) of the speech functions found across direct and indirect speech are directives. These are followed by statements (45%, n = 21) with the inclusion of the two statement-like minor clauses, and one solitary question (2%).

![Joan: speech function overview (direct & indirect speech)](image)

**Statements & minor clauses: direct & indirect speech**

Most of the speech acts Joan recalls are very aggressive in content. Three types of statement are represented equally each with a third (29%, n = 6) as follows: threats and warnings; highly personal insults aimed at Joan and others; and acts of identification in which Joan’s
voices profess to know either her ‘true’ identity or that of other people. These identifications are largely derogatory in nature, being either close to an insult or alleging a shameful fact.

**Directives: direct & indirect speech**

The clear majority of directives Joan cites are life-threatening commands to harm herself (44%, n = 11). These are followed by commands forbidding her from talking about her voices (32%, n = 8). The remaining directives also mostly relate to acts of speaking. These are evenly divided each at 12% (n = 3) between commands to insult other people and instructions concerning her behaviour. Proportionally, references to verbal behaviour are more prevalent in Joan’s account than in any other.
Questions: direct speech

The one question Joan refers to frames a spurious claim using the rhetorical device of an enquiry, in which the question asked actually supplies her with information. What is implicitly requested is confirmation of Joan’s belief in this sharing of gossip.

2.20, 54-57 and there was a night when um um this voice came to me and said (Joan lowers her voice) “Did you know that Julie is really a whore at night?” and I thought ‘oh right that’s incredible to think that of Julie’

Use of direct & indirect speech

Overall, Joan primarily uses direct speech to recount what her voices say (54%, n = 25), slightly more than her use of indirect speech (46%, n = 21). This distribution of direct and indirect speech is the least disparate of all the participants, with the exception of Amy (56%, n = 95; 44%, n = 74).

Over half (53%, n = 25) of these speech functions are directives, which are more commonly represented using direct speech (64%, n = 16) than indirect speech (36%, n = 9). By contrast, the reverse holds with statements being more often represented through indirect speech (62%, n = 13) than direct (38%, n = 8), the latter including minor clauses.
**Statements & minor clauses: direct speech**

Most of the eight statements, including minor clauses, that Joan quotes are insulting (63%, n = 5). In addition are single references to her voices making threats and claims, as well as one act of identification.

**Insults**

The language used is offensive and specifically abusive of women, and takes the form of either a full but short sentence, such as “she’s a real bitch” (1.62, 233), or a minor clause consisting of a noun group, as with “You dumb bitch” (2.198, 571).
Identify

One instance has been analysed as a form of identification rather than an insult, which is accompanied by a prophetic declaration of her fate:

1.62, 228-229 he sort of says (Joan speaks in a low guttural voice) “you’re a child of the devil— you’re going to burn in hell” that sort of voice.

Given Joan’s regular involvement in Christian activities this assertion seems to carry a more sinister meaning than a vindictive attack on her character. It implies that she is innately evil and thus already sentenced to eternal damnation, according to the religious force of the threat which follows.

**Statements: indirect speech**

The indirect speech reports that Joan recalls primarily involve acts of identification (38%, n = 5) and threats and warnings (38%, n = 5). This is the reverse of her use of direct speech, which mainly represents insults, with quoted threats and acts of identification being in the minority. Joan gives no examples of her voices blaming or criticising her, although she briefly refers to her voices ‘accusing (her) of certain things’ (1.49, 185).
Identify (hearer & other)

Four of the five acts of identification concern other people and in content appear to vary between a malign form of gossip and the sharing of confidential information. These were heard during a Bible study group and refer to two of the other discussion participants being “a whore” and “an undercover police officer” (2.9, 22–27). The solitary reference to Joan herself concerns her being “a child of the devil” (1.62, 227–228).

Warn

In the case of Austin, the ‘undercover police officer’, the disclosure of his secret identity later leads to warnings that she would get arrested by him if she stepped out of line during Bible study (2.20, 62). Threats of inescapable hellfire (1.62, 228; 3.61, 148) are reported without a surrounding context but accompany the assertion that she is from the devil (1.62, 227–228).

Directives: direct speech

All the commands to self-harm that Joan recalls are represented as direct speech (69%, n = 11). The few other directives quoted are either commands to verbally abuse another (19%, n = 3) or prohibitions on her freedom to tell anyone else about hearing voices (13%, n = 2).
Joan proportionately and numerically quotes the most commands to self-harm but this is due to her re-enacting the experience of hearing her voices repeating their directives in a manner suggestive of an endless loop (1.169, 502–505; 2.184–186, 527–531). Joan’s voices tell her to perform actions that are inherently lethal but do not explicitly tell her to kill herself. For instance, there appears to be no context for the self-harming acts that Joan’s voices demand. Clearly, acting on the commands to “crash the car” (1.169, 505; 2.184, 527), stand in the middle of the O-Bahn34 (3.80, 188) and “take an overdose” (2.186, 530) would constitute attempted suicide. The first is particularly critical as its immediacy constitutes an ‘opportune’ act, which takes advantage of a current activity, while the other two require Joan to initiate the activity. Furthermore, the repeated command to “take an overdose” (2.186, 530) appears to have its parallel in her summary of her clinical treatment:

1.129, 389-391 (She uses both hands to show pills being thrown at her) “Take another pill=take another pill=take another pill” I was just a zombie (. ) in and out of hospital and losing control of myself and… it wasn’t good

These directives are not represented as acts of punishment for earlier mishaps.

Notwithstanding the fact that these commands are directed at Joan, they avoid identifying her as the target. Joan’s personal involvement is represented as only a one-sided participation in which she is the agent rather than the casualty. The outcome of the action is

34 The O-Bahn is an express route for buses in Adelaide. This is an additional directive that Darby gives a minimal account of, out of deference to Joan’s reluctance to talk about her voices in our third interview. Whether this command was also heard as a series of repeated provocations as in the case of the other directives to self-harm was not indicated.
thus primarily one of performing rather than undergoing. What her voices omit is that she is the victim and potentially others.

**Command to insult**
A small subset of hostile commands identified are those in which voices incite Joan to verbally abuse another person. These are all represented as direct speech quotes (19%, n = 3). Joan is the only hearer who cites these experiences, which typically occur in such socially prescribed situations as Bible study groups where the stress she already feels participating in discussions is exacerbated by the fear of swearing in a devotional setting. Although these are few in number and clearly not as serious as commands to self-harm (1.67–71, 239–252; 2.190, 551–552), they represent an act of aggression that is personally directed against people she knows. Furthermore, it is a command she has carried out on at least one occasion, causing considerable embarrassment (1.67–76, 239–259).

**Directives: indirect speech**
Prohibitions were mostly represented in the form of indirect speech reports (67%, n = 6) rather than direct speech. As with the above two instances of direct speech prohibitions, Joan is strictly forbidden to talk about her experiences. The remaining directives (33%, n = 3) consist of coercive directions governing her general behaviour as well as one example of a form of commission in that Joan is instructed to ‘(look) for a messenger’ (3.122, 325–326).

Prohibit
Prohibitions chiefly occur in the context of the allegations heard during a Bible study group
that one of the participants was a “whore” while another was an “undercover police officer” (2.9, 22-27). Because of the danger of getting arrested, Joan is ordered to stay silent and take no part in the discussion (2.20, 62-65). As Joan confides to her partner,

2.248, 713-714 And there has been times Darby I’ve not been allowed to speak to anyone about anything

Darby was readily able to understand this as he also had been forbidden to disclose his voices to anybody else.

**Shirley: ‘I don't get the "It's your fault that happened" all the time’**

Shirley’s voices were undergoing a major change seemingly for the better at the time of our interviews. Most notably, Shirley refers to a number of positive communications in which she hears her voices reassuring her (21%, n = 17) as she tries to deal with the emotional trauma of being a victim of sexual abuse. Shirley attributes her experiences of being consoled to a combination of negative and positive sources. On the one hand, some of the reassurances appear to have a Pollyanna quality, in that they aim to distract her from managing emotional distress with childish appeals to escape into a mawkish optimism. Shirley credits these feelings of avoidance to a voice she calls Denial (Diary 3, 11). Although this voice can behave in a counterproductive way when Shirley is trying to come to terms with the trauma of childhood incest, Denial also enables Shirley to block out pain from the past (1.16, 211–223). In fact, Shirley acknowledges that ‘I’ve spent a lot of my life in sort of a denial state which is pretty standard’ (2.110, 624–625). Equally, these reassuring communications are interpreted as evidence of a protective presence that plays a practical role in both relieving her anxiety about her behaviour during fugue states and helping her to recall forgotten details (2.100, 573-584). The interplay of denial and reassurance evident in a number of the examples Shirley provides makes these interactions a complex behaviour. The account given by Shirley compares with Victoria’s as the most varied as she describes her continual attempts to accommodate the demands and individual perspectives of her voices into her everyday life.

**Speech function overview**

Statements, including one minor clause (71%, n = 82), account for the most frequent speech function represented across direct and indirect speech. Directives (24%, n = 28) make up nearly a quarter, with five questions (4%) comprising the remainder.
Statements: direct & indirect speech

Shirley provides the second most diverse sample of communications heard in the form of statements, plus one minor clause – Victoria uses the most statements. The range of speech acts is notable for its inclusion of positive as well as more moderate or neutral communications.

Although examples of accusing, blaming and criticising (30%, n = 25) comprise the largest group, these do not exhibit the vitriol endured by David and Amy. Nevertheless, the small group of insults (5%, n = 4) recounted are reminiscent of David’s experiences of hearing his self-worth devalued. Notwithstanding these negative attributes, Shirley’s voices are
distinctive in terms of their responsive behaviour. This is especially evident in their attempts to reassure her (21%, n = 17) about her diagnosis, despite Shirley also recognising that these often appear to be a form of avoidance. In addition, her voices are forthcoming in asserting their own particular wants (10%, n = 9) and disclosing their own feelings of vulnerability (4%, n = 3). These added to the other speech acts identified represent a diversity of communications that attests to the intense relationship that exists between Shirley and her voices through which they actively participate in the world of her emotions and concerns.

**Directives: direct & indirect speech**

Only Shirley and Darby do not cite any examples of their voices ordering them to hurt themselves or another person. Most notable in Shirley’s account is the prevalence of directives in which her voices counsel her to avoid emotionally unhelpful forms of behaviour (43%, n = 12). Regulatory directives that illustrate her voices intervening more forcefully in controlling her actions account for nearly a third of the total (32%, n = 9). The remaining 14% (n = 4) of directives are clearly prohibitive.

![Shirley: directives - direct & indirect speech](image)

**Questions: direct speech**

Shirley cites five instances of her voices asking questions. These are all in the form of direct speech, as are all other questions participants describe in this study. Most are informational in function in that Shirley’s voices appear to be asking her to supply facts they are missing. Three of these concern the identity of her husband Geoff (2.66, 341-346) and surprisingly her own (2.62, 322–325; 2.66, 337–340). In regards to Geoff, her voice uses a closed (polarity) question to ask for confirmation as to whether he is “grandpa”. In Shirley’s case,
however, the open ‘wh-’ question indicates a complete information gap. A further example of an open question is its strategic use as a hypothetical query about her future behaviour in our interviews:

4.106, 384-387 (She lets out a little laugh) Well that'll be like um like knowing that I'm coming here to- this afternoon “Well if Keith asks you this, how would you reply?” and so in essence having – and that-that's something that we do quite a bit throughout the day.

In addition, Shirley further hints at the highly interactive nature of her voices in the form of ‘practice conversations’ (4.104, 382) in which her voices habitually rehearse her for when she later talks with people in her daily life. Although the use of questions only represents 5% of all direct speech in Shirley’s account, her comment above suggests that these rehearsals are a regular form of interaction with her voices.

**Use of direct and indirect speech**

In the course of our four interviews, and with the addition of her four audio diary recordings, Shirley provides a high number of examples of what she hears her voices say. Her use of direct speech (85%, n = 98) is particularly marked and is exceeded only by Mark. However, given that Mark was only interviewed twice, if any comparison were to be made it might be more informative to consider her preference for speech frame in relation to David’s use of direct speech (82%, n = 68) over four interviews.
Including one minor clause, statements (71%, n = 82) account for the most frequent speech function represented across direct and indirect speech, while directives (24%, n = 28) make up nearly a quarter, with 5 questions (4%) comprising the remainder. This pattern is reflected in Shirley’s use of direct speech, with the majority of quotes framing statements plus minor clause (74%, n = 73), followed by directives (20%, n = 20), and finally all five questions (5%). Indirect speech reports, by contrast, are more evenly distributed between statements (53%, n = 9) and directives (47%, n = 8). In summary, both statements and directives were more frequently represented through direct speech (89%, n = 72; 71%, n = 20) than indirect speech (11%, n = 9; 29%, n = 8).
Statements: direct speech

Given Shirley’s greater use of direct speech to represent her voices, the distribution of speech acts is almost identical with the overall pattern across both direct and indirect speech.

Accuse, blame, criticise

Nearly a third of the quoted statements (30%, n = 22) Shirley attributes to her voices involve her being judged regarding her actions and behaviour. These negative assertions consist of accusations (n = 7), blaming (n = 6) and criticism (n = 9). These disparaging comments were spoken by ‘negative male voices’ that she used to hear (1.18, 235–236, 238 & 240). Shirley relates how this ‘constant down putting’ (1.8, 92) and ‘berating’ (1.39, 454–456) by voices of an ‘almost OCD type’ (1.18, 241) undermined her self-confidence even though they often concerned such trivial domestic actions as filling up drink bottles (1.21, 246–251). Individually these speech acts appear to concentrate on minor issues but as an aggregate they often wore down Shirley’s morale. Their occurrence together (1.18, 238 & 240) represents the linguistic equivalent of a three-pronged attack.

Accuse

The seven accusations Shirley’s voices make all concern routine domestic actions or her relationship to them. These are all negative in their choice of grammatical construction or lexical meaning. For instance, Shirley refers to her voices remonstrating with her for “not listening” to them (2.56, 270–272). An example of negative word meaning is the repeated use of “wrong” (1.18, 240; 1.21, 248 & 255–256) in relation to Shirley’s choice of drink bottle to fill. Although classified as accusations, this category includes such mild
admonitions as Shirley’s voices reminding her that she has neglected to put on a black band they want her to wear (3.6, 32 & 34).

**Blame**

The six attributions of blame are principally identified due to their use of “your fault”, as in 1.8, 84. Shirley does not provide the context for these apart from one incident in which her voices allege that the reason her mobile phone would not work when she returned to her car from attending the voice hearers group was “because you went in there” (1.8, 91–92). In our second interview, Shirley twice cites experiences of being blamed as the type of language that she no longer hears such since her voices have become more stable, which she feels is a result of her relationship to them having improved (2.86, 461–475).

**Criticise**

Criticisms are here categorised in terms of their grammar so as to foreground the use of the putative modal auxiliary verb ‘should (not)’. Shirley supplies most of the nine instances in our first interview. These generally occur without a context by way of example of the fault-finding nature of the voices she still occasionally hears (2.86, 472–475). She explains how it was the experience of being personally addressed that made her decide to look into her voices more closely (1.21, 273–278).

**Reassure**

Shirley’s account is atypical in that she and Victoria are the only participants who refer to their voices attempting to improve their morale. Nearly a quarter (23%, n = 17) of the statements Shirley quotes using direct speech display a more positive use of language although some cases are ambiguous in their actual significance. Overall, these apparently sympathetic interactions represent Shirley’s voices seeking to reassure her about her mental health. These range from generalised sentiments such as “You know everything’s okay” (Diary 3, 11) to more specific rebuttals of her diagnosis. During our second interview, one of Shirley’s voices joins in the conversation by contradicting her recent diagnosis of dissociative identity disorder (DID) as if in an attempt to maintain normality (2.117, 663–666 & 676–677).

**Express emotions, self-assert**

Shirley’s account is also notable for examples of her voices ascribing to themselves the capacity to experience emotions (n = 3) and volitional states (n = 9). Although these account for only 16% of direct speech statements quoted, they represent the third highest category of
grouped speech acts identified from Shirley’s interviews. Interestingly, they are typically self-referential rather than directed at Shirley, and thus afford some insight into how her voices construe themselves as personal beings.

**Express emotions**

The affective states cited are both highly aversive, namely fear and hate. Shirley attributes the former to a frail, vulnerable voice admitting “I'm afraid—I’m very afraid” (Diary 1, 6). References to hostile emotions were heard as Shirley was using writing as a way of working through the effects of trauma by allowing her voices to dialogue with her. She explains that when strong feelings of anger surface her voices make such comments as "I hate her" (2.56, 277) thereby vocalising the powerful feelings she is experiencing.

**Self-assert**

These assertions of resolve are either self-referential or directed towards Shirley. In the latter event they could possibly be analysed as borderline directives, as in the case of a voice objecting during our first interview with “we don’t like you talking about it” (1.4, 14–15), implying ‘we don’t want you to talk about it so don’t talk about it’. Shirley’s account is particularly striking as it is the only one in which two voices, a ‘little voice (…) small weak person’ and ‘a stronger voice=a bolder voice’, are at variance (Diary 1, 5–11). In her third audio diary entry, Shirley refers to this rallying voice as the Brave one (3, 15–16). It is his voice that finally gains the upper hand and gives her the courage to continue to record her reflections.

**Claim**

Assertions in the form of various claims represent only 14% (n = 10) of quoted statements. This group includes a miscellaneous collection of isolated remarks in which Shirley’s voices comment on events or objects that are immediately connected to the present situation. For instance, Shirley describes how during a therapy session one of her voices disagreed with her psychologist’s alternative explanation of events with “It’s not because of something else=it’s because of this” (3.40, 224–225). Equally, her voices are not above arguing speciously, as when they claim her mobile phone is not working in her car because she had been talking about them at the voice hearers group (1.8, 87–92). In addition, the voice Shirley named Denial attempts to describe her temperament in naïvely optimistic terms (1.16, 219–220) that overlap with the reassurances discussed above that are made to dissuade Shirley from looking too closely into her childhood trauma.
Statements: indirect speech

Shirley not only uses indirect speech (11%, n = 9) to a far lesser extent than direct speech (89%, n = 72) to represent statements but applies it to a narrow range of speech acts that are predominantly negative in function and meaning. These comprise insults (n = 3), claims (n = 3) and the grouped category of accusing, blaming and criticising with one example of each. There is one claim, however, which is conveyed as positive information.

Accuse, blame, criticise

These three clearly correspond to their direct speech counterparts and occur in combination in the order of accusation, criticism and blame in the following extract:

1.8, 78-81 for the longest time (.) for up until maybe two months ago um all the voices were-were negative (,) always um – not-not um suicidal or anything like that but always telling me I was doing the wrong thing=always saying I shouldn’t have done that=it was my fault that that happened

Shirley uses this three-pronged attack as a terse summary to characterise her voices before changing to direct speech a few clauses later. For the remainder of our interviews, Shirley prefers to quote rather than report these types of verbal behaviour.

Insult

In addition to the solitary insulting comment about another woman that Shirley quotes (1.56, 278), she reports three others. Two of these are directed at her while the other refers to an expletive repeated by a voice from a game Shirley and Geoff had been playing in which they were imitating his father’s habit of swearing (1.21, 270). The two personal insults are both
negative evaluations of Shirley’s value that mirror her lack of self-confidence through life (1.8, 84–86; 1.21, 258). Although Shirley remarks that she frequently hears unpleasant voices, these are the only examples she offers over four interviews.

**Claim**

Apart from a restatement that “Reg hates eggs” (Diary 4, 17-18), the other two claims concern Shirley. The first alleges that ‘people are always watching me’ (1.21, 259) and is the only example she gives that reveals possible issues regarding insecurity or paranoid delusions. The second refers to the protective role of one of her alters (2.42, 210–211), and is the only positive statement reported using indirect speech.

**Directives: direct speech**

In 71% (n = 20) of all references to directives, Shirley prefers to use direct speech to recall examples of her voices attempting to affect or direct her behaviour. All occurrences where advice is given (n = 12) are represented through direct speech. These twelve advisory directives form a sizeable majority (60%) of all quoted directives. There are half as many regulatory directives (30%) and only two prohibitions (10%) represented as direct speech.

**Advise**

Shirley is the only hearer who speaks of voices giving her advice to help her manage her feelings of distress. These directives mostly counsel her in relation to her attempts to deal with the emotional trauma associated with childhood sexual abuse. As in other cases, there is some overlap or ambiguity between categories. For instance, a number of the advisory type
of directives are also prohibitive in that they counsel Shirley against behaving in certain ways. However, as their function appears to be more protective than coercive they have been analysed as being more positive in intent. A number of these have the declarative clause structure of statements but have been included here as they are directly concerned with managing her behaviour (1.57–59, 567–571).

One other communication strategy that Shirley appears to attribute to her voices is that of enlisting her knowledge of her own limits (1.57, 567–568) or even conscience to decide how to act (4.106, 388–392). This suggestion of an alignment of shared knowledge that engenders a sense of solidarity is also evident in two other of the advisory directives cited above (Diary 3, 37; 1.57, 567–568).

**Regulate**

The examples Shirley provides represent her voices as being quite insistent in their demands. These regulatory directives feature them competing against her husband for attention (2.58, 300–301) or specifying what she can wear (3.6, 28–30). Shirley’s use of direct speech vividly illustrates the persistent behaviour of her voices. However, some cases may be more figurative than literal in that Shirley appears to be characterising the needy nature of her voices rather than strictly quoting what she heard (3.12, 71–73).

**Prohibit**

The first of the two prohibitions Shirley quotes occurs in relation to getting dressed to go out (3.6, 32–33). Her voice’s protest is suggestive of the domestic banter that might be heard between family members. The second illustrates how Shirley sometimes loses her train of thought as the result of a voice interrupting her with “No I don’t want you to say that” (3.70, 426) as she is about to speak. The directive function is realised through the use of the assertive self-reference in which the wants of her voice are cited as a sufficient basis from which to restrict Shirley’s behaviour.

**Directives: indirect speech**

The eight directives Shirley reports using indirect speech represent 29% of the total number of directives recalled. These are almost evenly divided between allow (38%, n = 3), regulate (38%, n = 3) and prohibit (25%, n = 2).
Shirley’s account is notable for being the only one in which there are references to voices negotiating a hearer’s terms of behaviour. Two examples are given which relate to her voices compromising on their position as to what colour clothes she can wear (3.8, 42–44). Shirley shifts to indirect speech here as a way of recapping the gist of her dialogue with her voices that she has just recounted using direct speech (3.6, 27–36). These negotiations represent a weak form of directive in that they endorse action by giving their approval. Her third example sets the boundaries in both positive (consent) and negative (prohibition) terms concerning what her voices will let her eat (4.29, 104–105).

**Regulate**

Shirley uses her three indirect speech reports to frame an interaction with her voices regarding having to put on a black band before she could go out (3.6, 26–36). The first instance is used to briefly explain her forgetfulness to act on their instructions as the reason they can still becoming unruly (3.4, 15–16). Shirley goes on to narrate the incident of the black band using direct speech quotes to represent her voices. The remaining two uses of indirect speech encapsulate the conversation. However, what this indirect speech summary adds that is not mentioned earlier is that the reason for wearing the black band is to accommodate the colour preferences of her male voices (3.8, 42–44). It is doubtful, however, whether one of her voices actually used as formal a word as ‘acknowledge’ or as abstract a concept as ‘males of the system’. There are a number of different ways in which such a condensed paraphrase could be expanded using colloquial speech. Conversely, a
number of alternative renderings of the original wording were heard. This is a further example of how the use of indirect speech explicitly allows hearers such as Shirley to ‘re-voice’ the experience of the original interaction in terms of their own interpretive framework.

**Prohibit**

Both prohibitions concern restrictions on what food Shirley is permitted to eat (*Diary 4, 10–11; 4.29, 104–105*).

**David: ‘Something telling you—talking to you all the time’**

David’s account is mainly constructed through an extensive use of direct speech to represent his voices. In terms of speech function, statements (80%, n = 67) are in the clear majority across both direct and indirect speech, with a relatively limited number of directives (12%, n = 10). All the examples given, however, are very negative and aggressive in function and content. Statements mostly comprise pejorative remarks directed at David that range from niggling criticisms to personal insults. The latter alone represent some 56% (n = 38) of both direct and indirect speech statements. Directives are equally divided between commands to self-harm (50%, n = 5) and instructions either coercing or prohibiting his ordinary activities (50%, n = 5).

**Speech function overview**

Comparable to Amy, the substantial majority of David’s references to his voices are represented as statements and minor clauses (86%, n = 72), with directives accounting for only 12% (n = 10).
Statements & minor clauses: direct & indirect speech

In terms of speech act, the examples David gives of his voices are overtly negative and hostile. In fact, over half (55%, n = 38) of the statements attributed to his voices consist of personal insults alone. The overall number of such aggressive interactions is substantially augmented with the addition of claims (19%, n = 13) that are all derogatory and disparaging in content, as well as accusations, blaming and criticisms (10%, n = 7). Warnings, which account for a further 15% (n = 10), are also associated with David’s alleged inadequacies.
**Directives: direct & indirect speech**

Half (50%, n = 5) of the directives cited are provocations for David to take his life. The remaining directives consist of regulatory (30%, n = 3) and prohibitive (n = 2) instructions concerning his behaviour.

![Pie chart showing the distribution of directives: 50% provocations, 30% regulatory, 20% prohibitive.]

**Questions: direct speech**

David provides two quoted examples of questions which appear to be more rhetorical than requiring missing information. Both questions (1.11, 46; 1.53, 173–174) are heard in the context of derogatory remarks concerning his lack of worth.

**Use of direct & indirect speech**

David makes substantial use of direct speech (81%, n = 68) over our four interviews to represent his voices. Statements with the addition of five minor clauses feature the most prominently across direct and indirect speech (86%, n = 72) while directives comprise only 12% (n = 10). Two quoted questions account for the remaining 2%. In terms of choice of speech frame, 81% (n = 58) of statements (n = 72) including minor clauses attributed to David’s voices are represented as direct speech as well as eight of the ten directives cited.
A high proportion of direct speech consists of statements combined with minor clauses (85%, n = 58). Although numerically fewer in comparison, statements also comprise the clear majority of indirect speech reports (88%, n = 14). Comparatively, directives are few in number overall but proportionally are equally represented across direct (12%, n = 8) and indirect speech (13%, n = 2).
**Statements & minor clauses: direct speech**

The pattern of distribution of speech acts represented through direct speech is virtually synonymous with that across both speech frames combined. Insults comprise 56% (n = 30) of David’s references to his voices, followed by claims (20%, n = 11) and warnings (15%, n = 8), with the remaining speech acts divided among accusations, blaming and criticisms (9%, n = 5).

Four of the five minor clauses David provides have not been analysed in terms of speech act due to their truncated grammatical structure and ambiguous interpretation. Their overall sense clearly suggests the argumentative and peevish character of David’s voice.
notwithstanding (1.36, 131; 1.101, 350; 2.30, 76).

Insult

The line between insult and harsh criticism is admittedly fine at times as both exist along a cline of verbal abuse. The present analysis has attempted to distinguish between more personal attacks (insults) and fault-finding (criticism). In terms of speech frame, David mostly recalls such pejorative remarks using direct (n = 30) rather than indirect speech (n = 8). The examples given indicate that he is vulnerable to attack in two key areas, namely self-worth and competency. As these insults feature a prominent use of evaluative language, their analysis and discussion are provided in the Chapter 7.

Claim

In association with hostile attacks on his character, David also attributes assertions to his voices concerning their supposed knowledge of events at the time of speaking. The eleven examples of claims David cites mostly concern close personal relationships. In particular, he refers to voices alleging that his partner Carol does not actually love him but is only tolerating him out of necessity (4.55, 201–204). Any belief concerning his acceptance by friends and family is summarily dismissed with “no-one loves you” (2.20, 52). Such putative claims often occur in combination with blunt insults denigrating his self-worth, and may lay the ground for incitements to take his own life, goaded by the taunt that “everyone will be happy” to see the back of him (1.23, 82–83). In this way the pervasive theme of self-negation is argued as good grounds for self-annihilation.

Warn

In contrast with claims, most of the eight assertions that concern the outcome of David’s intended actions are less serious in tenor. These nearly all occur in our second interview and particularly in reference to a trench David was helping to dig close to his partner’s house (2.45, 118–120; 2.151, 391–392). Although at first he did not see the humour in the melodramatic warnings that his digging was going to cause Carol’s house to fall in, the friend he was working with cajoled him out of his initial reactions of alarm and inertia. In several cases, the difference between a warning and an insult are admittedly slight and ambiguous. Assertions identified as warnings refer to specific situations (“you’re not going to do it right=if you do it it’s going – you’ll make the house fall over” 2.45, 119–120) while those that appear to be denigrating in general have been characterised as insults (“you’re never going to succeed (. ) you’re never going to do right” 3.151, 415–416).
**Accuse, blame, criticise**

The remaining five assertions differ in some respects from claims, insults and warnings in that although they are directed at David, they variously reproach him for his behaviour or find fault with his performance of domestic tasks (2.55, 153–159). Examples such as these are instructive as they demonstrate that statements can carry the impact of directives without needing to be grammatically constructed as imperatives. In this case, as a result of being criticised, David felt impelled to vacuum over and over again, if only to placate his voices.

**Statements: indirect speech**

Although insults again account for more than half of all statements represented through indirect speech (54%, n = 8), they are about a quarter of the number quoted using direct speech. A similar relationship holds for reported warnings (14%, n = 2) and claims to a lesser degree (14%, n = 2) compared to their direct speech counterparts, with accusations and criticisms again comprising the remainder (14%, n = 2).

![David: statements - indirect speech (grouped)](image)

**Insult**

The eight instances of verbal abuse reported using indirect speech again denigrate David's self-worth and competency (see Chapter 7 for their analysis as acts of appraisal).

**Accuse, criticise**

These two remarks exist along a continuum of negative assertions. The reported accusation of 3.151, 416–417 pointedly finds David's skills at fault, while 2.43, 111–112 is more of a general criticism of what he has done, as in the example given of a hole that has been dug.
The distinction made here is to highlight the subtle emphasis implied, with the latter focusing more on the product rather than the process, comparable to the grammatical case of ‘effectum’ (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p.148), which focuses on the result of David’s efforts.

**Claim**

The two claims reported both relate to David’s relations with other people. In the first instance, his voices allege that I am not interested in listening to him (2.168, 460) while the second contradicts his conviction that he has a good relationship with his family (3.155, 434–435).

**Warn**

Both warnings occur in relation to the trench he was digging with a friend at his partner’s house (2.51, 135-137). As with their direct speech counterparts, these cite his incompetency as apparent cause for alarm.

**Directives: direct speech**

These directives consist of commands to self-harm (38%, n = 3), followed by instructions regulating (38%, n = 3) and prohibiting (25%, n = 2) behaviour.

![David: directives - direct speech (grouped)](image)

**Commands to harm (hearer)**

The three direct speech examples David gives of his voices inciting him to self-harm are all provocations to take his own life. These are represented in very broad terms, and give no
indication as to how to carry out the act. The colloquial verbs (“do in” and “end”) used in the two curt imperatives 1.23, 82–82, for instance, suggest their contempt for his worth. The use of the ‘middle voice’ (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 350) in the third, borderline case of “you should-you should die” 35 (2.20, 52) does not even specify the agency of the action. However, it is classified as a weak form of command in that its use appears to imply that David is ultimately capable of instigating its occurrence. His voice presumes to stand in judgement over him but leaves it to him to execute the sentence on himself as if it were the only decent thing to do. It is a moot point which of the two, a direct command to take his own life or a moral judgement that requires satisfaction, is the hardest to hear. The first requires David to refuse to obey, the second to reject its truth value.

Regulate

Two of the three instructions stipulate what David is supposed to write in his journal (2.180, 505–506). The imperative mood of the clause is tempered to some extent by the phrase ‘make sure’, as if David’s voices were concerned that he should not omit certain details.

Prohibit

The two prohibitions quoted are found in the same turn as the two regulatory instructions above and relate to what David is not permitted to record in his journal (2.180, 508). These are much blunter as a result of their use of the negative modal auxiliary verb ‘can’t’, citing an apparent moral barrier to his ability to write what he was intending. This construes the force of a compelling set of circumstances, as distinct from the more direct use of the imperative ‘don’t write’, in which the speaker intrinsically claims authority to forbid action. David then describes how he even has experiences of feeling his voices attempting to gain control of his hand as he is writing, and shows me a passage in his journal where he felt forced to cross out what he had written (1.180–184, 509–516).

Directives: indirect speech

The two reported directives are both commands to self-harm in language identical to that used in the quoted commands. There is again the distinction between the ‘middle voice’ of 2.28, 70 and the ‘active voice’ of 4.38, 152.

35 It is not clear whether this second clause and the following clauses are all part of an indirect speech clause complex. There is a break between the projected ‘that’ clause and the omitted subsequent clauses, which David speaks independently of each other. This analysis admits an indeterminacy in which a generalised use of ‘you’ is used initially but which shifts to a more specific use that becomes increasingly suggestive of direct address as each clause is produced further from the opening reporting frame.
Amy: ‘They’re very clever at sucking people in’

Amy’s account of what her voices say is relatively evenly distributed between direct speech (53%, n = 99) quotes and indirect speech reports (47%, n = 88). The large majority of these take the form of statements (90%, n = 168). However, this very broad category of speech function is cut across by a diverse range of speech acts. Many of these have been identified as assertions whereby Amy’s voices lay claim to being able to penetrate the deceptive appearances of events and behaviour. In fact, the proportion of claims included in her account (41%) is higher than the overall average (26%). In addition to undermining Amy’s perception and interpretation of the world around her, her voices menace her through more overt acts of intimidation involving plotting, threatening and warning, which combine to destabilise her sense of security about the future. Amy also experiences her voices as attempting to weaken her self-esteem by accusing and blaming her for her alleged responsibility for past and current events. These attacks on Amy’s moral character are further compounded by personal insults which disparage her abilities and feelings of self-worth.

**Speech function overview**

Statements with the addition of two minor clauses (90%, n = 170) are not only the most frequently represented speech function across direct and indirect speech in Amy’s account, with directives comprising less than 8% (n = 15) overall, but proportionally are the highest cited of all participants. Only David’s account displays a comparable distribution of statements.
**Statements: direct & indirect speech**

Most of the statements that Amy refers to are speech acts in which her voices make claims or justify certain actions (41%, n = 70). Such speech acts share the property whereby Amy is made privy to information that her voices implicitly assert to be true. This entails her voices appearing to assume a position of some authority to allege that what they say has the status of fact. A quarter comprises the more aggressive speech acts of plotting, threatening and warning (25%, n = 43) followed by accusing, blaming and criticising (22%, n = 37). The former group mostly target Amy as a victim of potential violence whereas the latter castigates her for her own supposed culpability. Insults (11%, n = 18) constitute acts of verbal abuse or disparagement in which Amy’s voices attempt to belittle and ridicule her. In one additional occurrence Amy’s voices identify themselves as demons (3.31, 165).

![Amy: statements - direct & indirect speech (grouped)](image)

**Directives: direct & indirect speech**

Although unambiguous commands to self-harm appear to be few overall (20%, n = 3), five directives that are either advisory, reassuring or regulatory in function relate to Amy allowing her life to end through illness, if not actually injuring herself. Including these more covert cases would bring the overall number of directives involving her taking action against herself to just over half (53%, n = 8) the total. However, for analytical purposes, these more nuanced directives are treated separately.
Questions: direct speech

Amy directly quotes two instances of her voices asking questions (4.20, 128–129; 4.41, 260–261). These are less the result of a conventional ‘information gap’ than a form of intimidation in which her voices use sarcasm to challenge her. The first in particular is a pungent example of the ability of voices to argue back:

4.20, 126-129  I know what the books say and I know what the doctors say and all that you know (.) it’s a chemical imbalance in my brain and that’s what causes the voices but if their argument is “Well if we’re a chemical imbalance then why doesn’t the medication take us away?”

Use of direct & indirect speech

As with Joan, the margin of difference between Amy’s use of direct and indirect speech is comparatively small. Amy also uses direct speech as the primary grammatical construction for recounting what her voices say, with the distribution of direct (56%, n = 95) and indirect (44%, n = 74) speech relatively closely matched in her account.
Statements form the overwhelming majority of direct (86%) and indirect (94%) speech accounts of her voices, with directives comprising 10% and 6% respectively.
Statements: direct speech

Five categories of grouped speech acts have been identified in the examples Amy gives of her voices. The largest group (43%, n = 37) of the statements Amy attributes to her voices have been identified as various types of claims, predictions and justifications. Although these are invariably negative in meaning or inference, their content is less serious than that of the other groups featured. In particular, the majority of the remaining statements are relatively evenly distributed across the more overtly hostile categories of plot, threaten and warn (21%, n = 18); insult (19%, n = 16); and accuse, blame and criticise (16%, n = 14).
Claim, justify

In this study, Amy’s account characterises voices the most as professing to be in possession of information that is unknown to the hearer. Amy appears to prefer to speak in the role of her voices using direct speech rather than reporting them as indirect speech. The direct speech examples she gives mainly represent her voices making claims based on their supposed superior knowledge. These appear intended to undermine her confidence in her own intelligence and trust in other people (36%, n = 31). For instance, her voices commonly make assertions that reveal the hidden motives of people around her or which explain the significance of her illness in supernatural terms. These claims are invariably negative when made about other people in that Amy’s voices maintain that everyone is deceiving her as a cruel joke (1.53, 425–427; 2.10, 30–34). Other claims, such as there being a divine purpose behind her voices, initially appear more ambiguous but later Amy attributes a malicious intent to these assertions (2.40, 226; 2.47, 260–261).

A sub-category of claims, ‘justify’, is suggested to recognise a distinctive type of assertion that only Amy provides. This is a statement in which her voices downplay the occurrence of positive experiences in her life (7%, n = 6) on the pretext that even these were still under their control and that next time she may not be so lucky (2.25, 139–141; 2.31, 173–177). These claims are distinguished from the core group as they represent a specific manipulative strategy whereby Amy’s voices attempt to bluff their way out of appearing to be less powerful than they maintain. They do this by excusing or justifying their inaction as if it were merely a matter of apathy or indifference on their part. The underlying menace is that by being given a temporary reprieve she will only suffer more when they return to “test” her (2.47, 260–262).

Plot, threaten, warn

Amy quotes about half as many examples of overtly negative speech acts (21%, n = 18) as she does the arguably less aggressive cases of claims, predictions and justifications. In her recount she tends to focus on her voices intimidating her indirectly through warnings (12%, n = 10) rather than explicitly threatening her (7%, n = 6). Nevertheless, what initially appears to be a warning may prompt Amy to act against her own interests. For example, she explains that after hearing the repeated warning that her father was going to be in a bad temper (1.7, 71) she became so anxious that she decided to provoke his anger than wait for it to occur.

More representative are assertions in which her voices worry her with the supposed
consequences of her actions (2.18, 94–95; 2.21, 115–116). These all refer to alleged activities that run the risk of exposing her concealed madness to others. Her voices lay the blame squarely on her if she ignores their warnings. The two examples (2.104, 518–519; 4.41, 271–272) Amy gives of her voices ‘plotting’ or conniving aloud shows them spontaneously agreeing to embarrass or mislead her. Such behaviour is by its nature a collaborative activity and such utterances create the impression that Amy is at the mercy of malevolent beings scheming to bring about her demise. These two cases constitute an important shift in ‘dialogical positioning’ (Davies et al. 1999; Leudar & Thomas, 2000; Leudar et al., 1997) in that Amy is not directly addressed but is positioned as a bystander.

**Insult**

Pejorative comments comprise 19% (n = 16) of the direct speech statements Amy includes in her account (see Chapter 7 for an analysis of their use of appraisal).

**Accuse, blame**

Statements in which voices explicitly malign Amy’s behaviour are slightly fewer than insulting comments. These statements which malign appear to be evenly divided between accusations (8%, n = 7) and blame (8%, n = 7). The latter are typically identified by their use of “your fault” (e.g. 3.31, 166). She does not, however, cite any examples of her voices criticising her as such for past actions that she should or should not have committed but they do hold her causally accountable for events that she denies were her responsibility (2.61, 323). The accumulated effect of these false assertions is to represent Amy as someone who is careless and unworthy.

**Statements: indirect speech**

Claims (38%, n = 32) again feature with one reported justification, together representing over a third (39%, n = 33) of all indirect speech statements. However, whereas Amy usually chooses to recall these as direct speech quotes, she prefers to report threats (31%, n = 26), accusations (19%, n = 16) and blame (8%, n = 7) as indirect speech. By contrast, insults (2%, n = 2) were less likely to be reported than quoted as direct speech.
Claim, justify

A major difference between Amy’s use of indirect speech compared to direct speech to represent statements is the greater number of claims (n = 32), with only one report of voices justifying their tolerance of pleasant events in her life (4.18, 80–81). Amy generally uses indirect speech to provide more detail about what her voices claim. Claims are developed into an explanatory sequence of assertions in which multiple actions, cause and effect accumulate. This is evident in Amy’s account of her voices claiming that the nurses and doctors treating her could also hear voices but were concealing this from her so that they could continue to detain her in hospital (1.3, 23–26).

An instructive example that illustrates how the use of indirect speech may inadvertently minimise the severity of a directive is evident in relation to the graphic order for Amy to cut herself (4.18, 59–61). She first refers to this command using a nominalised construction in the context of a claim ‘with the letting of the blood um the evil – that will get the evil out’ (1.19, 242–243). Furthermore, the formal use of the noun group ‘the letting of the blood’, as opposed to the more visceral clauses “cut yourself and let all the blood out”, is grammatically less available to be argued with due to the use of nominalisation (Bloor & Bloor, 2013, pp. 132–133; Thompson, 2014, pp. 245–246).

Accuse, blame

Reports of accusations (23%, n = 16) and blame (10%, n = 7) together equal in number those of claims and justifications discussed above. As in the case of direct speech, no instances of criticising were identified. Of all the participants, Amy reports the highest number of both
these verbal attacks. An important pragmatic distinction between these two groups as analysed in this study is that whereas claims and justification concern other people, situations or the voices themselves, accusations and blame are personally levelled at Amy. As a result, the act of reporting these latter two further emphasises her involvement. In particular, Amy’s use of the first person pronoun ‘I’ to report accusations (3.35, 187–188 & 192–194; 4.18, 75–77) may actually reinforce the perception of her own alleged culpability unlike the sense of remove construed by the less proximal pronoun ‘you’. In other words, by using ‘I’ Amy propositionally comes to own her responsibility as the accused, which may unintentionally accentuate her sense of guilt. This contrasts with the use of ‘you’ in direct speech, which instead positions her in the role of the voice as speaker.

Associated with accusations are reports of blame which revolve around the first person dependent genitive pronoun ‘my’. This is always used in the context of the noun group ‘my fault’, as in ‘they would say that like it’s my fault the fires were there’ (3.27, 151–152) as heard in relation to the recent bushfires, as well as being blamed for mishaps to family and friends. The change in deixis from ‘your’ to ‘my’ implicates her more personally, although to some extent grammatically the use of indirect speech distances the speaker from the dialogic immediacy of a quoted utterance.

**Threaten**

Threats (31%, n = 26) fully comprise the third main group of reports. As with the speech acts of accusing and blaming, Amy chooses to use indirect speech rather than quote threats, reporting over four times as many direct speech threats (n = 6). Her first interview contains the highest concentration of reported threats. It would appear that threats of retribution if she revealed the existence of her voices were a significant part of her earliest experiences (1.3, 5–7). This theme of punishment for disclosing her personal sensations is turned around in most of the other examples given where the threat of exposure itself is used to intimidate Amy. In these cases, her voices threaten to publically shame her by either transmitting her actual derogatory thoughts or falsely attributing disparaging thoughts to her (1.51, 397–417 & 449–450; 2.107, 531–532).

In our third and fourth interviews, she reports her voices threatening to physically harm her family. These violent threats slightly exceed in number those to embarrass her and range from causing illness to bringing about large scale destruction. Sometimes these appear to be indiscriminate, as in the case of the bushfires interstate (3.31, 162–163), and at other times as punishment, such as for allegedly neglecting her mother (3.42, 221–224) or not listening to
them (4.16, 44–46; 4.18, 54–56).

Insult

Far fewer insults (2%, n = 2) are reported than quoted (19%, n = 16) and occur only in our fourth and last interview, which is also the context for the most insults represented as direct speech. The first report echoes a preceding direct speech quote (4.41, 258–260) while the second (4.69, 449–453) refers back to the same incident in which her voices told her that nursing staff were ridiculing her.

Directives: direct speech

Some 10% (n = 10) of the direct speech examples Amy gives have been identified as directives. Most of these are relatively minor provocations (7%, n = 7). However, Amy also mentions several commands to self-harm.

Regulate

The regulatory directives Amy attributes to her voices are largely bluffing strategies. In terms of pragmatics, rather than functioning as orders to take action, they are a form of ploy for evading exposure or circumventing further queries. The short clause complex “just wait and see” (e.g. 1.13, 120–121) that is quoted fully or in abbreviated form occurs four times and is generally used by her voices in the context of justifying their current inaction.

Although grammatically it is an imperative, this formulaic expression is deceptively complex in meaning and function. It is a directive to the hearer to take no action but it also advises the hearer to be prepared for a forthcoming adverse event which will vindicate the
speaker. It is in this latter sense that it can appear to be a threat and is often experienced as such by Amy (1.13, 120–123; 4.23, 147–152). Conversely, statements that function as threats and warnings implicitly carry a directive function. Their impact on the listener represents a subtle form of control in that the listener understands that they are implicitly being told to eschew certain actions if they wish to remain safe.

**Command to harm (hearer)**

More serious in content and function are the three commands to self-harm which Amy only discloses in our last interview (4.18, 57–61). There is some uncertainty, however, as to whether the order to “cut yourself and let all the blood out” (4.18, 60–61) was actually heard or if Amy is supplying this to clarify what her voices meant by “let the evil out” (4.18, 59). The directive is phrased not as in terms of violent form of self-injury but more of a method of treatment or exorcism.

**Directives: indirect speech**

Amy reports half as many indirect speech directives (n = 5) as she quotes direct speech directives. These broadly speaking all relate to acts of self-harm and outnumber the direct speech commands but are more euphemistic or oblique in their formulation. They are accordingly analysed under different headings from ‘commands to harm’ to highlight the less aggressive and more subtle use of language. In these examples the goal is release from depression or illness into death and peace.
Advise, reassure

These comprise several weak forms of directive in which she is reassured that it is permissible for her to die. These are not constructed as commands to injure herself but are phrased as providing approval for taking her own life when feeling depressed (1.53, 432–438) or giving up the struggle with pneumonia when she was in hospital (2.53, 288–289). Dying is described in positive terms as a spiritual release by which she can let go of the emotional and physical pain of this world and be united with God.

Regulate

The two reports of regulatory directives (2.53, 286–288) are more specific in their instructions than the above assurances in that Amy is counselled to relinquish her hold on life by physically giving in and letting her pneumonia take its course. Dying is here modelled on the act of letting go into sleep. These instructions to surrender would appear innocuous without the context in which they occur and are suggestive of the way in which Amy’s voices reflect her struggles with health-related issues. They align themselves with her desire to escape further exertion and find respite from illness and unhappiness. In this way, death is not directly represented as the result of self-harm but is characterised more as the welcome cessation of all suffering.

Darby: ‘(My voices) are very demanding and dogmatic’

Darby’s account of his voices appears to be the most benign in terms of content and function. Nevertheless, his voices are clearly represented as taking a very active if not dogmatic role in determining his behaviour. Although their instructions do not appear to have involved a direct risk to his personal safety, they did compromise his interactions with other people in various service encounters and potentially could have led him into financial hardship. In addition to these incidents, Darby’s references to his voices foreground their role as observer-commentator when ascribing religious identities to others around him as well as to himself.

Darby’s conspicuous use of reported speech weaves his voices into the overall narrative rather than highlighting his direct experience of hearing them as interlocutors. His voices thus become predominantly recalled through condensed reports of content as distinct from more immediate and personal recreations of interaction. This has the effect of orientating the listener to Darby as the focus, or “addressed recipient” (Goffman, 1981, p. 133), of what his voices say rather than privileging his voices as interlocutors reconstituted through quotes.
By the same token, Darby’s de-emphasising of his voices’ production of language reinforces a sense of emotional distance in addition to their temporal removal. His voices can be said to now speak from within his account rather than extrinsically through it. In Goffman’s (1981) terms, Darby’s voices are no longer the ‘authors’ of their speech but ‘figures’ in his account inasmuch as they are spoken for, as opposed to speaking in their own person.

**Speech function overview**

Darby’s account is striking for its near symmetrical division between statements (49%, n = 18) and directives (51%, n = 19).

**Statements: Direct & indirect speech**

The majority (n = 10) of the seventeen statements Darby attributes to his voices involve repeated references to his voices designating him with a new, religious identity (n = 6) or revealing the concealed identity of others (n = 4). In both cases, the roles and personal names ascribed by Darby’s voices are drawn from events described in the gospels. The remaining statements (n = 7) are claims mostly concerning the alleged need for secrecy regarding what he heard. Darby’s voices are unusual in comparison with other participants in that he makes no mention of any aggressive interactions with his voices. For example, he does not cite any cases of hearing accusations, threats or insults.
Directives: direct & indirect speech

Over two-thirds (68%, n = 13) of the directives Darby cites relate to being instructed to carry out actions that affect his routine behaviour. While some of these directions are in themselves relatively innocuous, several placed him at risk of public humiliation. In contrast, the remaining six directives (32%) prohibit him from taking any action. Regulatory directives are found almost equally across direct and indirect speech while prohibitions are wholly represented using indirect speech. Darby includes no examples of his voices commanding him to hurt himself or another person. This distinction is shared only with Shirley.
**Use of direct & indirect speech**

Darby is the only participant who predominantly represents his voices through indirect speech (78%, n = 29). This difference is particularly evident in the case of statements, in which only one is rendered as direct speech, despite nearly half of his total number of utterances being statements (49%, n = 18), with directives making up the rest (51%, n = 19).

![Darby: speech function overview](chart)

Statements comprise more than half (59%, n = 17) of indirect speech reports while directives account for all but one of the eight uses of direct speech and the remaining 41% of indirect speech.
**Statements: direct speech**

Darby uses direct speech only once to refer to a statement. All other statements are reported using indirect speech. The solitary statement Darby quotes is a reference to his being a significant member of Jesus’ group of disciples (1.231, 663–664). As this act of identification is reported in all other cases, its content will be discussed under indirect speech.

**Statements: indirect speech**

Darby’s recall of his voices is mostly concerned with communications (56%, n = 9) in which
he is made privy to the ‘true’ identity of other people as well as himself. Associated with these are a number of claims in which he is told that this information is to be kept to himself.

Identify (hearer & other)

Unlike his partner Joan, who refers to her voices identifying others in terms of their alleged, clandestine profession (i.e. ‘whore’ and ‘undercover police officer’), Darby recalls his voices identifying various people with important figures from the gospel narratives as Jesus Christ and Pontius Pilate when he was in hospital (2.96, 248–251). The repeated references to Darby as the ‘thirteenth disciple’ (e.g. 1.51, 194–195) are ambiguous in their significance as they carry both negative and positive associations. Although the number thirteen is traditionally a number of ill-omen, the appellation ‘thirteenth disciple’ also suggests an arcane or occult status that marks him out as special or perhaps even awaited. It appears that this role had already been conferred on him without his knowing it, apart from one occasion where he is told that this was yet to happen (2.96, 247). However, Darby accepted his new identity with little emotion and did not appear to develop any grandiose ideas about himself (2.104, 262–265). His designation as a noteworthy personage is in contrast with Joan, who was also identified in religious terms but pejoratively as ‘a child of the devil’ (1.62, 227–228 & 229).

Claim

Nearly all the claims (n = 7) Darby reports concern the allegedly confidential nature of what his voices used to tell him (2.50, 138–140). Despite the religious content of the information with which he was supplied, the language used to swear him to secrecy does not invoke
divine authority but instead appears to refer to official clearance procedures that are more bureaucratic than spiritual. This claim is construed lexically through the collocation ‘top secret’ and the technical formality of the verb ‘declassify’. This is reinforced more directly in the form of proscriptive directives, discussed below.

Darby also refers to a voice whose content he reports as a claim but which arguably had the effect of a directive:

1.195, 585-587 I went to – (Joan smiles widely and gestures to Darby to tell the story) my voices told me that I had two Ferraris to pick up (Both he and Joan chuckle)

Such examples of language serve to show how a hearer’s report of their voice may not, at least initially, make explicit the effect on their actions. In other words, a hearer may not expressly refer to an action they took as a directive from their voice.

**Directives: direct speech**

Broadly speaking, the seven directives Darby quotes are all regulatory (100%) in that he is given instructions about performing mundane activities. However, there may be grounds for recognising a sub-category of commission so as to allow for identifying directives that appear to set an objective.

**Regulate**

The context in which these primarily occur is that of travelling to various churches at any hour of the day or night to receive blessings in accordance with his prominent status. Darby explains how his voices were quite pedantic in the way they ‘micro-managed’ him through this series of directions (1.231, 662–667). Darby describes how on another occasion he was informed that he was to go shopping:

1.216, 631-633 Well um uh I’d wake up in the mornings and uh and the voice would say “right you-you’re going to buy a DVD today” and um I-I’d um quickly get dressed and have breakfast and go to um um Sanity or um Ezy DVD

The explicit use of second person ‘you’ and the prospective verb form ‘(be) going to’ (Lewis, 1986) suggests a decision made earlier that Darby is only made party to when the process of decision-making has closed. Implicitly, Darby is expected to comply with a decision reached in his absence rather than the course of action itself. This case can be distinguished from other regulatory directives as it appears to act as a type of commission in that Darby represents himself being assigned a goal in the form of a task or mission to accomplish. Darby provides more instances of such commissions using indirect speech.
Directives: indirect speech

Darby divides his use of indirect speech evenly across regulatory (n = 6) and prohibitive (n = 6) directives.

Regulate

Whereas Darby uses direct speech to indicate the high level of direction he often received on his visits to churches to receive blessings, he mostly uses indirect speech to catalogue other more disparate commissions, such as attempting to be interviewed on the radio news (1.191, 577–580). As with his citing of other directives, the language Darby uses is typically terse, which may or may not represent the actual wording heard. For example, the following instruction is phrased earlier as a quote (1.216, 632) and carries the sense of a fait accompli, as discussed above:

1:219, 641-642 they just-they just told me to go to-to West Lakes and uh and um uh go to Sanity

Darby came to spend several thousand dollars over numerous visits. On a positive note, as a result Darby has built up such a large DVD collection that family members and friends have borrowed them or even stayed to watch one over a coffee. As Joan generously observes, ‘it’s a good social point’ (1.228, 656).

Prohibit

As indicated earlier in relation to the proscriptive language of the claims reported, all six

36 The name of a retail store selling CDs and DVDs.
instances of prohibitions expressly forbid Darby from talking about his voices as neither their existence nor such information as his being ‘the thirteenth disciple’ had yet been “declassified” (2.50, 138–140). The representation of these prohibitions as reports using indirect speech, especially with the use of the passive voice construction ‘(be) not allowed to’, represents Darby as being denied the freedom to exercise self-autonomy while he remains subject to the need to obtain permission to determine his own actions.

**Victoria: ‘It’s really like having a relationship with a person but it’s all inside your head’**

Victoria describes talking to herself in the person of a friend, family member or God with comforting words that she wants to hear as a result of feeling upset or lonely. These conversations seem to have been particularly compulsive when she used to sit for extended periods in front of her mirror (5.10–18, 27–54). The interactions she describes in her account are varied and extreme, including personal expressions of support and affection, demands for action on issues of social justice, but also orders to mutilate herself. Despite their extreme content, Victoria likens her experiences of her voices to any relationship (1.83, 394–395) and compares her voices with ‘having a friend constantly talking to you in your head’ (1.58, 302) but quickly qualifies that with the admission that ‘sometimes the friend can be quite nasty and say quite ridiculous things’ (1.58, 303–304). In spite of all she has suffered on account of her voices, she also admits to resisting taking her medication because of her attachment to them.

**Speech function overview**

Victoria and particularly Darby give nearly equal weighting in their accounts to statements and directives. Victoria represents her voices with a higher proportion of statements and minor clauses (54%, n = 52) than directives (45%, n = 43) across direct and indirect speech.
Statements & minor clauses: direct & indirect speech

In terms of the range of speech acts described, the accounts given by Victoria and Shirley are comparable as regards the variety of interactions with which they represent their voices. Furthermore, both participants are unusual in that they refer to their voices sometimes conversing with them in a supportive manner. Victoria is the only person who gives examples of her voices affirming her self-worth through praise and encouragement (25%, n = 13).

Nonetheless, Victoria refers to a number of offensive remarks (13%, n = 7) made about her appearance and moral character. Although she also makes reference to criticisms (12%,
n = 6)\(^{37}\), the context in which they were experienced suggests they were forms of chiding or remonstrance heard as her mother’s voice admonishing her for not respecting herself enough. The category of consent (10%, n = 5) is notable for comprising speech acts that are the closest to a voice offering to undertake action for a hearer. Claims (12%, n = 6), on the other hand, are all negative in content, mostly imputing dishonourable motives to people she meets socially.

**Directives: direct & indirect speech**

Directives are almost equal in number to statements. Nearly half of these (49%, n = 21) are regulatory in their apparent intent. Mostly, these are overtly negative or involve her compromising her safety. The most extreme examples consist of a sequence of innocuous actions that at the outset do not appear malicious but which culminate in acts of self-harm. It is because of this initial concealment of intent that these speech acts are not categorised as commands to self-harm so as to highlight the preparatory role of regulatory instructions in leading to explicit instructions to injure herself (7%, n = 3). However, Victoria is more abrupt in her description of commands to harm others (9%, n = 4), especially her father. Apart from Darby, Victoria is the only other participant who tends to indirectly report (56%, n = 24) rather than directly quote (44%, n = 19) directives.

Prohibitions account for nearly a quarter (23%, n = 10) of the total. The examples Victoria gives largely concern being denied self-care in the form of food and medication. The inclusion of positive experiences in which she is encouraged to pursue her interest in

\(^{37}\) Excluding one accusation from the grouped category.
jewellery (12%, n = 5) would seem to be uncharacteristic of her voices but are clearly connected with a substantial number of acts of praise and encouragement (25%, n = 13) heard as assertions of her artistic talent. She has only one quoted question (3.104, 524–525), which is sarcastic in tone.

**Use of direct & indirect speech**

Victoria primarily uses direct speech (65%, n = 62) to recount what she recalls of her voices. This is particularly evident in the case of quoted statements and minor clauses (44%, n = 42). However, Victoria unusually shows a marginal preference for reporting directives using indirect speech (25%, n = 24) rather than quoting them using direct speech (20%, n = 19).

In terms of the distribution of speech functions in terms of each speech frame, Victoria differs from other participants in her clear preference for reporting directives (71%, n = 24) and quoting statements (65%, n = 40). Hearers in this study overall preferred to use direct speech to represent to directives.
Statements & minor clauses: direct speech

As only ten statements are reported using indirect speech, the distribution of speech acts represented using direct speech closely follows that of the total across both types of speech frame, with the notable exception of threats, of which four are reported.
Praise

Victoria’s voices are distinctive for their forthright commendations of her character and talents (24%, n = 10)\textsuperscript{38}. These are sometimes experienced in response to feelings of distress, such as when she takes the part of her mother and tells herself how she proud she is of her daughter (1.28, 115–119). Although such experiences may provide immediate comfort, Victoria goes on to state that they have led her to falsely assume these conversations are remembered by the other person. Furthermore, they also come to replace the discussion of any issues with the actual family member or friend involved, thereby preventing their resolution. Nonetheless, it was because of the praise her voices gave her about several jewellery designs she had drawn when she was ill that she returned to study (1.93, 433–436). Victoria followed this advice and enrolled in a jewellery course after being commended on her work. In a later interview, Victoria talks more about how the change in her voices from those of men who mistreated her to hearing her parents praising her has led to her making real changes for the good in how she lives (3.46–49, 221–237).

Criticise, accuse

The six examples Victoria gives of her voices making negative evaluations were all heard in the context of a party she went to for an old high school friend, Syd, at which his friends from football were rapidly getting drunk. Victoria describes how she heard her mum’s voice admonishing her as she watched Syd and his friends race to drink as fast as they could from a ‘beer bong’, a contraption in which beer is siphoned through plastic tubes (3.72–74, 337–

\textsuperscript{38} Excluding one act of encouragement from the grouped category.
Later Syd tries to have sex with her when she stays overnight but she refuses him. When she returns home, she hears more voices chiding her for what nearly happened in a protective if reproachful manner that she clearly associates with her mother (3.76, 363–366). One assertion identified here as an accusation rather than a claim due to its highly defamatory content is one in which a voice often alleges that her father is a paedophile (3.104, 513–515). As a result of this false accusation, Victoria on one occasion reported her father to the police and he was subjected to questioning.

Insult

Four of the six offensive remarks Victoria quotes are directed at her physical appearance, mental competency and personal value. These are examined in more detail in Chapter 7 in terms of their use of evaluative language.

Claim

Victoria refers to only five instances (12%) in which her voices make claims. These are all negative and several occur in the same context in which she explains how intrusive her voices used to be in social situations before she started taking medication. For example, when someone was talking to her, her voices would attribute ulterior motives as the reason for their interest in her (3.35, 127–132). These cynical claims about the motives others had in talking with her inhibited her from making friendships as they encouraged her to believe that people only wanted to exploit her. Victoria recognises that she was prone to hear more florid delusional claims when she did not take her medication, such as allegations concerning a government conspiracy against her (1.20, 87–89).

Consent

Victoria refers to five examples (12%) of her voices consenting to assist her with a request. Two of these (1.46, 245; 3.25, 81) appear close in intention to the major speech function of offering in that her voice agrees to take action on her behalf in a manner suggestive of a willingness that does not merely comply but indicates a more active involvement. Both of these acts of consent are spoken in the person of God responding to Victoria’s bedtime prayers for friends and neighbours who are ill. Although consent is the result of Victoria’s request rather than a volunteering of assistance initiated by her voice, the readiness with which her voice replies implies a voluntary agency that is a core feature of offers. These examples are exceptional in that the speech function of offering is noticeably absent in all hearers’ accounts unlike those of statement, directive and question.
Identify (hearer & voice)
Victoria’s examples (10%, n = 4) are all positive and attributed to God. As these make use of evaluative language, they are analysed in Chapter 7.

Express emotions, self-assert
Although Victoria does not foreground experiences of her voices expressing their emotions or asserting themselves (10%, n = 4) in her account, the following reference suggests that such behaviours are characteristic in at least one case:

1.65, 327-328 Justin my ex-husband he’s always “I love you=I want you back” and all that sort of stuff

Victoria’s interactions with her male voices, often those of ex-boyfriends, appear to veer between the more prominent examples of insulting comments and these habitual declarations of devotion and longing. One instance which is not romantic in content is the expression of interest shown by the voice of Victoria’s jewellery teacher about one of her designs:

2.10, 60 “oh I’d like to make this”

Statements: indirect speech
Only ten speech acts are reported in contrast with the forty-two represented using direct speech. These primarily refer to Victoria’s voices making threats (n = 4), praising (n = 2), expressing emotions (n = 2) and making claims (n = 2).
Threaten

A series of four threats are summarised in very general terms in relation to a voice called Lisa that Victoria leaves relatively late in our interviews to mention (4.178, 663–667). She does not state what the content of the threats are but they target both her and ‘people I loved’ (4.178, 666).

Praise

The two reported acts of praise demonstrate the extremes in behaviour that are associated with changes in Victoria’s overall mental state. On the one hand, she wryly credits her voices with being the first to give her the praise needed that eventually led to her enrolling in a jewellery design course at TAFE (1.93, 440–441). However, when Victoria was ill they asserted that it was because of her exceptional intelligence that the government was trying to kill her (2.25, 130–133). The context in which this grandiose assertion was made could also support its classification as a form of claim but it has been categorised here to highlight its inflationary content.

Express emotions

Both instances refer to Victoria’s night time conversations in bed before going to sleep in which she often hears an ex-boyfriend reassuring her that he loves her (3. 21, 62–63; 3.23, 74).

Claim

The one claim identified provides the alleged reason for Victoria not taking her medication, namely that she was the target of a government conspiracy due to her superior knowledge and intelligence (2.25, 130).

Directives: direct speech

Regulatory directives (47%, n = 9) are referred to nearly twice as often as their inhibitive counterpart, prohibitions (26%, n = 5). The former are largely divided between the use of imperatives to commission an overarching future task, or to step her through the performance of a series of isolated physical acts that culminate in commands to self-harm. Prohibitions all centre on neglecting self-care with demands that she forego taking her medication and eating. Overall, the examples of directives Victoria gives either place her personal safety at risk or are the instigators of serious physical self-harm.
Regulate

As with Darby, Victoria’s voices segment in ‘real time’ a sequence of actions for her to follow. However, in Victoria’s case these are a covert prelude to a concluding command which necessitates her harming herself:

2:37, 271-274  like I’ve had a voice tell me to burn myself with a cigarette lighter … I’ve had a voice tell me (She acts out lighting the cigarette lighter) “light it” so I lit it (.) “count to 10” so I counted to 10 (.) “let go of it (.) let go of it=put it on your chest”

In contrast, several other regulatory directives arguably function as a form of commission. Victoria varies in her recount of how she came to spend two to three weeks sleeping at a bus stop in Port Augusta (1.95, 448–451; 1.108, 490–492; 3.97, 459–466). In the only direct speech version, the imperative is forcefully used (4.163, 623–624) as though she were being given an assignment. A more explicit example of a commission is that of releasing refugees from the detention centre in Baxter (3.29, 96–97), especially as it appears that Victoria attributed this directive to God (3.29, 98).

Command to harm (self & other)

Victoria is the only hearer who is told to harm another person (her father) as well as herself. These commands are represented as either a retributive act of justice for her father’s alleged criminal offence (1.28, 143) or simply her own personal inadequacy (3.45, 212). In both cases, death is given as the punishment. In the episode in which Victoria describes burning herself with a cigarette lighter (2.37, 271–298) it is only when prompted about the reasons for harming herself that she goes on to explain that it was punishment for supposedly
embarrassing a friend’s father.

**Prohibit**

In our second interview Victoria produces five examples of prohibitions, representing around a quarter (26%) of the nineteen quoted directives. These are all addressed to Victoria as blunt negative imperatives and mostly forbid her from taking her medication (2.25, 135 & 139) and eating (2.33, 239; 2.35, 266). The first is on account of an alleged government conspiracy (2.25, 130) and the second because she was supposedly overweight. The latter had particularly serious consequences as she put herself on a starvation diet.

**Suggest**

The three quoted examples Victoria gives of her voices acting in more positive terms stand in stark contrast with her other directives. These are recalled in combination with prefatory praise of her jewellery designs (1.93, 435–436) and even encouragement to pursue a new career path (3.16, 38). Victoria could not remember which voice suggested this idea but thought it might have been an ex-boyfriend or her mother.

**Directives: indirect speech**

There is a slightly higher number of reported regulatory directives (50%, n = 12) than quoted occurrences, while prohibitions (22%, n = 5) comprise less than a quarter of the total. Victoria’s account again largely features references to her voices ordering her to carry out a significant undertaking such as travelling to Port Augusta. Reported prohibitions, as with their direct speech counterparts, mostly concern being barred from eating and taking medication. In the case of commands to harm (self and other), Victoria not only tended to represent them more often as indirect speech reports (21%, n = 5) but was more specific in terms of their content. Positive directives in which she is encouraged to study jewellery are similar in number to their direct speech equivalents (8%, n = 2) if lower proportionately. Victoria’s use of indirect speech to represent directives accords with the primarily negative and hostile nature of her direct speech examples.
Regulate

Victoria’s use of the default directive verb ‘tell’ in the recurrent structure ‘a voice told me to’ (1.95, 455; 3.97, 459–465) clearly positions her as lacking a sense of her own agency. However, because this clause is often supplied after she has recounted an episode it is not always certain how much of the preceding content should be attributed to her voice’s specific instigation. Shirley, Amy and Darby, on the other hand, typically use a reporting verb to introduce the content of their voice’s instructions, and either suggest that they did not carry out the injunction or leave open the question of its performance. That is, in their accounts the voice comes first and then the instruction, with the action left unsaid. Victoria, in contrast, reports the instructions she heard in terms of a completed past action. She explains her behaviour retrospectively by explaining how it was instigated by a voice.

Nearly all the examples Victoria provides relate to her being instructed to travel to Port Augusta and sleep at a bus stop (1.95, 448–455) in order to attempt to reach the Baxter detention centre on foot some twelve kilometres away to release the refugees held there. The only other instances of reported regulatory directives involve being told to spend the night in a park near her family home (3.97, 461–462), and an explanation of her reluctance to act on her voice’s encouragement to pursue her interest in jewellery (1.111, 510–517) as she associated her experiences of hearing such directives with being ill.

Prohibit

In addition to several reported examples of her voices prohibiting her from eating or taking her medication (2. 25, 149; 2.35, 244) Victoria also explains how she often felt unable to
show any physical reaction when her parents spoke to her, possibly because her voices were forbidding her from doing so (4.125, 505–508). These reported directives all appear to have been blunt imperatives given the structure of the indirect speech clause and their direct speech equivalents.

**Command to harm (self & other)**

Victoria’s account of one incident in which she recounts directly acting on a command to harm herself is structured in a manner that clearly marks it out as a self-contained episode. This is realised by Victoria ‘bookending’ her account of harming herself with her cigarette lighter (2.37, 271–277) with an opening and closing summary using indirect speech in which she plainly states that she was told to burn herself. Earlier in the same interview, Victoria chillingly describes a voice giving her the curt command to go into her father’s bedroom to kill him (1.28, 143). When she refers to it again, but now using indirect speech, she is more specific as to the actual manner of his death, explaining that she was told to shoot him (1.111, 506–507). As Victoria did not go on to state if she had access to firearms, it is unclear how much actual risk her father stood in.

**Suggest**

Victoria twice refers to her voices recommending that she study jewellery design (3.16, 32–45).

**Mark: ‘I don’t get commands’**

Mark’s voice behaves in a manner that is distinctively different from other participants in this study. The absence of ‘commands’ (1.8, 69–72) is for Mark one of its most distinguishing features. As a form of self-commentating, his voice repeats his ideas aloud but does not offer any observations of its own (1.14, 94–95). In particular, when this commentary (1.4, 17) mirrors Mark’s growing distress, it does not berate him as David’s voice does (David 2.43, 110–113) but instead echoes Mark’s own first-hand feelings of resistance and helplessness. Negative experiences feature a combination of speech acts, namely acknowledgement, complaint, protest and self-assertion, that appear to represent an escalating sequence from increasingly less detached observations of his own difficulties to surges of intense emotion that profess the loss of the will to live. These speech acts function as a kind of barometer for his emotional pressure. More positively, Mark’s voice collaborates with him to resolve issues or suggest ideas in regards to working out his business plan.
Speech function overview

Statements (47%, n = 14) with minor clauses (7%, n = 2) account for over half of the total, with directives (23%, n = 7) and questions (23%, n = 7) comprising most of the remaining half. However, separating references to Mark’s voice from speech in his own person is complicated by the diagnosed symptom of thought echo, as in the sequence of turns 1.101–104, in which it is sometimes unclear to what extent the audible thought represents a phenomena that is distinct from Mark’s own thought processes.

Statements & minor clauses: direct & indirect speech

The statements and minor clauses Mark attributes to his voice are notable for the inclusion of two types of closely related speech act not identified in the accounts of other participants. The most frequent is a form of complaint in which Mark’s voice echoes his distress about a recurrent predicament he is experiencing. This typically positions him as a victim of circumstance. The other is in the order of a self-directed protest that features Mark arguing that he is unable to cope anymore. Complaints and protests account for 75% (n = 12) of all statements and minor clauses he attributes to his voices. The remaining 25% (n = 4) includes two instances of a milder or more neutral form of ‘acknowledgement’ that is distinct from a complaint or protest in that Mark’s voice observes with apparently less emotion the duress of the situation he is in. In addition are two examples of Mark’s voice asserting more insistently both its willingness and refusal to face personal difficulties and demands. Acknowledgements can be said to represent the early phase of a continuum that develops momentum as complaints, protests and especially negative self-assertions culminate in
nihilistic ruminations that often lead to Mark placing himself in psychiatric care.

Directives: direct speech

All seven directives are provided in the form of direct speech quotes (100%). These are regulatory in function and are repetitions of the colloquial imperative “hang on” which is typically used to interrupt and take the turn in a conversation. As this verb group is quite formulaic, it stands on the borderline between a directive and minor clause.

Questions: direct speech

The questions Mark quotes are neutral in their apparent intent. They are all concerned with querying the truth of information and do not display any sarcastic or intimidating overtones. Four of the seven questions are closed polarity interrogatives which conventionally expect a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer to either confirm or disconfirm the query. More specifically, in Mark’s account they represent a process of deduction to clarify the dependability of the ideas he is considering. The other three questions are open ‘wh-’ interrogatives in which Mark is ostensibly given more scope in his choice of answer. However, these appear to function less to elicit information than as a means of prompting or inviting Mark to reflect on how to develop his business plan.

Use of direct & indirect speech

In our two interviews Mark almost exclusively uses direct speech (97%, n = 29). The sole exception is a reported statement functioning as a negative form of self-assertion.
Statements & minor clauses: direct speech

The use of direct speech across all speech functions is proportionately equivalent to the overall pattern of speech function use given the occurrence of only one indirect speech report.

As noted above, negative expressions of discontent occur more frequently than acknowledgements and self-assertions. In the case of direct speech, nearly three-quarters of statements (73%, n = 11) are complaints and protestations.
Complain

The seven complaints identified are formulaic in their use of idiomatic expression. These are a type of negative exclamation in which Mark hears a thought echo of his voice expressing agitation that he is about to re-enter a familiar cycle of illness (1.59, 215–218; 1.90, 295–297). These complaints consist of a refrain that foregrounds the recurrent pattern of his illness in terms of an emotional immediacy which often leaves him feeling helpless.

Protest

Mark repeats a protestation four times with some slight variation. They emphasise feelings of being overrun and incapacitated by the levels of stress he is experiencing. These are typically heard in combination with other negative statements and appear to be a transitional speech act occurring at the mid-point of an escalation of distress that may be initially signalled with a complaint before culminating in a strong self-assertion in which his voice seems to indicate the growing pressure of thoughts of self-harm (1.6, 58–63; 2.201, 606–610).

Acknowledge

There are two connected clauses that have been analysed as forms of acknowledgement in that Mark’s voice concedes the difficult nature of his experiences. Although in terms of content these are negative statements, functionally they appear to be part of a more positive process in which Mark is able to monitor his mental state (2.27, 102–104). However, Mark goes on to explain that even such ‘congruent’ thoughts that accord with his own self-assessment may give rise to a violent tide of ‘tangential thinking’ (2.27, 107).
**Self-assert**

Whereas with protestations Mark’s voice insists that he is unable to act for himself, self-assertions concern the act of will needed. Two examples are identified in which Mark’s voice asserts the necessity to act on his ideas (2.20, 72–74) and a more compulsive urge that he associates with the onset of illness (2.201, 609), which was discussed above in relation to the category of protests.

**Statements: indirect speech**

Mark only once uses indirect speech to refer to his voice. This is a reported self-assertion (1.6.61) which is embedded in his description (see Protest) of the sequence of echoed thoughts that leads to getting himself admitted to hospital (1.6.58–63). When Mark’s negative thoughts intensify from an initial complaint and protest to a more adamant assertion that is suggestive of a growing resolve to end his life, his voice has developed a more resistant and defiant function.

**Directives: direct speech**

Mark several times distinguishes his voice from those more generally heard in that he does not hear any ‘commands’ (e.g. 1.8; 2.16; 2.18; 2.185). However, he produces seven identical instances of the colloquial interjection “hang on/about”, which is arguably a mild form of regulatory directive in that he is being instructed to refrain from further action and pay attention. This use of the imperative typically introduces an episode of self-questioning in which Mark’s voice reflexively queries the rationality of his thought processes (1.104, 338–342).

**Questions: direct speech**

All the questions Mark’s voice poses enact a process of either self-enquiry or problem solving.
The four questions that probe Mark’s mental status in relation to his business project are grammatically constructed as closed polarity interrogatives, while the three that explore his business options are open ‘wh-’ interrogatives.

In the case of closed polarity questions, the choice of proposition is narrow and highly specified. The four questions are presented as a pair of binary alternatives which hinge on the uncertainty of the origin of his ideas for his business proposal:

1.101, 332-335; 1.104, 338-339 Well for example um the notion that I-I wanted to do that project right? Now that was-s-s-s prominent in my mind but a competing th-th-thought that went with that is “hey hang on hang on am I ill at the moment? Is this rational?” (…) I have this thought that I – I sort of say to myself “hey hang on
The three open ‘wh’-questions, on the other hand, are used to elicit ideas and suggestions rather than attempting to define an issue as above (2.11, 32; 2.25, 94; 2.156, 461). In our second and final interview, Mark explains how he has been investigating issues of health and safety in relation to his business project. He goes on to describe how this type of behaviour from his voice is in ego-syntonic alignment with his own conscious standpoint (2.25, 93–99). This sense of a productive consistency in thinking reflected in his voice is also referred to in an extract from interview 2.11, 28–34 discussed earlier under directives.

**Summary**

When hearers discuss the content of their voices, they are involved in a highly complex activity in which their recall of the words and meaning of what they hear is realised as both a pragmatic and grammatical representation. Communicative function and linguistic form are simultaneously interpreted and mapped in the context of their impact on the hearer’s emotions and self-understanding. Language becomes the fundamental channel through which the verbal phenomena associated with the sensory experience of voices are not only personally encountered but subsequently communicated to others. Voices are then judged on these terms, especially in a clinical setting, by what they say. Their behaviour is largely documented with examples of the types of verbal interaction hearers report similar to those discussed in detail above.

This chapter has accordingly attempted to demonstrate that embedded samples of what voices say play the part of perforations in hearers’ accounts to a world beyond our hearing. We only come to hear of the voice through the language that hearers use. Indeed, words and grammar, meaning and function come to constitute the voice in many respects in the accounts hearers give. Specifically, this chapter has sought to recognise how hearers represent their voices as social interactions as well as the role played by the speech frame chosen to ‘stitch’ them into the overall narrative. In any personal account, voices primarily come to be represented as either a quoted or reported linguistic entity. In addition, the preceding discussion has also discerned possible patterns in the relationship hearers appear to be developing between the two domains of speech act and speech framing. It is through the combination of this pair of lenses that we are able to draw a detailed map of the personal accounts hearers give of the verbal behaviour of their voices (see Appendix 6 for more details).
Key findings include:

1. The majority of examples hearers gave of their voices were in the form of statements (70%). Directives accounted for a quarter (25%) of the total.

2. Participants generally preferred to speak as their voices using direct speech for statements and directives twice as often as framing them as indirect speech reports.

3. The speech acts identified situate interactions in relation to events in the external world. The language voices use expresses intentional and emotional force which often have direct implications for the hearer’s behavior and actions.

4. Statements comprise a diverse range of speech acts. A quarter of these (26%) are represented by claims that deny the apparent veracity of relationships or situations, or assert an opposite reality. Speech acts that more directly compromise hearers’ behavior are expressed as forms of hostile or bullying communication: accusations, blame and criticism (18%), insults (17%), and plotting, threats and warnings (15%). The emotional content of aggressive statements that reject a hearer’s sense of self-worth are arguably as potentially dangerous in the long-term as explicit commands to act violently.

5. Commands for hearers to harm themselves (15%) or others (3%) were exceeded by more regulatory directives that instructed hearers concerning daily activities, assigned significant undertakings, or gave advice or consent. However, a number of negative statements, such as claims and insults, could be interpreted by hearers (for example, David) as implying that they should take their own lives. Prohibitions involving food were a form of negative directive that had the potential to result in hearers neglecting their health.

The next chapter considers from a functional perspective the role grammar plays in how voices represent the world of the hearer.
6 How do voices represent the hearer’s world?

This chapter examines voice content in terms of the type of verb that forms the grammatical core of the clause. A transitivity analysis identifies how the language attributed to voices represents action as a distinctive type of process that refers to a specific domain of experience (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Every reference to a communication from a voice was analysed, apart from a small number of reported statements that summarise voice content as a form of verbal behaviour without providing the content of the interaction, as in ‘They threatened me and everyone of value in my life’ (Amy 1.21, 144–145). As the distinction between direct quote and indirect report has already been treated in Chapter 5, the choice of speech frame can be excluded from the following analysis.

A summary of the total distribution of process types across all participants is initially presented, which is then followed by a detailed analysis of each process type and its various sub-types with the support of examples for each hearer. Following Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), processes are examined for each participant in the order of material, behavioural, mental, verbal, relational and existential. The rationale for observing this sequence is that the domain of each process borders upon its neighbour in a continuous ring. Thus, the ‘minor’ processes (behavioural, verbal and existential) are held to be positioned between the ‘major’ processes (material, mental, and relational). An abridged key of the main processes is featured in Table 6 (see Appendix 7 for further information with examples).
Table 6 Summary of process types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process type</th>
<th>Main sub-type</th>
<th>Main content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>Making &amp; happening</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transformative</td>
<td>Acting on &amp; changing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavioural</td>
<td></td>
<td>Physical &amp; mental behaviour, bodily functions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental</td>
<td>Perceptive</td>
<td>Perceiving</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Thinking</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Desiderative</td>
<td>Wanting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Emotive</td>
<td>Feeling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Verbal behaviour</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Semiosis</td>
<td>Quoting &amp; reporting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Intensive</td>
<td>Being (attribute or identity)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Possessive</td>
<td>Having</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Circumstantial</td>
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<td>Existential</td>
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<td>Existing</td>
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Overview of how voices represent the hearer’s world

Even after taking individual differences into consideration, there is a noticeable pattern across participants in the predominance of material processes followed by relational processes, with Shirley being the notable exception. With the addition of behavioural processes representing action as a meaningful hybrid of physical and mental functions, the proportion of processes construing acting in the world increases markedly in Amy’s case. Mental and verbal processes vary proportionally across accounts but the former appears to be more typically a part of the content of voices, with Joan and Darby being the only participants who give greater precedence to verbal processes. Existential processes on the other hand make only a single appearance, in Amy’s account.

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39 Total percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.
In order to further identify patterns across hearers’ accounts, the above data is displayed in a stacked bar chart for the purposes of comparison. However, given the variation in the number of interviews and the frequency of references to the content of voices, this chart is meant only to be suggestive of differences.

Darby’s account features the highest proportion of material processes (49%) construing concrete action in the world. With the addition of behavioural processes, however, the representation of substantive activity in the world increases noticeably for other hearers. Indeed, the inclusion of behavioural processes swells the number of references to physical action to either just below or over half the total number of processes in participants’
accounts, apart from Shirley, who has the lowest proportion of material processes (29%). Relational processes are a process type that also forms a substantial part of the recalled content of voices. These processes form a major part (40%) in both Shirley’s and David’s cases. Mental processes are primarily found in the accounts of Shirley (22%) and Amy (20%) while Joan’s account features the highest proportion of verbal processes (22%).

Overall, David’s account is notable for its near symmetry of process types. The major processes of material and relational virtually stand at opposite ends of the spectrum in Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2014) model of transitivity when laid out as a continuum (see Chapter 1 for the image used on the front cover of Halliday, 1994). These two processes are closely balanced in David’s account, with the third major process type (mental) being far less evident but more apparent than the minor processes (behavioural and verbal) which fringe its margins. The third minor process type (existential) is lacking altogether. This pattern of distribution is also discernible to a lesser degree in the accounts of Shirley, Amy and Victoria. In contrast, Darby is the only participant who makes no reference to his voices using mental processes, whereas Mark is the only participant who makes no reference to verbal processes.

When viewed across all accounts, the symmetry of the distribution of processes is quite striking in that the major process types of material (37%, n = 273) and relational (31%, n = 229) are closely matched while mental processes as the third primary type are considerably fewer in number. Behavioural (8%, n = 56) and verbal (8%, n = 60) processes as minor processes representing human activity are substantially smaller in their distribution with only one example of existential processes identified. This pattern accords with Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2014, p. 215) ranking of process types and their respective distribution across a range of language uses.
Joan: ‘Whatever the voices are saying you believe’

Joan’s account of the content of her voices is primarily found in the region governed by material and behavioural processes but also expands into the more representational domains of relational and verbal processes in which concepts and speech are used to denote action of a more symbolic order. By contrast, references to mental activity are notably absent from Joan’s voices.

The examples Joan gives of her voices primarily features processes that represent her behaviour and physical actions, especially in contexts in which it is the subject of intrusive
directives. These are all negative in meaning, often describing acts of self-harm or unpleasant experiences administered by others. In addition to demanding she take physical action against herself, they attempt to coerce her into verbally acting in an insulting and hostile manner to others. Although there is very little reference to her voices commenting on her beliefs or emotions, or what others think of her (as in the case of Amy), their use of negative evaluations target her self-esteem and opinion of others.

Joan’s account is chiefly comprised of material (40%, n = 22) processes. This figure increases to around half the total (49%, n = 27) if behavioural processes are also included (9%, n = 5). Relational (25%, n = 14) and verbal processes (22%, n = 12) appear to an almost equal degree while mental processes barely feature (4%, n = 2).

**Material processes**

Nearly all the material processes used, regardless of whether they are transformative (77%, n = 17) or creative (23%, n = 5) in type, represent violent action.
Creative: specific

The five creative sub-types of material processes are all found in the same context of Joan being commanded to “take an overdose” (2.186, 530–531). The process ‘take’ is specific in the sense that the direct object ‘an overdose’ is the outcome of Joan’s actions rather than a pre-existing entity to be acted on. The repeated use of ‘do’ is counted as it is here substituting for the overall action.

Transformative

Only two of the seventeen transformative instances of material processes are not elaborating in sub-type. That is, nearly all the actions represented involve an existing entity being changed in a fundamental respect.

Elaborating

An extreme case of this class of material process is in seen in the repeated command for Joan to “crash the car” (1.169, 505; 2.184, 527). The destructive impact of Joan’s action is ostensibly directed only towards her vehicle. Such cases of commands to self-harm place the act of violence outside the hearer in terms of a material object, thereby evading any explicit reference to an act of suicide or murder.

Acts that do explicitly affect the welfare of a person include several references to the threat of damnation that Joan is “going to burn in hell” (1.62, 228–229; 3.61, 148) and warnings that she could get “arrested” by Austin, allegedly an undercover policeman, if she did anything wrong (2.20, 62 & 65). As a result of such intimidation, she was too afraid to take
part in her Bible study group.

**Behavioural processes**

Four of the five behavioural processes identified are repetitions of the content of the indiscriminate command to tell various people to “f- off” (1.62, 232–233). Retaining the category of behavioural process allows for distinguishing such cases where voices use language to refer to people in the crudest physiological terms.

**Mental processes**

The only references to the domain of the mind Joan attributes to her voices are two instances of the cognitive sub-type “know”. The first is used in the informal question stem “Did you know…?” to introduce the allegation that one of the participants at her Bible study group was a prostitute (2.20, 55–56), while the second is used in an insult to dismiss her intelligence (2.57, 157).

**Verbal processes**

The twelve examples Joan gives of her voices referring to acts of speaking are equally divided between summary reports of prohibitions against communicating with others and directives specifying the content of what she is being compelled to say. These sub-types of verbal process are identified as activity and semiosis respectively (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; see Appendix 7 for more illustrative examples) and are both used in speech acts functioning to control Joan’s social behaviour.
Activity

Verbal processes of this type are nearly all used in prohibitive directives, in which Joan is forbidden from engaging in such acts as ‘speak[ing]’, ‘mention[ing]’, or ‘discuss[ing]’ in relation to her voices, as well as from conversation in general (2.111, 279–280; 2.113, 282–284; 2.248, 713–714).

Semiosis

These are mostly used in blunt directives in which Joan is ordered to “tell” various people “to f- off” (1.62, 232–233).

Relational processes

All fourteen of the relational processes included in Joan’s account of her voices are intensive: attributive in type, describing the characteristics and features of people and situations. These are divided between abusive remarks directed at Joan (n = 5), allegations or insulting comments about others (n = 6), or claims about situations (n = 3). The personal insults aimed at Joan concern her being “a child of the devil” (1.62, 227–229) and “a dumb bitch” (2.57, 157; 2.63, 168). The claims about other people mostly concern the alleged covert occupations of two members of her Bible study group (2.20, 55–56 & 61–61). Claims about situations include the supposed confidentiality of her voices (2.113, 282–284) and the danger of talking with others (2.20, 64–65).

Causative: agency

Joan twice reports the content of her voices in terms of a relationship of causation in which
she explicitly attributes agency to her voices in determining her behaviour. These two instances concern her experience of being told that she was ‘not allowed to speak’ (2.20, 62–64; 2.248, 713-714).

**Shirley: ‘It’s hard sometimes to believe that all this is going in my head’**

One respect in which Shirley’s account differs from other participants is the predominance of relational clauses as against material clauses. In particular, this atypical pattern foregrounds interactions in which her voices make evaluations concerning her value and capacity.

![Shirley: transitivity overview (%)](image)

References to events in the world using material processes are typically about acts performed by Shirley in the past and occur in the context of acts of blame or accusation. Other interactions cited include her voices debating decisions under consideration, such as her ongoing involvement in this study and even what clothes to wear. Shirley’s actions are represented as inextricably implicating their own. Behavioural processes focus on demands on Shirley to pay more attention to their needs. Associated with these negotiations is a substantial use of mental processes that position the emotions and wants of her voices as key factors. Shirley’s communication with other people is a source of contention as evidenced in the use of verbal processes. Her voices routinely quiz her about future conversations and the content of what she might divulge.

Shirley’s account is different to those of other participants in that her inclusion of relational
processes (40%, n = 54) exceeds that of material processes (29%, n = 39) even with the addition of behavioural processes (4%, n = 6). Mental processes are the third highest positioned, representing under a quarter (22%, n = 29) of the total, while verbal processes account for the remaining (4%, n = 6).

**Material processes**

Material processes of the transformative type are in the clear majority (90%, n = 35) with only four creative (10%) instances included.
Creative: general

Shirley’s four references to ‘happenings’ are mostly found in acts of blame in which her voices allege that she is responsible for mishaps:

\[ 1.8, 81 \] it was my fault that that **happened**

In such cases, ‘**happened**’ is used in Shirley’s indirect speech reports as a generic form of reference to past actions. This use contrasts with the examples Amy provides in which her voices intimidate her with the threat of unspecified unpleasant events rather than blame for actual past ones.

Transformative

Most material: transformative processes are elaborating (80%, n = 28) in type with six enhancing (17%) and one (3%) extending of the other types.

Elaborating

A high number of elaborating instances are repetitions of formulaic phrases, such as the accusation “You **did** the wrong thing” \( (1.18, 240) \) and the criticism “you **shouldn’t have done** that” \( (1.21, 256) \). In neither case is it specified in Shirley’s account what it is that she did. The referent act presumably was clear from the context in which these statements were heard. A contrasting experience is illustrated in one of Shirley’s audio diary entries in which two of her alters disagree over her involvement in this study (Diary 1.6–14). She finally aligns herself with the more confident of her two alters, repeating in her own person the words of her bolder alter, “I want **to do** this” (Diary 1.11). Other occurrences are given in the form of regulatory directives cited in reference to Shirley’s discussion with her alters concerning what she colours she is allowed to ‘**wear**’ \( (3.6, 27–30) \) and what accessories she needs to ‘**put on**’ \( (3.6, 34; 3.8, 44) \). These instances demonstrate the contributing role her alters play in representing her appearance as a developing process of addition and inclusion.

Enhancing

The six uses of the enhancing sub-type refer to movement in both literal and metaphorical terms. Its figurative use is found in relation to one of her alters advising her against a premature encounter with her memories of her childhood abuse:

\[ 1.57, 567-568 \] sometimes you know the voices all say to me with "Oh you know you're not ready yet" (.) “don't-don't” you know “**don't go** there yet”

Two further instances construe movement as a means of leaving a painful past behind \( (1.16, \)
Shirley attributes these to the alter she names Denial, who advocates avoidance, either naively urging Shirley to press on with life or claiming that is no longer any experience to remember.

**Behavioural processes**

The few behavioural processes (4%, n = 6) identified are mostly concerned with the ‘near mental’ activities of ‘listening’ and ‘watching’.

Shirley several times refers to her voices expressing their dissatisfaction by accusing her of not “listening” to them (2.56, 271–272) in the sense of caring about their needs. Listening implies a communicative relationship in which her voices feel acknowledged as distinct from the impersonality of mere auditory perception (i.e. ‘hearing voices’). In addition, there is one occurrence of a statement in which her voices claim that “people are always watching me” (1.21, 259). Here Shirley is the focus of unwelcome attention that carries the implication that those observing her are anonymous and cannot be seen in return. There are no other examples of claims featuring similarly disturbing content as the few other references Shirley makes to negative remarks are reported as personal insults using relational processes.

**Mental processes**

Shirley (22%, n = 29) and Amy (20%, n = 50) are the only hearers whose accounts reflect a substantial proportion of references to their voices representing processes of the mind. However, whereas half of Amy’s references are concerned with acts of ‘thinking’ and the
remaining half divided between ‘wanting’ and ‘feeling’, Shirley’s account foregrounds ‘wanting’ (38%, n = 11) and ‘feeling’ (34%, n = 10), followed by ‘thinking’ (24%, n = 7) with her one reference to perception (3%) mirroring Amy’s sole reference to emotion.

**Desiderative**

The desiderative sub-type of mental process fundamentally underpins the struggle between Shirley and her voices (3.4, 15–16; 3.12, 70–71) and among her voices themselves (Diary 1, 6–7) to agree on what action to take. The role played by these psychological processes of ‘wanting’ is closely connected to mental processes construing emotion as the identification of needs and the expression of feelings are closely related in Shirley’s account. All references to wanting are from the voices’ perspective. These include both what her voices want to do themselves (Diary 1, 6–7) and what they want her to do (3.4, 16; 3.12, 72–73). These conflicts centre on Shirley’s decision over whether to continue to participate in this study (Diary 1; Diary 3), which by implication requires the cooperation of her voices, domestic negotiations concerning Shirley’s behaviour (3.4, 15-16; 12, 70-71), and outbursts of frustration and fatigue (3.67, 391) which may become expressive of her own feelings (3.67, 401–402). The use of the negative (“don’t want”) and positive (“want”) are equally distributed across all unambiguous instances of her voices communicating to her. References to a positive dynamic is particularly evident in Shirley’s recount of their general verbal behaviour (3.6, 23–28).

**Emotive**

Apart from two references to “Reg hates eggs” (Diary 4, 16–18) that Shirley could not
explain but which had the strong effect of making her feel nauseous when she was intending to have scrambled eggs for breakfast, other references to emotions mainly concern Shirley’s rather than her voices’. Most of these occur in the form of advisory directives, as in the following instance in which Shirley was feeling anxious over whether her behaviour as a result of her experiences of her voices was disturbing her children but heard a reassuring voice addressing her:

1.24, 297-298 she just said to me "you don't need to worry about that" and I felt this calmness come over me

Apart from these recurrent dismissals of her frequent feelings of insecurity, no verbs directly expressing any positive emotions are used by her voices. However, a number of references refer to positive evaluations as well as to negative moods or feeling states, for example “I’m afraid” (Diary 1, 6), which are treated under relational processes.

**Cognitive**

In addition to the use of ‘think’ to introduce an opinion (Diary 1, 11; 1.21, 261), in several examples the verbs used by her voices are associated with recall and recognition. These extend from the directive from her calm voice to stop ‘remembering’ distressing past experiences (1.39, 458) to being reminded to put on a black wrist band that she had “forgotten” to wear as agreed (3.6, 32) as a token of ‘acknowledgement’ of “the males of the system” (3.8, 43–44). As a gesture of the conscious inclusion of the existence of her voices, and even their value, the significance of the addition of a small fashion accessory was of the utmost importance from their perspective for the relationship.

**Verbal processes**

The verbal processes featured are evenly divided between those representing the general activity of spoken communication and those indicating content.
The former is used to demand that Shirley “talk” with them (3.12, 72–73) and to express their displeasure at her “talking” about her experiences to me (1.4, 14–15). The semiosis type is more concerned with the actual choice of words used as well as the content. For instance, one of the questions Shirley includes in her account was asked as part of a ‘practice conversation’ before our fourth interview.

4.106, 385-386 “Well if Keith asks you this, how would you reply?”

Communication is not only an important element in terms of their access to Shirley but the control of that access as regards others is also a key concern, as it is for the voices experienced by Joan (2.248, 713) and Amy (1.57, 467–471).

**Relational processes**

Shirley’s account features the most diverse range of relational processes of any participant. Those of the intensive type comprise the majority overall. Most of these are attributive in sub-type (41%, n = 22), with their identifying counterpart representing just under a third (30%, n = 16). Relational processes of the circumstantial: attributive sub-type follow (19%, n = 10). However, if these are considered in relation to intensive: attribute cases, it is evident that Shirley’s references to her voices are mostly concerned with describing the behaviours and characteristics of people and situations rather than defining identity.
Intensive: attributive

Shirley refers to her voices describing a number of different entities. Several instances are self-referential, as when one of her voices admits to feeling afraid (Diary 1, 6) at the prospect of Shirley taking part in this study. The examples Shirley gives concerning herself include a persistently negative male voice ‘telling me I’m useless’ (1.8, 85–86) and ‘I’m not a very worthwhile human’ (1.21, 258). Her more recent female voices are generally positive and their use of the attributive sub-type is found in advisory contexts, such as when Shirley is counselled that she was not ready to explore past traumatic experiences (1.59, 571). However, their most substantial use is in relation to a situation that is referred to in more general terms. This is particularly evident in references to the alter Shirley calls Denial, who encourages her to avoid facing emotional issues from her childhood:

Diary 3, 11-12 "You know everything’s okay (...) it's all fine"

In fact, Shirley cites a series of relational clauses to typify the Pollyanna attitude Denial represents:

1.16, 219-220 "oh no it's all gone (...) it’s a sunny rosy day (...) everything’s wonderful the sun shines and I’m always happy"

Intensive: identifying

Relational processes of the intensive: identifying type are often used to notable effect to specify the significance of an event. Shirley gives emphasis to this usage in her account through a repeated reference to the following ascription of blame:
Clearer instances feature in several questions asked by her voices about the identity of not only other people, such as her husband Geoff (2.66, 342–343), but also of Shirley herself (2.62, 325), whose identity does not appear to have been known by all her alters, especially the younger ones. Possibly the most startling use of this type of relational process is found in Shirley’s experience of hearing a new voice not only announcing itself by name but defining its identity in terms of its relationship and function to an unknown other:

Diary 3, 25  “And I’m Susie and I’m his victim”

In contrast with those clauses featuring attributive processes, Shirley’s voices use noun groups with identifying processes principally to reveal the hidden meaning of events, as well as for enquiring about and disclosing personal identity.

**Possessive: attributive**

Although this sub-type accounts for only 9% (n = 5) of the relational processes Shirley attributes to her voices, several are worth noting for their use by her voices to deny her psychiatric diagnosis:

2.117, 663-666  (She breaks into a short laugh) here we go=it was a voice um (She breaks into laughter again) I just heard a voice saying to me “but you don't have DID” which is a common voice (She says with a laugh) I hear as well

Shirley goes on to remark that she has heard that it is not unusual for people with DID to ‘doubt their diagnosis’ (2.117, 669). In her case, however, this doubt is voiced as outright denial.

**Circumstantial: attributive**

This small group (19%, n = 10) is used in several contexts. The most significant use is found in interactions in which her voices attempt to explain away Shirley’s memories of childhood sexual abuse as the result of other experiences (3.40, 224–225). As with the examples of possessive: attributive sub-types discussed above, these claims relate to the theme of denial.

**David: ‘Got a tendency to come at me in short sentences’**

The transitivity overview of David’s account on first consideration recalls the configuration of processes in Shirley’s account. However, the pattern of process types generated is oriented towards two principal axes, the material and relational, but with far fewer mental processes.
David’s voices represent him as wholly inadequate in the domains of doing and being. The denigration of his self-esteem is enacted through a barrage of insults alleging his incapacity to act effectively in daily life as confirmation of his inherent worthlessness. Together, these processes are used to divest David of any sense of effective agency. Indeed, the only significant action proposed is for David to rid the world of his existence. Whereas material and relational processes are predominantly used about David, the few mental and verbal processes included generally refer to other people. In particular, mental processes position David as an object of rejection and disbelief.

In contrast with the general pattern observable in the accounts of other participants, David’s voices are primarily represented across two domains. There is a slightly more predominant use of material processes (44%, n = 38) than relational processes (40%, n = 34), which is marginally increased with the addition of behavioural processes (3%, n = 3). The few mental processes mentioned (9%, n = 8) exceed the number of verbal processes (3%, n = 3).
Material processes

The repeated ratio across hearers’ accounts of 3:1 between the two categories of material processes is evident in David’s case, with 74% (n = 28) being transformative and 26% (n = 10) creative in type.

Creative: specific

All ten references to material: creative processes are specific in sub-type and are used in negative contexts. The examples David gives concern two distinct activities: digging a trench at his partner’s property with a friend (2.45–55) and writing in his journal (2.180). In the first case, David’s voices attack his ability to perform a manual task, not because of lack
of strength but due to his incompetency. In the second case, David is either ordered to or prohibited from writing certain thoughts and experiences in his journal.

**Transformative**

Most of the 28 occurrences of material: transformative processes are elaborating \((n = 24)\), with few examples of the extending \((n = 2)\) and enhancing \((n = 2)\) sub-types.

**Elaborating**

Many of the examples are included in this category by default due to David leaving their context of use unspecified:

\[2.55, 157-161\] I’ll worry about doing something and sometimes I won’t end up doing it because I worried about it because the voices just said “you can’t do this=you can’t do that” um “if you do it, it’s going to be wrong” uh “Carol’s not going to like what you’ve done=it’s not going to be good enough”

David repeats this demoralising refrain several times during our second interview. This attempt at deterring David from acting no matter which way he turns creates in his account the sense of an all-encompassing barrier to having any transformative impact on the world around him. His voices deny him the possibility of being able to have influence or bring about change of any kind. Exceptions to this pattern include directives to commit suicide, where the only effective action David is credited with is the ability to bring his own meaningless existence to a close:

\[1.23, 82-83\] “do yourself in=you’re not worthy=just end it all and everyone will be happy”

Such commands are compounded with claims that his partner Carol and others are only “putting up with” him \((4.55, 201–204)\) because they have no choice. Here David is represented as an ineffectual burden with whom family and friends have no desire to interact.

**Behavioural processes**

Two of the three behavioural processes cited are used in commands for David to take his life. The use of behavioural processes in this manner allows for the representation of suicide in less violent terms by referring to ‘dying’ rather than as a more deliberate act of self-destruction \((2.20, 52; 2.28, 70)\). This has the effect of construing David’s death in terms of acting in accord with nature. The third instance is where David’s voices accuse him of “faking” his illness \((3.144, 401)\). This charge of malingering stands in contrast to the use of “pretending” in Amy’s case \((2.10, 31–32)\) where it is other people who are the ones guilty of
Mental processes

The few mental processes David attributes to his voices mainly refer to acts of thinking (50%, n = 4) and feeling (38%, n = 3) with no examples given of perception. Overall, mental activity is represented as a domain in which other people are more active than David.

Acts of cognition mostly refer to either the ignorance of other people when making fun of his voices (3.96, 294) or claims that no one believes what David says about his voices (3.78, 232; 3.144, 399). References to emotions are limited to taunts that nobody, including his partner Carol, loves him (2.20, 52; 4.55, 201), and that she will dislike whatever he does (2.55, 160–161). The one mention of a desiderative act occurred during one of our interviews in which a voice claimed that I did not “really want” to listen to him (2.170, 465). Apart from one instance in which he is directed to witness what others are saying about his voices (3.96, 293), David is typically represented in negative terms as a passive entity with no credible influence over the beliefs and feelings of family, friends or psychiatrist.

Verbal processes

The small set of verbal processes refer to the remarks others are making about his voices (3.96, 293–294) and my alleged disinterest in listening to what David is telling me (2.168, 460).
Relational processes

Relational processes (40%, n = 34) comprise a major portion of the total number of processes presented in David’s account of his interactions with his voices. These are almost entirely intensive: attributive in type (91%, n = 31) and are found in such high proportion due to their use in insulting remarks made to David.

As these are analysed in terms of their use of evaluative language as pejorative remarks, the reader is referred to their discussion in Chapter 7.

Causative: agency

In one instance David recalls a voice explicitly attributing agency to his actions:

2.45, 119-120 You’ll make the house fall over

Considering the number of references to David being judged as incapable of acting effectively in the world, it is ironic that he is here credited with exaggerated powers to create havoc.

Amy: ‘I think “well hang on you have said that before you know and nothing’s happened”’

Amy’s account of her voices is forcefully mapped in terms of the outer (material), symbolic (relational) and inner (mental) worlds of experience, that is, happening and doing; being; and sensing respectively. In particular, the material domain of unattributed events and calculated actions propels her description of voice content.
The material world is the principal domain in which her voices boast of having the power to do sabotage and harm. Their claim to be sent by God for the purpose of testing Amy is not negated by their self-identifying as demons. Rather, their presence implies that although the supernatural realm exists beyond the material world, it is capable of violent intrusion into the natural order. Moreover, they maintain they exercise a forceful degree of agency in that they can compel human behaviour. Amy also gives the domain of relations an important role in her account through the examples she provides of her voices interpreting the significance of events, invariably to her detriment. The third domain that features in her account is that of mental processes. Amy’s voices often confuse her with their claims to having unrestricted access to the contents of her mind, imputing to her thoughts and feelings she is not aware of experiencing. Overall, these three process types together construe her voices as representing themselves as effective agents in the world.

Material processes constitute over a third of all processes (36%, n = 100), with the proportion edging closer to half (44%, n = 122) with the addition of behavioural processes (8%, n = 22). A quarter of the total is represented by relational processes (26%, n = 72) followed by mental processes (20%, n = 56) and a relatively small number of verbal processes (10%, n = 27). Amy’s account is notable for including the only occurrence of an existential process identified across all interviews.
Material processes

Some four out of five of the material processes Amy attributes to her voices are transformative in type (78%, n = 78), involving the performance of actions on people or objects already existing in her world.

However, Amy’s use of the creative category of material processes (22%, n = 22) is notable for the proportion of its general sub-type, which construes the notion of events taking place of their own accord.
Creative

The majority of the twenty-two material: creative processes identified are general in their terms of reference (82%, n = 18) in that they imply the seeming self-generation of action as events that simply ‘happen’ rather than their deliberate production by a separate agent. In fact, Amy provides the clear majority of all examples of voices making use of this process sub-type given by participants in this study. These typically occur in her account in the context of the negative speech acts of threaten and false claims.

General

On the whole, happenings construe events or phenomena that would appear to occur within the natural order of things. However, in the context of Amy’s voices, these are typically sinister in meaning in that the agent responsible is not explicitly named but is understood to be her voices acting directly or indirectly. Furthermore, the events that Amy’s voices claim or threaten her with carry a certain volatility due to their apparent self-animation. This is because such events are not anchored to a specific action performed by the voices but are represented as agentless in themselves. An important contributing factor to the menacing nature of such threats is the very vagueness of what it is that could ‘happen’, which leaves Amy with the foreboding sense of imminent disaster constantly hanging over her. For example, from an early age Amy did not disclose her experiences because of the threat of unnamed consequences left to her imagination to supply:

1.3, 6-7 (hearing voices) was a secret you didn’t tell anyone and if you did I was told that something terrible would happen

The terror of such unspecified suffering succeeded in silencing her for much of her early life. Her voices, nevertheless, had the capacity not only to forecast mishap but to bring it about:

1.3, 47-49 “we know - we know what’s going to happen=she’s just going to get comfortable and then something (growling) r-r-r-really bad’s going to happen”

The verb ‘happen’ is also used to refer to specified events in the past (1.13, 95–97). Here the use of ‘happen’ has the effect of characterising events as the consequence of prior behaviour. In particular, the closest her voices come to identifying a causal factor is in regards to Amy herself. She is the one responsible for the bad things that happen, especially to those she cares about. Moreover, according to her voices Amy is also to blame for the recent bushfires in the state of Victoria (3.29, 154–156). On the one hand, the effect of laying the guilt for the fires at Amy’s feet invests her with considerable significance, even power, although she is unable to exercise it to her own advantage. Her behaviour is important in that what she does
is considered by her voices to be serious enough to warrant harsh retributive action being visited on others. But on the other hand, it appears to be her incompetence that provokes such unwelcome attention rather than any threat she may pose to her voices.

Specific

This sub-category of material processes deals with acts that bring an object of some kind into existence. Amy only uses these processes four times. In the following example, her voices warn her against producing any tangible object that could act as a clue to her interior world:

2.21, 113-116 I can’t-I can’t draw that picture because somebody might interpret it like this because the demons would say you know “oh if you draw that picture you know (whispering) they’re going to think it’s this this and this"

Artwork would appear to be a particularly revealing medium in that its meaning is open to interpretation. Any drawing she produces stands independently of its creation as she cannot control what others make of its significance. According to her voices, using drawing to express her subjective experiences is to expose herself to ridicule. This fear is exemplified in the use of another specific sub-type of the creative category in which Amy’s voices threaten “to make you make a fool of yourself” (2.31, 175–176). A recurring theme of her voices is the danger of doing anything which could lead others to suspect that she hears voices or has experiences that no one else has. Equally, the threat of exposing her themselves is one of the forms of intimidation they use against her.

Transformative

The greater proportion of Amy’s references to her voices’ use of material: transformative processes are elaborating in type (60%, n = 47) followed by the extending (21%, n = 16) and enhancing (19%, n = 15) sub-types. Nearly all the material processes construe negative or unpleasant acts directed towards a person or object existing prior to and independent of the action performed.

Elaborating

Amy’s voices claim that she has been given into their control so that they can try her worth:

2.47, 260-262 when they really want to get me down they say “we’re you know we’re testing – we’re sent from God to test you” and either that or “you’re so evil God won’t protect you from us”

Amy’s voices also profess to ‘control’ the bushfires across the border in Victoria as well the power to ‘burn’ towns (3.29–31, 154–163). In addition to claiming to manipulate natural events, they threaten her with harming or killing family and friends at will (3.18, 48–51;
Extending

The examples Amy gives of the extending sub-type of material: transformative processes she attributes to her voices tend to relate to a number of repeated threats concerning the transmission of her thoughts to other people:

1.51, 402-403 but then what they threaten to do is actually broadcast that to everybody you know

Ironically, Amy’s voices claim that she too plays the role of ‘voice’ in other people’s lives. She is accused of being responsible for instigating the recent bushfires in Victoria and indiscriminately causing road accidents because of messages she had ‘sent’ (3.35, 188 & 192–194). These examples connote malicious acts of paranormal communication and suggest the transference of instructions or directives. They thus have an agentive role in that it is implied that the people who received the messages acted on them either to the detriment of others or to themselves. Underlying these communicative events is the issue of control, and more particularly, who is in control. Minds are here represented as being vulnerable to invasion and penetration by unknown outside forces. Not only can thoughts be transmitted but the voices allege that they also have their source elsewhere. Indeed, they claim to have been divinely commissioned in that they were “sent from God to test you” (2.47, 261).

One instance where an extending sub-type of a material: transformative process does not refer to transmission but to obtaining an object is in relation to Amy’s hopes to ‘get’ voluntary work at a radio station (4.41, 259–262). Although Amy is credited with effecting events at distance, her ability to reach personal goals of her own planning is ridiculed. In fact, her competency in directing her efforts to achieving a positive and important outcome such as work is represented as futile.

Enhancing

In Amy’s account, the use of enhancing sub-type of the transformative category of material processes construes movement in terms of a passage from different spatial domains as a metaphor for dying:

2.53, 288-290 and I can pass into the other – pass through the barrier you know I could just leave this world and a lot of my life I’ve wished I could leave you know

Arguably, in this instance Amy’s voices are not directly telling her to kill herself. In fact, she was too ill to attempt to take her own life. Amy explains that she was in hospital with
pneumonia and running a very high temperature. She describes having ‘this image…and this impression’ \((2.53, 286–287)\) that she was being encouraged to stop struggling to find her breath and just let go. Dying is here expressed as an effortless transition that moves on from the earthly plane of pain and suffering.

Satanic forces as represented by her voices assume a material aspect in that they have their source in her body:

\(3.31, 165\) “we’re demons and we’re coming from you…”

In contrast, references to their removal are used ironically by Amy’s voices to disparage conventional biopsychiatric approaches to eliminating them:

\(4.20, 128-131\) but if their argument is “well if we’re a chemical imbalance then why doesn’t the medication take us away?” you know and stuff like that and then the other argument is that “oh medication’s taken us away but you just want us to be here”

As will be discussed under mental: desiderative processes, her voices make the claim that although they may no longer have a chemical presence, they continue to exist inside her because of her allegedly perverse desire for them.

**Behavioural processes**

Nearly all 22 verbs (9%) analysed as construing behavioural processes are more associated with the mental rather than physiological domain. These often refer to perceptual and cognitive behaviours as in cases where Amy’s voices threaten her with the serious consequences of not paying attention to them.
Amy’s voices claim that she will be responsible for anything terrible that happens to anyone she cares about if she does not ‘listen’ to them (4.18, 54–56). As with Shirley, Amy’s voices are preoccupied with the need to get her attention. However, there is a more oppressive and menacing sense to their demands for compliance as these often occur in accusations and threats, whereas Shirley likens her voices to children grizzling for attention (3.12, 62–73).

During one of our meetings, her voices tormented her with disparaging taunts that she could not ‘cope’ with the mental and emotional pressure of being interviewed (4.53, 361–364).

Her voices also dismiss the behaviour of other people, such as her nurses when she was admitted to hospital, as a way of undermining her trust in her treatment as well as her own judgement of appearances:

2.10, 31-32 they just said thinks like um “you know oh they can really see us=they’re just pretending they can’t you know they’re just pretending that (…)”

Inherent in these claims is an alleged slippage between surface behaviour and underlying reality. Such taunts leave Amy living in an insincere world in which her vulnerability is never honestly mirrored back to her. Instead, the physical exterior is but a façade that is manipulated by mental deception. The body lies because the mind is false.

**Mental processes**

Around half (48%, n = 27) of the mental processes referred to by Amy’s voices relate to acts of thinking. The remaining half is evenly divided between acts of wanting (21%, n = 12) and perceiving (21%, n = 12), with five (9%) references to emotional states.

![Pie chart showing Amy's mental processes](image)
Cognitive

Amy’s voices target two areas in particular. These are her ability to think for herself and her anxiety about what other people would think of her if they knew what she really believed. The majority of references involve Amy’s voices claiming to know what she is really thinking when she herself does not. They lay claim to superior knowledge in that they know what she is either not aware of about herself or is hiding from herself:

1.51, 397-398 Yeah well they just sort of say you know they say I’m thinking things or saying things or-or-or planning things I’m not um but they say I am

They also threaten to expose her by relaying to others even the thoughts that she does not know she is thinking (1.53, 411–413). Her voices also mock her belief in her ability to work as a volunteer at a radio station (4.41, 260–261) and talk to groups about her experiences (4.41, 269–272). As discussed above in the ‘near mental’ cases of behavioural processes, how people act is given the lie by what is actually running through their minds. According to her voices, such thoughts are invariably hostile or ridiculing (4.41, 259–260).

When Amy’s voices refer to acts of cognition, it is in terms of their superior knowledge and capricious power. For example, the claim “we know what’s going to happen” (1.3, 46–47) appears to be overheard by Amy rather than directly addressed to her. The malevolent tone is highlighted through the inclusive use of ‘we’, which serves to taunt Amy with her exclusion from the intelligence her voices share. Her vulnerability before their mental faculties is further suggested by claims that her safety and happiness can change on a whim:

4.18, 79-81 what they do is they focus on anything that happens in you know my life and if it’s positive they say they’re only allowing that to happen until they decide to take it away

Desiderative

Nearly all the twelve (21%) references to wanting or desiring that Amy’s voices make are in relation to her interior processes. These generally take the form of assertions in which she is accused of harbouring harmful thoughts about other people. These accusations often concern events that have not yet happened but which she allegedly wants to occur (1.51, 402–405) and further contribute to undermining her confidence in her own judgement and intelligence.

Amy’s voices moreover menace her by professing to have the ability to tell others about the spiteful thoughts that she denies having. As seen in the discussion of mental: cognitive processes, her voices claim to have ‘behind-the-scenes’ access to areas of her mind unknown
to her. They instigate distrust in her knowledge of herself by professing to know her better than she does. Consequently, she becomes caught in a struggle over asserting control over her mental domain, that is, the very ownership of her own mind. Furthermore, her voices accuse her of secretly revelling in reported criminal acts or wishing she could have been the culprit, thereby instilling feelings of guilt for imaginary future events or actual events hundreds of kilometres away. More subtly they insinuate that their grandiose claims (3.31, 161–162) reflect the power that she wants to have:

3.70, 314-320 Well well like um like what would happen say six months ago with the fire if there was a fire that then um if I was able to say “look you know I-I’m not there” they’d come up with (She speaks in a low gruff voice) “oh yeah but you wish you could’ve burnt them down there=you’d like to see the fire” and stuff like that so they actually changed from like the basic “it’s your fault” saying you know “you wanted to be – you know you wanted it to happen=you wanted it to be your fault”

By attributing immoral desires that she is too ashamed to admit, Amy’s voices play on her conscience by assuming that very role themselves. As her ‘conscience’, they profess to mirror back what she is too guilty to own for herself. In this way, Amy’s personal sense of self is challenged as her voices seem to turn her mind back upon her. The ultimate irony is that she herself is the reason they do not go away:

4.20, 130-131 “oh medication’s taken us away but you just want us to be here”

Perceptive

The twelve (21%) mental processes that pertain to sensory experience are mostly found in contexts associated with Amy’s anxiety about whether her voices are not only noticed but also experienced by others. Her agitation is further exacerbated by fears that those who can hear her voices are in league with them against her:

4.69, 451-454 when I would be standing to get my medication the nursing staff would be in the office and they would be saying things like you know they’d be laughing and saying how stupid I was you know (.) how they could hear the voices too and they were just pretending they couldn’t

Amy’s world is characterised by continually feeling at a disadvantage with those around her. The apparent absence of similar experiences in other people is explained by her voices as a sham put on by nurses to mock her. During our first interview Amy’s voices were telling her that my interest in her experiences was also a façade. This was not because I was not interested but because I already knew due to some psychic power I possessed:

1.53, 425-427 they say that you know “uh Keith he-he can read your mind=he knows what’s
Amy was supposedly like an open book that I could invade as I wished. She had no privacy or intimate space of her own away in which she could hide from prying eyes. Knowing about Amy’s experiences was not expected to elicit empathy but only contempt and deceit.

**Emotive**

There are five instances where Amy mentions her voices referring to emotions. Most of these concern her feelings for other people and are used in relative and appositional clauses to define their identity:

1.21, 146 they built on my insecurities promising to harm people I loved

4.16, 45-46 they’re going to destroy people that I care about

It is unclear whether this is her own way of encapsulating what her voices said about specific family or friends, or reflects actual wording. However, what is more important is that references to her tender feelings towards others are juxtaposed with material processes representing violence against them. Her private world of sensitive experience realised through close personal relationships represents a key area of vulnerability for Amy even though it is not foregrounded in clause structure.

The remaining use of a mental process of emotion is found in the claim that the reason why other people say they cannot hear voices is in order to ‘scare’ her (1.3, 23–26). Everyone around her is part of a malicious plot to terrorise her so that she can be detained in hospital against her will. As seen in regards to the use of mental processes of desideration and cognition, the main preoccupations of Amy’s voices appear to be what she allegedly desires and what people would think of her if they knew. In general, they appear to target her worries around self-esteem and opinion and do not directly express hostile or benevolent feelings of their own towards her. Such antipathy is instead indicated through negative appraisal in the form of relational processes.

**Verbal processes**

Verbal processes constitute some 10% (n = 27) of processes overall. Most of these (n = 21) are semiotic in type in that they either introduce the content of what her voices intend to say or make reference to Amy disclosing information to others. These verbal processes are typically used in the context of threats and spurious claims.
The following examples show how the verbal processes by Amy’s voices relate to themes of exposure, isolation and manipulation. First, they threaten to shame her by revealing thoughts to other people that she would be ashamed to admit. However, the thoughts they attribute to her are typically fabricated, although her voices try to convince her that she is actually thinking what they falsely claim (1.53, 411–416). Second, they seek to silence her by threatening to harm anyone to whom she reveals the existence of her voices (1.21, 145–146). One specific threat they make refers to me getting hit by a car because of what she is telling me (1.57, 467–471). In our early interviews Amy continued to struggle with her fears that she would be responsible for any accident I had because of talking to me about her voices. Third, her voices use language to maintain the illusion of control by justifying their inaction, claiming that the previous times they did not mean what they said but that the next time she would be sorry (3.104, 515–521).

Another form of shamming is when they claim responsibility for what Amy does say despite their threats:

1.57, 491-494 they’re tricky little buggers (laugh) they-the um you know they don’t ah …like what they’re doing at the moment is they’re actually saying “haha we’re getting you to tell him what we want you to tell him” you know and stuff like that

As well as appropriating the content of what she says, Amy earlier explains how her voices may seize on a compulsive thought and then harass her with it. In this extract they appear to talk among themselves as they tease her about their power to incite her to inappropriate verbal behavior:
“oh let’s make her tell the joke then (I give a little laugh) um to prove she’s crazy”

When I asked Amy to read over the transcript of our second interview, her voices even claimed that what I had transcribed was of my own making:

“oh (She whispers) that’s crap (She now speaks in a huskier voice) you didn’t really say that you know he just wrote that”

Relational processes

The second largest group of processes Amy’s voices draw on are relational processes (26%, n = 72). The majority of these are intensive in type (76%, n = 55) with the attributive (44%, n = 32) and identifying (32%, n = 23) sub-types relatively evenly distributed across relational processes overall. Circumstantial (19%, n = 14) and possessive (4%, n = 3) sub-types comprise the remainder.

Intensive

Attributive

Most of the thirty-two (44%) intensive: attributive processes describe Amy and are extremely negative (See Chapter 7 for their analysis in terms of appraisal).

Identifying

Nearly all of the twenty-three (32%) relational: intensive: identifying processes that construe the specific significance of a participant are used about Amy. These typically occur in speech acts where her voices are blaming her. Most of these hold her directly responsible for
whatever mishap has occurred using by way of minimal variations on the formulaic phrase ‘it’s your fault’ (1.13, 95–96; 3.31, 166; 3.83, 424). Alternatively, Amy’s voices threaten to expose the true identity of the contents of her mind (see the underlined):

1.51, 403-404 but then what they threaten to do is actually broadcast that to everybody you know and say that’s what I want to have happen

**Circumstantial**

**Attributive**

These thirteen (20%) processes are used by Amy’s voices to refer to place and position. This can be used either literally in terms of location, or figuratively, such as when used to introduce reasons for events happening:

3.37, 205 they tend to say um “it’s-it’s because-because (…) you must be at fault”

Similar to the intensive: identifying sub-types above, a number of these are used in sentences where Amy is accused of or blamed for some mishap. The circumstantial nature of these constructions essentially represents Amy as being metaphorically in a defective space or logically implicated as a determining factor in any misfortune.

**Possessive**

**Attributive**

Two of the three instances in which her voices refer to the notion of ‘having’ occur as claims affecting as fact the assertion that her experiences were unexceptional:

1.21, 147-148 It was merely stated that everyone has spirits (…) everyone had these secrets

However, these are immediately followed by a warning that to talk about them was punishable. Her voices also claim that if she does mention their existence, others would think she was ‘too weak to belong’ (1.21, 153).

**Existential**

The one example of an existential process identified in this study occurs in Amy’s quote of a claim made by her voices as they point out one more trap she has fallen into:

1.13, 116 “huh there’s another thing we’ve got her caught up on”

Whereas relational processes establish a relationship between two elements in terms of an entity and a characteristic (attributive) or defining property (identifying), existential processes indicate that an entity is self-evident by virtue of its existence. Amy’s voice
merely draws attention to what is already available to be seen. However, what was missing before was the shared acknowledgement of its presence as a fact. Amy is thus made a witness to her own deception.

**Causative: agency**

Compared with other participants, Amy uses a considerable number (n = 25) of causative elements in the verbal group complexes she ascribes to her voices. Most of these are highly coercive in force (60%, n = 15) while the eight (29%) cases of low agency generally represent her voices refraining from exercising their power.

By having the source of agency located away from herself, Amy’s voices are represented as manipulative and threatening. As a result, these causative constructions represent Amy as defenceless and at the mercy of forces beyond herself:

1.57, 493-494 what they’re doing at the moment is they’re actually saying “haha we’re getting you to tell him what we want you to tell him”

As well as construing forced action, Amy’s voices use causatives to claim that her mental health is the target of malicious attacks from nursing staff:

2.10, 33-34 “you know oh they can really see us=they’re just pretending they can’t you know they’re just pretending that this-this trying to put – make you sick you know they're trying to make you crazy”

The causatives attributed to Amy’s voices feature the absence of obstruction (low agency) in addition to coercion (high agency). For example, low agency causatives are used in
interactions in which her voices justify their inaction or non-intervention (1.21, 167–168; 2.25, 139–140). These may be used in tandem with high agency causatives in a manner that is suggestive of spiteful capriciousness (2.31, 171–177). In addition to directly interfering in Amy’s life, her voices claim to have power in the external world over natural events. However, they hold Amy accountable as being the primary instigator in that it is her incompetence that is to blame for any accident or disaster that harms other people (3.29, 154–156; 3.35, 192–194).

More disturbingly, commands that entail self-harm are not construed as violent acts but as a removal of barriers that requires her to “let the evil out” (4.18, 59–61). Here, the interior dimension of Amy’s physiology is associated with the supernatural realm of the devil. It is only by cutting herself and shedding her blood that evil can be released.

Such examples demonstrate how Amy’s experience of her voices often construes events as a retributory chain of cause and effect in a hostile world where events are enacted as punishments and people have little control over their actions. Self-determination and free-will are illusions. People become masks and mere instruments in a world of deception in which voices claim the power to determine their actions. Amy’s account represents her world as one in which she believes she has very little control over her life. She feels she is either the victim of coercion or the unwitting perpetrator of wrong.

**Darby: ‘You’re just totally absorbed uh in-in the voices’**

Although Darby’s account features a relatively limited number of references to the content of his voices, a pattern to his recall of his experiences still emerges. As with most other participants, the material domain is clearly emphasised over the region of symbolic relations. However, less pronounced in other accounts is Darby’s reference to verbal behaviour, which bears some similarity to the prominence given to verbal processes in the transitivity pattern of his partner Joan.
Darby’s references to his experiences voices are weighted towards an account in which he is often represented as standing in a reactive relationship to his voices. This is particularly evident in the use of material processes in which he is typically despatched to obtain a product or service. When his voices use material processes in reference to themselves, it is solely to depersonalise themselves as a form of confidential information subject to a higher authority. This sense of their own secrecy is reinforced through the negative use of verbal processes in prohibitions against their presence being made public. In addition to the high proportion of material processes, Darby’s account is also unusual for the majority of relational processes being of the intensive: identifying type. This choice in transitivity function reflects the content of his voices being primarily that of disclosures of personal identity using titles and names rather than appraisals of character in the form of evaluative adjectives or noun groups.

Darby’s recollection of the content of his voices is notable for being half composed of processes representing material action (49%, n = 20) and for the absence of any reference to mental activity. Relational processes account for a third of the total (34%, n = 14) while verbal processes are less than half this sum (15%, n = 6).
Material processes

There are no references to any action taken by Darby or another agent resulting in the creation of an object. All material processes are transformative in type as action is performed upon an entity already in existence. These representations are relatively evenly spread across the elaborating (n = 8), extending (n = 5) and enhancing (n = 7) sub-types.

Transformative

Elaborating

Most of these material processes are repetitions of the claim that information given by his voices, for instance his esoteric identity as the “thirteenth disciple”, and the voices themselves had not been ‘declassified’ (1.81, 270–271; 2.50, 139–140). Such bureaucratic language has an intimidatory aspect as it assumes an imbalance of power in which Darby is positioned as having neither the expertise nor the access to official channels to dispute this statement.

Extending

A pattern that becomes identifiable with the separation of material processes into their sub-types is the preoccupation Darby’s voices had with directing him to obtain a product or service. This extended from everyday purchases through more major acts of acquisition to the bestowal of spiritual favours. Although at the lower end of the scale in terms of merchandise, the order for Darby to “buy a DVD” (1.216, 631–632) became so routine that he spent in the region of AUD$3,000 on his substantial video collection. A more extreme
case was the announcement that he had “two Ferraris to pick up” (1.195, 586). In terms of services, the directive to “get an interview with the-with the news presenter” (1.191, 579–580) at a radio station appears to have been an isolated occurrence compared to the habitual instruction to drive around to various churches to “receive blessing” (1.102, 309). In each case, however, Darby was to be a beneficiary through acting on the instigation of his voices.

Enhancing

This sub-type of material processes foregrounds acts of movement. These primarily involve the verb ‘go’ in which Darby is sent out to perform a range of tasks that require him to a radio station (1.191, 579), retail stores and shopping centres (1.219, 641), and churches (1.231, 666; 3.88, 207). The use of ‘go’ in combination with the extending sub-type of material processes defines Darby in terms of mobility and procurement rather than as an agent of change through directed action.

Behavioural processes

The one behavioural process identified refers to the implied directive to “have a look round for a few churches” (1.231, 665).

Mental processes

There were no references to voices using mental processes.

Verbal processes

All six verbal processes occur in the context of reported directives in which Darby is prohibited from disclosing his experiences of hearing voices. Most examples are semiosis in type (67%, n = 4) in that they involve reference to content or recipient (“I wasn’t allowed to tell the doctors I had voices” 2.250, 726–727), while the activity type (33%, n = 2) foregrounds the behaviour in more general terms (“I wasn’t allowed to talk” 2.250, 726) before going on to specify the content with a semiosis form of verbal clause.
Relational processes

Darby’s account is unusual for consisting mostly of instances of the intensive: identifying sub-type of relational process (79%, n = 11) but this is primarily due to the repetitions of the claim that “I was the thirteenth disciple” (1.51, 194–195). However, there is one occasion in which Darby refers to his voices identifying other men during a stay in hospital as historical and supernatural figures from the Bible (2.96, 249–251). The one use (7%) of an intensive: attributive sub-type is found in the claim that his voices were “top secret” (2.50, 139). Both cases (14%) of the possessive: attributive sub-type extend the sense of possession to the more abstract contexts of ‘having’ voices (2.250, 726–727) and ‘having’ two Ferraris to collect (1.195, 586).
Causative: agency

The four examples of a causative construction foregrounding agency are all reported in the context of the ban on Darby speaking about his voices:

2.50, 138-140 I remember when I had voices um I-I wasn’t allowed to tell anybody because they hadn’t been you know it was top secret you know they-they hadn’t been declassified

The passive voice form of ‘(be) allowed’ reinforces the subservient position in which Darby is placed by his voices appearing to act in an official capacity through their use of bogus intelligence terms.

Victoria: ‘Your head tells you all sorts of crazy things’

The semantic space circumscribed by material and behavioural processes, extending into the domain of relational states, is initially suggestive of the transitivity pattern in Joan’s account. However, Victoria’s representation of the content of her voices is more inclusive of mental experience and less focused on verbal activity.
The range and pattern of meanings that construe Victoria’s account of the content of her voices demonstrate the considerable impact her experiences have had on her beliefs and behaviour. Material processes of a transformative type are used in several significant ways. Most disturbingly they are often cited in directives representing or leading to acts of violence against herself or others, especially her father. Material processes also feature in directives that encapsulate action on an ambitious scale, such as emancipating detained refugees. In addition, material and behavioural processes are used in domestic prohibitions against taking her medication and eating meals, as well as in regulatory directives in which being ‘sent out’ is the precondition for substantial action. Although negligible in number in Victoria’s account, material processes of the creative type provide evidence of the future possibility of more positive content in her voices.

As regards the representation of other forms of experience, verbal processes construe the social behaviour of the men Victoria meets in her daily life as merely a front for their greed for sex and money. The attitude of the voices themselves cuts across the use of mental and relational processes, demonstrating a conflict among Victoria’s voices towards her. On the one hand, mental processes are generally used to represent the romantic feelings and desires of previous partners for Victoria. Alternatively, Victoria is grandiosely referred to in terms of her remarkable intelligence. On the other hand, clauses with relational processes vary widely in their use. These are evenly distributed across negative and positive contexts, with Victoria often being vilified by male voices in sexually and physically derogatory terms but also positively in terms of her artistic talents.
Slightly more than half of the processes that comprise Victoria’s account of the content of her voices are material (40%, n = 43) and behavioural (11%, n = 12) in type. Relational processes represent a third of the total (32%, n = 34), with mental (11%, n = 12) and verbal processes (6%, n = 6) following with fewer examples.

**Material processes**

Similar to Shirley, nearly all the material processes featured in Victoria’s account are transformative in type (95%, n = 41), with only two instances (5%) of the creative type of material process. Hence, there is a far greater emphasis on acts that impact extant objects and situations than acts that bring them into existence.
Creative: general

The two cases of material: creative processes are general in sub-type. These occur in the context of her voices urging her to ‘make’ jewellery (1.93, 436; 1.111, 510–511). These are noteworthy for being the only positive references to a creative type of material process, general or specific, given by a participant.

Transformative

Most (59%, n = 24) of the forty-one examples of the transformative type of material process are elaborating in sub-type. Enhancing forms account for over a quarter of the total (29%, n = 12) followed by extending (12%, n = 5).

Elaborating

This sub-set of material processes are generally violent in meaning, with Victoria often represented as assailant and victim at the same time. As a victim, when she was very unwell her voices would implicate the government in a conspiracy to “kill” her using her medication (1.20, 88–89; 2.25, 129–130). In the role of aggressor herself towards others, Victoria was commanded to commit general acts of violence:

2.29, 182-184 (She lets out a breath) when I was very ill it would be (She lets out a breath) some quite sinister sort of stuff you know um … you know telling me to hurt people or telling me to blow things up

More specifically, she was ordered to “shoot” (1.111, 506–507) and “kill” (1.28, 143) her father. However, most of the examples direct Victoria to turn her hand against herself. These range from the most blatant command to “kill” herself (3.45, 212) to performing an initially
less obvious series of actions that direct her attention to her cigarette lighter, which becomes
an instrument of self-harm (2.37, 272–274). At other times her voices were more direct:

2.39, 307 “right you’ve got to burn yourself for what you did to Hugh's dad”

The theme of burning as a form of punishment also occurs in Joan’s account (1.62, 228–229;
3.61, 148) where she is intimidated with the threat of hellfire, while Amy’s voices accuse her
of secretly wishing she had started the recent bushfires and could watch them burn (3.29–31,
154–163).

Added to the negative instances above are two cases in which material processes of a
transformative: elaborating sub-type are found in a questionably more positive context. Both
involve acts being performed for another’s benefit as an act of altruism. The foremost of
these is the mission to “free” (1.95, 455) or “save” (1.108, 491) the asylum seekers held at
Baxter detention centre. It was this role of human rights activist that led to Victoria sleeping
at a bus stop in Port Augusta on her abortive attempt to reach the refugees. A further
experience, which is more benign in content, occurred during her night-time prayers to God,
who agreed to “help (her) out” (1.46, 245) concerning a friend with cancer. At the time of
our interviews, Victoria reported a change in her voices for the good when she heard a voice
complimenting her on “doing a good job” (3.49, 228) on her studies in jewellery making.

**Extending**

Most of the five cases of the transformative: extending type of material process occur in
directives prohibiting her from ‘taking’ her medication (1.25, 135 & 139; 2.25, 149).
However, there is one reference to hearing God agreeing to “take care of that for you” (3.25,
81) in response to her prayers for her family’s safety and wellbeing.

**Enhancing**

The transformative: extending type of material process (n = 12) is also mainly used in
directives but features in suggestions and criticisms as well. Most commonly in Victoria’s
account, the order to “go” is used in clauses in which she is despatched to another location,
such as Port Augusta (1.108, 490–491; 3.97, 459–461) or Baxter detention centre (1.95,
454–455). In addition, it is used with another verb as a call to rouse herself to take further
action, as in “Go sleep in a bus stop in Port Augusta” (4.163, 623–624), which amplifies the
autocratic tenor of the base directive. The most serious occurrence of its use is the lone
reference to being ordered to enter her father’s room to kill him (1.28, 143).
In the context of a criticism, Victoria heard her mother’s voice reprimanding her for going to a friend’s house where she put herself at risk of being raped (3.76, 363–366). In a figurative as well as positive use, her voices had recently encouraged her to “(go) pursue jewellery making” (3.16, 32–33 & 36). Here, in contrast with movement as a literal projection into physical space, her artistic interests are instead represented as a line of creative activity that can be followed, with the added implication that they may also be ‘captured’ through the application of her own efforts.

**Behavioural processes**

Behavioural processes foreground the material processes that lie at the interface of physical and mental experience. In Victoria’s case, most of the twelve (11%) instances refer to basic physiological functions.

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<tr>
<th>Victoria: behavioural processes (subtypes)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Near mental</td>
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<tr>
<td>Near verbal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physiological (conscious)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physiological (basic functions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Near material</td>
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As with Shirley, Victoria’s voices were fixated on food as an object for exercising control over her body. In our second interview she recalls her voices telling her not to “eat” (2.33, 239; 2.35, 244 & 266), leading her to starve herself for a month.

Her most frequent use of a behavioural process is in relation to acting on orders from her voices to ‘sleep’ at a bus stop in Port Augusta (3.97, 460–461 & 457–458; 4.163, 623–624) and in a park near her family home (3.97, 464–466).

**Mental processes**

Victoria’s twelve references to mental processes are concerned with intelligence and desire, with no inclusion of any verbs of sensory perception.
Cognitive

The four uses of mental processes referring to acts of cognition represent both Victoria and her voices as intelligent beings. When she was very ill, her voices would overwhelm her with inflated delusions about her superior intelligence being the reason why the government was conspiring to kill her (1.20, 88–89; 2.25, 130–133). Self-references to her voices’ capacity to appraise occur in positive contexts that are more recent to our interviews. They are used to project statements of praise, firstly in the person of Chris, her jewellery teacher at TAFE, and secondly from her mother or father:

2.10, 60-61 “oh I think that’s a good idea”
3.49, 229 “I knew you’d be good at this”

The use of the past tense in the second compliment conveys the sense that the voice identified with a parent had previously recognised Victoria’s talents and her current achievements only confirm this faith. In this way, “knew” functions to elicit her trust in their judgement and belief in her own abilities.

Desiderative

These four references mostly represent Victoria as either an object of desire or the means to one. One example in which a voice declares its own longing involves Justin her ex-husband, who she often hears expressing his love for her and ‘wanting’ her back (1.65, 327). The other two instances relate to her voices cynically claiming that the only reasons why men would talk with her is to exploit her for money or sexual favours (3.35, 129–131). In contrast, there
is one reference to hearing the voice of her jewellery teacher expressing interest in creating one of her designs on her behalf (2.10, 60).

Emotive

Three of the four expressions of feeling concern the strong emotion of ‘love’. These are spoken by male voices, namely her former husband (1.65, 327) or ex-boyfriend (3.21, 62; 3.23, 74) before she goes to sleep as part of night-time ritual in which she also says her prayers. A more problematic case for inclusion is one in which she heard her mother chastise her for not “respect[ing]” herself (3.74, 342–343) as she sat watching men at a party getting drunk. This verb could also be analysed in terms of an act of cognition. However, its context of use suggests that its meaning includes a more feeling-toned element in which Victoria is reprimanded for not esteeming her own value. Arguably, taking this view of herself would involve a measure of self-love.

Verbal processes

Half of the six verbal processes included in Victoria’s account of the content of her voices focus on the activity of speaking and are used in negative contexts involving men. These are used in claims based on the derisive refrain of “they’re just talking to you because (they want to)…” (3.35, 129–131). Casual social conversation is represented as a front for men wanting to manipulate her to satisfy their greed.

The other three semiosis type of verbal process are more varied in meaning. The most disturbing use occurs when Victoria’s voices order her to “count to 10” (2.37, 273) as a
prelude to burning herself with a cigarette lighter. In addition, there is one reference to her voices forbidding her to “say” a thought out loud (2.25, 157), which is the only instance in which Victoria mentions her voices attempting to censor her speech. The remaining use is heard as the voice of her mother scolding her for going to a friend’s party:

3.76, 364-365  “and I told you you shouldn’t have gone”

It is not clear whether there had been a previous conversation with her actual mother or if a voice had warned her not to go. However, this use of ‘tell’ to project a criticism is familiar enough in domestic arguments to suggest that Victoria felt that she had gone against some advice, perhaps her own intuition if not her mother’s actual words, and that this interaction prepared her to be on the defensive for when she returned home.

**Relational processes**

A third (32%, n = 34) of the processes in Victoria’s account are comprised of relational processes. The majority (84%, n = 27) of these are intensive: attributive in type. This distribution is comparable to David’s (91%, n = 31) in terms of both number and proportion. However, unlike David, Victoria refers on a number of occasions to voices featuring positive content. Only three examples (9%) of the intensive: identifying type and two (6%) of the possessive: attributive type are included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victoria: relational processes (main types)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intensive</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Possessive: Attrib</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Circumstantial: Attrib</strong></td>
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**Intensive**

**Attributive**

Most of the examples cited concern Victoria, occurring both in acts of praise and insulting
Causative: conation

Victoria on one occasion refers to her voices directing her to ‘help free refugees’ (1.95, 455). This use of the verb ‘help’ is noteworthy for being the only example of a voice commissioning a hearer to act in the interests of another.

Mark: ‘The thinking that accompanies that is a sequential and-and I would just say a natural argument’

Mark’s account displays the most striking coverage of the region bounded by material and mental activity. Participation in the world of physical action and the personal domain of thinking and choosing is clearly configured in the content of Mark’s voice, but with the noticeable exclusion of social communication. On the other hand, interpreting the meaning of experiences in terms of coherent relations is a significant part of Mark’s representation of his voice.

As the shortest account, comprising only thirty processes representing the content of Mark’s voices, the range of verbs used is narrow and effectively consists of the actions ‘do, come, go; hang on; think, want; be’. Material and behavioural processes together constitute the greater part of the total (60%, n = 18) as a result of the repeated references Mark makes to the statements and directives they occur in. Material processes mostly occur in negative contexts and refer to Mark or his depressive feelings whereas behavioural processes act constructively to direct his attention. The domains of thinking and wanting are typically
represented in combination with material processes and carry a greater functional load in that concrete action is viewed through the lens of a mental process which is grammatically negated. Relational processes are mostly attributive in sub-type and usually refer to Mark’s mental state. Although they are evaluative in function, the language used is impartial or neutral rather than pejorative.

Material processes (37%, n = 11) with the addition of behavioural processes (23%, n = 7) account for the majority of the content of Mark’s voices in terms of transitivity. Nearly a quarter (23%, n = 7) consist of relational processes, followed by mental processes (17%, n = 5). Mark’s account is the only one in which no reference is made to verbal processes.

![Mark: transitivity overview (direct & indirect speech)](image)

**Material processes**

The eleven material processes identified are all transformative in type. Seven of these are elaborating and four are enhancing in sub-type.

**Transformative**

**Elaborating**

As with many of the material processes in David’s account, Mark uses the pro-form ‘do’ (Huddleston, 2002a, p. 100) to substitute for a more lexically meaningful verb. With one exception (2.20, 73–74), these are all used in negative statements in which Mark’s voice expresses despair in his ability to cope with the pressure he is under, or a refusal to persevere with a current challenge. These mostly occur as the projected content of a mental process which carries the negative meaning, as in the first example, and which foregrounds the
domains of thinking or wanting as a prerequisite for action and their absence a major obstacle:

1.6, 61 and when I hear that I no longer want to do it

2.201, 607 “no no oh no I really can’t do this”

In these examples, ‘do’ plays the role of an all-purpose verb that serves to cover any activity Mark is engaged in. The absence of examples featuring a more descriptive verb essentially bleaches his account of content that is more personal or informative in nature. Indeed, as a blanket term, Mark’s voice uses ‘do’ to do duty for a large part of the domain of concrete action. This is of course only possible because of the close ties the content of his voice is making with the immediate context in which it is heard.

**Enhancing**

The four occurrences of material processes of the transformative: enhancing type depict Mark’s experiences as a tide of negative thoughts and emotions:

1.59, 216 when I become sick for example I uh will think “oh no not again” you know “here it comes again”

2.201, 607 “oh no here-here we go again”

These references to regular irruptions of ‘futility and despair’ (1.59, 218) in terms of the momentum of coming and going suggest a relentless cycle over which Mark has little control. His voice represents the imminent approach of his depressive feelings as a force that threatens to sweep him away.

**Behavioural processes**

Mark refers to the same verb six times with one variant:

1.101, 334 “hey hang on hang on am I ill at the moment?”

There are grounds for analysing the occurrence of “hang on/about” as a minor clause in that this process is bleached of its lexical meaning and functions as more of a spoken form of punctuation to alert Mark to the importance of the ensuing message. However, its use as an imperative that demands an interruption to his current activity warrants its inclusion. In such contexts, Mark is required to suspend all action while his voice questions him on his ideas.

**Mental processes**

The five mental processes Mark recalls in his account are all negative in meaning. Three are cognitive and two are desiderative in type.
Mark explains that mental processes typically form a sequence in which his depressive feelings escalate as the content of his voice changes from a cognitive mental process to a desiderative one:

1.6, 58-63 typically when I’m going through a depressive phase is that uh they are typically nihilistic in character um concentrating on such things as doom and gloom “here I am again” uh “oh no uh I – I d-not think I can do it” and when I hear that I no longer want to do it then I know that I need direct intervention and that usually the point at which I get myself hospitalised

It is when Mark’s voice progresses from expressing negative thoughts and beliefs about his abilities to wanting out of desperation to commit suicide that the domain of feeling is especially intense. As Mark explains concerning his experiences of post-traumatic stress disorder, ‘the thinking has a very strong emotive component attached to it as well’ (1.49, 189). Although he does not provide any examples of his voice directing overt hostility towards him using emotive mental processes, the overwhelming sense of ‘futility and despair’ (1.59, 218) Mark describes reaches a critical point in the loss of his desire to live.

**Verbal processes**

No verbal processes were referred to.

**Relational processes**

The seven relational processes cited are all used in reference to Mark’s mental health. In contrast with most of the other participants, these do not occur in derogatory remarks. They are instead largely found as part of a process of self-enquiry.
Most of the relational processes are intensive: attributive in type (n = 4) and are typically used in questions debating Mark’s state of mind and the logic of his ideas for his business project (1.101, 332–335; 1.104, 338–339; 2.27, 103–104). An example of the intensive: identifying type is used to suggest his illness as the underlying cause of his behaviour (1.104, 339). In addition, there are two cases of relational processes of the circumstantial: attributive being used by his voice to represent his feelings of stress (2.27, 103) as an all too familiar place he can never escape for very long:

1.6, 60 “here I am again”

**Summary**

Despite differences in the number and length of interviews, the total number of references to voices, and even the repetition of examples of voice content within a hearer’s account, a general pattern emerges that characterises the transitivity configuration of hearers’ accounts, notwithstanding differences in the content of the voices within and across accounts (see Appendix 7 for tables of examples). This is clearly evident in the precedence given to material action and behavioural functions as the primary content hearers recall of their voices, with the exception of Shirley, followed by the secondary content of the descriptive representation of people and other entities through the use of relational processes. The domain of mental experience generally follows as a third area of activity for voices followed by acts of communication construed by verbal processes.
This same pattern can be viewed from an alternative perspective which maps each process type in relation to its use across accounts.

Here, for instance, the anomalous prevalence of relational over material and behavioural processes is more evident in Shirley’s account. In addition, verbal processes can be seen as a more substantial component of Joan’s and Darby’s accounts than mental processes.
Key findings include:

1. The overall distribution of process types across hearers’ accounts accords with Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2014, p. 215) ranking of process types across a varied range of language use. It can thus be said that the grammar of voices in terms of the genre of voice-hearer accounts constitutes a genuine form of meaning-making. What voices say are conceptual representations of the worlds of doing and happening; being and having; and sensing and saying (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999).

2. The voices cited by hearers typically consist of representations of material processes (37%) denoting action in the physical world. This focus on substantive activity is, however, balanced with language that construes the abstract domain of symbolic meaning through relational processes (31%). Although the private world of mental and emotional experience (15%) comprises half that of material or relational processes, the representations of thinking, feeling and wanting play a significant role in characterising hearers and their voices.

3. More than half (56%) of the material processes included in hearers’ accounts represent actions performed on existing objects and people. With the addition of material processes that represent acquisition (11%) or movement (17%), voices appear to use language to work with the world to hand rather than to promote the creation of original products. However, the representation of events as agentless ‘happenings’ in the case of Amy contrives to portray the world around her as unstable and vengeful. Her account is also noteworthy for the prevalence of causative constructions that depict her as both powerless and damaging.

4. A sizeable majority of relational processes are used to identify or characterise hearers and others (81%). These are primarily (57%) used to attribute or denigrate the significance of hearers as well as family and friends but are also used by voices to describe themselves. Such language allows voices to assume the role of ‘meaning-giver’ through their interpretations and opinions. Many of these evaluations provide the focus for the appraisal analysis in Chapter 7.

5. In addition to the contribution material processes make to situating voices in the world hearers share with other people, mental processes position voices within the desires, concerns, and beliefs of hearers. The accounts of Shirley and Amy provide evidence of both the pacifying and invasive character of voices that talk about the thoughts and
emotions of their hearers as well as expressing their own wants and needs.

Although a number of significant patterns have been discerned across hearers’ accounts, it is clear that in the personal context of each hearer’s experience the nuances of what individual voices say defies any reductive form of description. Instead, beneath much of the apparent banality and repetition to which hearers are often subject are subtle indications that voices represent a complex view of the world that is different for each hearer. The next chapter focuses on how voices express negative and positive views.
7 How do voices appraise hearers, others and themselves?

This final chapter of the four data analyses investigates how voices use language to make evaluations about hearers, other people or situations, and themselves. These acts of appraisal may be the central focus of the interactions hearers recall or they may be more implicit. Appraisal theory (Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) organises evaluations into three categories: affect, appreciation and judgement. These are subdivided but given the small set of data only the subtypes for judgement are used as headings as this form of appraisal is the most frequent. An abridged key of the main themes is featured in Table 7 (see Appendix 8 for more information).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appraisal type</th>
<th>Main themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>Emotions &amp; feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>Values &amp; reactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgement</td>
<td>Social esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Normality &amp; capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social sanction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Veracity (truth) &amp; propriety (ethics)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some 241 instances of appraisal were identified from the data set of 750 clauses attributed to voices in the form or direct or indirect speech. Appraisals are not limited in number to individual clauses, and may occur as single words (e.g. “I’m afraid” (Shirley Diary 1, 6)); a string of evaluative words, as in the noun group “you’re a stupid fat bitch” (Victoria 2.45, 441–442); or as an idiomatic expression, for example, “you’re a waste of space” (David 3.144, 401–402). In addition, a small number of borderline cases, often in the form of entire clauses, are included that invoke attitude through their overall meaning, such as “oh but you don’t have DID” (Shirley 2.117, 675), in which a voice expresses the opinion that Shirley does not have a debilitating mental disorder. This statement indicates a judgement of capacity in which Shirley is referred to as a normally functioning person. On the other hand, clauses that typically signal appraisal in their choice of verb, as in the use of mental processes construing emotion (e.g. ‘love’) and desideration (e.g. ‘want’), are not included as
these have already been treated at length in terms of transitivity. However, their overall contribution to how voices appraise hearers is included in this chapter.

An overview is first presented of the total distribution of appraisal types across all participants, followed by a detailed analysis for each hearer of the main categories of appraisal and their sub-types using examples.

**Overview of how voices make appraisals**

Although Amy, David, Victoria and Shirley all participated in four to five interviews, Amy’s account features the most prominent use of evaluative language. Given Shirley’s highly interactive relationship with her voices, a greater use might have been expected. However, this apparently lower incidence is due to her voices often expressing attitude through verbs of feeling and wanting. Similarly, Mark refers to his voice making its feelings known through verbs of wanting in addition to the eight explicit instances of appraisal in his two interviews. In their three interviews together, Joan provided considerably more examples of evaluation than Darby. Both their accounts are noteworthy for a conspicuous absence of language expressing feelings whether through mental processes or explicit appraisals.

Proportionally, the overall differences in the patterns of appraisal are clearer when the data is displayed in a stacked bar chart.

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40 Total percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.

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Apart from David, Victoria and Darby, appraisals in the form of judgements are more evident than affect or appreciation. Joan (72%), Amy (46%) and Victoria (20%) include more appraisals invoking condemnatory judgements of their moral character and behaviour (social sanction) whereas the accounts of Shirley (34%) and David (29%) feature more appraisals disparaging their ability to function in the world (social esteem). Appraisals of appreciation, on the other hand, primarily appear in the voice content described by Victoria (59%) and David (54%). In David’s case, his personal worth is persistently disparaged but Victoria’s voices make both negative and positive evaluations regarding her person and skills respectively.

Overall, more than half (59%, n = 141) of the acts of appraisal are types of judgement, with most of these concerning social sanction (32%, n = 78) than social esteem (26%, n = 63). A third (33%, n = 79) consist of types of appreciation, while the remaining 9% (n = 21) refer to affective states.
Joan: ‘They’re strong voices nasty horrible cruel in fact it just … totally out of line’

Although Joan attended fewer interviews than Shirley, David, Amy or Victoria, she has the highest proportion of the social sanction type of judgement (72%) as well as a numerically substantial total (n = 18) considering that her interviews were also shared with Darby. This high number is due to the repeated references she makes to her voices insulting or threatening her. These negative voices typically attack her sense of propriety by representing her as being morally contemptible.
Joan’s voices use appraisal to diminish her self-respect in several related ways. They focus in particular on ridiculing her intelligence and moral acceptability to others. The behaviour of other women is sexually implicated as transgressing social mores. Furthermore, her voices’ use of evaluative language unequivocally represents Joan as objectionable and undeserving of forgiveness because of her sinful nature. Their judgement is essentially a moral rather than personal matter, as evidenced by the absence of any reference to emotionally evaluative language. Instead, judgements displaying condemnation and bigotry constitute her or another as the source of offence and culpability. In particular, images of damnation and punishment, whether religious or institutional in scope, feed her fear of the bullying behaviour of her voices despite Darby’s frequent reassurances (2.106, 276).

Although the reasons for her punishment are left unspecified, her designation as a “child of the devil” (1.62, 227–228) acts as a wholesale condemnation of her character. This theme of judgement is clearly evident across the threats, insults and acts of identification presented in the pragmatic analysis of Joan’s account. This censuring form of appraisal would appear to be largely influenced by her activities as a practising Christian.

Twenty-five examples of the use of evaluative language were identified in Joan’s accounts. Most of these have been classified as types of judgement (84%, n = 21), with the remainder expressing forms of appreciation (16%, n = 4). The majority of appraisals expressing judgement relate to social sanction (72%, n = 18) in contrast to social esteem (12%, n = 3). No examples of language used to indicate affect were found.
A large part of the voices’ use of appraisal (72%, n =18) was directed at Joan. References to other people or entities (24%, n = 6) were also prominent while only one example (4%) was given of voices appraising themselves.

![Joan: focus of appraisal](image)

### Affect

Not only is there an absence of any reference to appraisal of affect in Joan’s account but the transitivity analysis found that mental processes involving feelings or intention likewise do not occur in her account.

### Appreciation

Three of the four uses of appreciation refer to value, namely the positive reference to the ‘confidentiality’ of the information her voices represent (2.113, 282), and two uses of mood adjuncts (Eggins, 2004) to devalue through minimisation (2.57, 157 “you are just a dumb bitch”) and intensification (1.62, 233 “she’s a real bitch”). The fourth example of appreciation is a type of reactive appraisal in which Joan’s voices attribute a negative quality to her actions (2.20, 65 “dangerous”) to deter her from contributing to her Bible study discussion group.

### Judgement

**Social esteem: capacity**

The three instances of judgements based on social esteem are all directed at Joan and are repetitions of the pejorative adjective “dumb bitch” (2.57, 157; 2.63, 168; 2.198, 571). This
verbal abuse was sufficiently hurtful to draw a response from her partner Darby in which he appealed to Joan’s university education and intelligence to disprove their insulting remarks (2.161, 464–469).

**Social sanction: propriety**

Judgements that invoke the supposed violation of social mores form the clear majority (72%, \( n = 18 \)) of all acts of appraisal in Joan’s account. The language used is generally associated with one of two positions. It either evokes the moral dimension in its use of fundamentalist religious terms or is blatantly prejudicial in its recourse to sexist insults. In the first context, Joan on four occasions during interviews repeats being told that she is “a child of the devil” and is going to “burn in hell” (e.g. 1.62, 227-228). In these instances, her voices assume a malevolent critical tone and represent her punishment as fitting retribution for her evil nature.

Her voices equally resort to the use of outright crude attacks. Joan four times quotes her voices calling her a “bitch” (e.g. 2.57, 157) and once in relation to another woman (1.62, 233) when Joan was incited by her voice to insult ‘whoever was there that they didn’t like’ (1.65, 236). The allocation of this abusive term to the category of social sanction: propriety rather than to appreciation: value is to highlight the sense of Joan’s or another person’s character being beyond the moral pale. Similarly, there are a further four references to her voices claiming that one of her Bible study group was a “whore” (e.g. 2.9, 22-23). Although this would appear to be less a personal insult than an allegation concerning the type of work, the choice of “whore” as opposed to prostitute or sex worker implicitly invokes a moral judgement.

**Shirley: ‘We often have to talk about how they felt … you know what comforting things to help comfort them’**

Shirley in our first interview makes repeated reference to her voices blaming and criticising her for her apparent failure to measure up to the standards expected of her. However, whereas she is primarily found accountable for her actions in terms of judgement (social sanction), her voices reassure her using language addressing her social esteem in which, for example, she is told she is not mentally ill. In addition, Shirley makes several references to her voices appraising themselves using the language of affect and judgement. If these cases are considered in association with mental processes, especially those that are emotive and desiderative in type, the proportion of examples of self-appraisal expressing affect increases substantially. A comparable situation also applies in relation to the addition of the mental
processes used in the advisory directives counselling Shirley to avoid agitating herself. However, these are not included here as they have already been treated in the transitivity analysis.

In the main, Shirley’s account presents her voices as tending to refer to both their own wants and her feelings of anxiety using verbal processes, which directly determine the structure of the clause as a whole. More significantly, this impacts the type of interpersonal communication experienced, as in the use of statements in self-assertions (e.g. Diary 1, 6–7 “I don’t want to do this”) and directives concerning Shirley’s emotional behaviour (e.g. 1.10, 168 “you don’t need to worry about that”). However, there are a number of instances in which the content of her voices clearly differs through their individual use of appraisal. This is particularly evident in the reliance of male voices on negative terms to denigrate Shirley’s self-worth, and the exaggerated use of positive adjectives by the female voice of Denial to paint a naïve picture of her current situation. An area in which Shirley might seem vulnerable to attack, namely, her capacity to function, is instead the focus of frequent reassurances from her calming voice that she is not pathologically ill or abnormal. The area where Shirley appears to be most susceptible to aggressive voice content, however, is in relation to her past actions, in which she is reproached for her behaviour. This situates what she does as a continual matter of moral concern in which there is no room for her to make mistakes.

Nearly two-thirds of the items identified for appraisal express judgements (63%, n = 26). Positive or non-hostile evaluations of social esteem (34%, n = 14) slightly outnumber the
mostly negative evaluations of social sanction (29%, n = 12). Negative forms of appreciation represent nearly a quarter (24%, n = 10) of the total followed by positive and negative references to affect (12%, n = 5).

Shirley is the target of the majority of acts of appraisal (71%, n = 29). Nearly all evaluations expressed as judgements relate to Shirley apart from two references to her voices themselves and one to another person. Descriptions of situations in general rather than of people tend to be the focus of positive terms of appreciation in her account. Voices, on the other hand, principally appear to appraise themselves using language representing affect. This apparent pattern becomes more salient with the addition of her voices’ use of mental processes to convey their wants and relational processes to state their feelings.
Affect

Although as regards a narrow analysis only one example applying to Shirley was identified in the directive to “stay calm” (1.39, 458–459), in which a desired state of security is indicated, the directives using emotive mental processes (e.g. 1.24, 298) advising her to resist ‘worrying’ about her family should also be borne in mind. These multiple references to Shirley’s generally anxious state reinforce her voices’ appraisal of her in terms of insecurity. This theme is also indicated in relation to her voices themselves in the two admissions of her ‘little voice’ to being “afraid” (Diary 1, 6). The two other examples of appraised affect also concern her voices, such as the frequent experience of hearing them expressing dissatisfaction with what is happening in her life (3.67, 391 “I’ve had enough”), and the voice of Denial, who encourages Shirley to retreat into a fantasy form of happiness (1. 16, 220).

Appreciation

Six of the ten (24%) appreciation type of appraisal of concern Shirley. These include appraisals of her personal value and consequences of her actions:

1.8, 86 there’s (She quickly points to the left side of her head) always someone telling me I’m useless

1.21, 258 I’m not a very worthwhile human being

1.21, 248 “that was the wrong one”

In contrast, the voice of Denial uses cheerful references about the weather to signify an
optimistic attitude to life in which there is no room for unhappiness or painful memories:

1.16, 218-220 if I’ve been upset about you know thinking about my past and things like that it will be like “oh no it’s all gone (.) it’s a sunny rosy day (.) everything’s wonderful the sun shines and I’m always happy”

These appraisals attempt to deflect attention away from Shirley’s memories of childhood abuse to the external circumstances of her situation.

Judgement

Social esteem: capacity, normality

Most of the fourteen (34%) items classified as judgements of social esteem are used in contexts in which Shirley’s voices appear to be reassuring her about her mental health. These variously concern her capacity to function by referring to her diagnosis (e.g. 2.117, 664–665 “but you don’t have DID”), her general condition (1.16, 214 “you’re not sick” (…) “you haven’t been hurt”), or the need for her to be more “ready” (1.57, 567–568; 1.59, 571) before she can deal with her childhood trauma. In addition are appraisals in which the voice of Denial downplays Shirley’s anxieties with reassurances that normalise her situation in very general terms (e.g. Diary 3, 11–12 “everything’s okay (…) it’s all fine”).

The two references that do not involve Shirley belong to a new voice that suddenly identifies itself (Diary 3, 25–26 & 28-29 “And I’m Susie and I’m his victim”). This form of self-designation has been interpreted in terms of capacity as it implies that the voice of Susie is not able to function normally as a result of the harm she has experienced. However, there are grounds for also considering “his victim” in relation to social sanction: propriety in that victimhood suggests Susie has wrongly suffered at the hands of another.

Social sanction: propriety

The majority of the twelve (29%) references to Shirley’s behaviour are a quite uniform in their use of admonitory language. There are several repetitions of the accusation that Shirley is doing “the wrong thing” (e.g. 1.8, 80) while half the total (n = 6) of this sub-type of judgement consists of attributions of blame that represent mishaps as her “fault” (e.g. 1.8, 81).

David: ‘Yeah the language is quite colourful too’

David’s account is clearly oriented to illustrating how his voices negatively appraise his innate worth. These are drawn from a set of related concepts dealing with inadequacy and inferiority. Closely associated are a number of damning evaluations of David’s ‘fitness’ to
retain his place in the world. Although the latter judgements of capacity appear to be less emphasised, this would appear to be due to his voices primarily using processes to disparage his ability to make any substantial impact in his life. Such claims are typically realised through the use of material clauses with negative modality, as in 2.43, 110–111 ‘it’ll say that you can’t do it’. Thus, estimations of value (appreciation) and capacity (judgement: social esteem) are both strongly indicated but are represented using different grammatical resources. As the latter have already been illustrated in terms of transitivity, this appraisal analysis is confined to the use of evaluative adjectives and noun groups.

David’s account features the highest proportion of appraisals indicating appreciation (54%, n = 27), putting aside the three appraisals of the same type that solely constitute the use of evaluative language in Darby’s account. Allied to these are judgements that further depict David as incompetent as well as undeserving in an uncompromising world where his actions always fall short on a rigid scale of achievement. There are no gradations or degrees of accomplishment, only categorical failure. David’s voices drum home the message that he is fundamentally flawed and that nothing he does will ever be worthwhile or win him the respect or affection of another person. The futility underlying these appraisals of his sham existence ultimately lead to provocations to end his meaningless life in the knowledge that nobody ever wanted him there in the first place. It is for good reason that David sums up these communications as ‘the voice of doom’ (1.52, 170).

Over half (54%, n = 27) of the items identified are hostile appraisals of David’s personal characteristics (appreciation), and are mostly disparagements of his intrinsic value.
Judgements in terms of social esteem account for a quarter of the total (26%, n = 13), with most of these ridiculing his capacity to act effectively. These are followed by the social sanction type of judgement (12%, n = 6) and several appraisals of affect (8%, n = 4). All appraisals are highly negative in content.

David is clearly the focus of appraisal (87%, n = 40) with the remaining six (13%) uses of evaluative language concerning his partner Carol, me and everyday objects.
Affect

The four appraisals of affect identified are all used in reference to other people. These mostly concern an alleged lack of engagement in their relationship with David, and implicate his partner Carol as well as me:

4.55, 201-204  “she’s only putting up with you” (…) “that person's only putting up with you because they have to” (disinclination)

2.168, 459-460  Like even now like it’s telling me that you’re not interested in what I’m saying (dissatisfaction)

The fourth goads David to take his own life, claiming that “everyone will be happy” (1.23, 83) as a result. In addition are several instances treated in terms of transitivity in which the mental processes ‘love’ (2.20, 52; 4.55, 201) and ‘want’ (2.170, 465) are negated to further represent David as an object of contempt.

Appreciation

The area in which David’s voices show the most activity in his account is that of denigrating his basic right to life. These may sometimes appear associated with a supposed lack of capacity, and are sometimes found in combination with insults directly making such claims (e.g. 2, 113, 301–302). The distinction drawn here between negative appraisals of David’s value and capacity is that the former attack him more in terms of his being (existence) rather than doing (action).

A number of themes are apparent in the twenty-five instances of David’s value being derided. These can be summarised according to the key appraising words used (see Table 8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key word</th>
<th>No. of occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of worth (not worthy; worthless)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Not) good</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should (die/ not be here)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste (of space/time)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useless</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
David gives the most emphasis to disparaging remarks in which his voices allege that he does not deserve to have Carol as his partner. Love is a reward he needs to earn or be good enough to merit:

1.34, 121 it tells you that you're not worthy of being in a relationship

2.168, 456, 458 it goes about really badly about worthiness and relationships

This sense that David is defective is relentlessly reinforced across the other instances in which his presence is depreciated. His voices habitually negate the adjective “good” to argue that he does not make the grade to hold his place in this world and that anything he does will always be deficient:

2.20, 53 “what you’re doing on this planet isn’t good enough”

2.55, 160 “if you do it it’s going to be wrong”

2.55, 161 “it’s not going to be good enough”

The second and third examples are closely associated with his supposed inability to act effectively and so are related to appraisals of his capacity but which make more direct attacks on the action itself. Similarly, the assertion that David is “useless” (4.55, 202) denigrates his value by insisting on his incompetence in such simple matters as digging a hole (2.43, 110–112). However, the difference between the two in David’s case is often so slight as to be almost indiscernible.

Insinuations that it is a mistake for David even to be alive are made plain grammatically in the covert directives for him to take his life, which by implication demand a response:

1.11, 46 “you shouldn’t be here”

2.20, 52 “you should-you should die”

The theme of futility is also invoked in regard to David’s use of a journal to help him deal with his experiences, in which his writing is dismissed as “a waste of time” (1.53, 173) and “a waste of space” (1.53, 173) as well as himself (1.11, 47).

Judgement

Social esteem: capacity, normality

Included among the numerous instances of David’s voices denying his ability to perform the most mundane of manual tasks, which were treated in the transitivity analysis of material
processes, are judgements of David which invoke an assumed measure of ‘correctness’ which he consistently fails to achieve (e.g. 2.55, 155 “you haven’t done it right”). David draws the analogy of a nagging relative who is never satisfied with the results of anything her nephew does (2.113, 298–302). In addition, there are several references to his voices either mocking his mental illness (1.34, 122–123), such as by comparing him to ‘the Elephant Man’ (2.205, 567–568) or questioning his normality (1.91, 323–325), as well as simply insulting his intelligence (1.101, 350).

One context in which David is likely to hear voices is at family gatherings (3.135–136, 382–387). Given David’s associations of his voices with negative family behaviour (2.113, 298–302), the form of appraisal Horace and his other voices display are consistent with Carol’s own views:

| 3.137 Carol | You’re better at handling crowds now but you’re still not better at handling extended family social situations |
| 3.138 Keith | Mmm why do you think they (unclear) |
| 3.139 Carol | Because he fears being judged by them |
| 3.140 David | And the voice kind of does a negative take on that what they think you’re about and all that sort of stuff |

It is an open question to what extent David’s troubled relations with his family leading to him leaving home and the generally belligerent attitude he faced the world with as a teenager (2.215, 621–624) provided some of the content for his voices targeting his feelings of inadequacy.

**Social sanction: Propriety, Veracity**

With one exception, the six instances of evaluative language used to pass judgements of a moral nature implicate David. The exception concerns his partner Carol’s supposed manipulation of their relationship (1.11, 48–49). The core group of these censoring appraisals consist of David’s voices denouncing him for behaving falsely, presumably in relation to his mental illness, calling him “a fraud” and “a fake” (1.8, 26; 3.144, 401). As with Amy, whose voices claimed that nursing staff were playacting during a stay in hospital, the associated themes of appearances being deceptive, the pretence of relationships, habitual lying, and the betrayal of trust can chronically erode the confidence of a hearer like David. Added to this are the potential feelings of guilt that have at times undermined David’s belief in himself as an effective agent capable of directing his own life as the result of being taunted with the allegation that “everything that has happened to you has been your own fault” (2.20, 53–54).
Amy: ‘You’re always on edge’

Amy’s account is second only to Joan’s in terms of featuring the highest proportion of judgements. However, unlike Joan, Amy emphasises appraisals of social sanction (propriety) to a greater degree than social esteem (capacity). The former primarily hold her personally accountable for causing external mishaps, while the latter disparage Amy’s ability to function in terms of mental health and competency. Other areas that are invoked through appraisal is the principal of evil as a material presence in Amy’s body and the falsehood of the nursing staff treating Amy, who ridicule her behind her back.

Appraisal is mostly used by Amy’s voices to intimidate and humiliate. Her worth as a person is consistently mocked and devalued and she is both represented as an object infected by evil forces and deserving of derision. She is chiefly described as inept in her lack of personal skills and attributes as well as accountable for a trail of mishaps and accidents. In the volatile world of cause and effect represented by her voices, Amy’s alleged effects are only ineffectual at best when not destructive. According to her voices, events typically occur as punishment and people are liable to react aggressively or deceitfully.

Amy makes substantial reference to her voices making hostile judgements about her ability to function in the world (77%, n = 55). In particular, her account foregrounds negative judgements of her behaviour, with nearly half (46%, n = 33) the appraisals identified attributing immoral motives to her thoughts and actions. These are followed by further judgements that belittle her intelligence and strength (31%, n = 22). The remaining
examples of evaluative language are mostly used to devalue her worth (14%, n = 10) and attribute negative moods to others (8%, n = 6).

The majority of appraisals (82%, n = 58) target Amy in derisive terms. Evaluations of other people, entities or external events are occasionally included in Amy’s account (13%, n = 9), with four (6%) instances in which voices declare their confidentiality and imply their own hostile position.
Affect

Four of the six uses of appraisal identified involve negative emotions broadly related to (un)happiness. These concern other people or the voices themselves. On one occasion, Amy’s voices warn her that her father is going to get into “a really bad mood” (1.7, 71), which she precipitates to relieve the rising agitation disturbing her. Two references to Amy’s voices threatening to ‘destroy’ (4.16, 45–46; 4.18, 83–84) friends and family are included as this verb, which appears to be cited verbatim, clearly expresses her voices’ hostility. By contrast, the report provided by a voice that “God said he’s sorry that he gave me too much to deal with” (4.18, 64) is the only instance of her voices referring to a sympathetic response such as contrition. As regards appraisals of Amy, her voices mock her feelings of insecurity when she overhears them in conversation describing the risks she runs in letting herself become “comfortable” (1.3, 48), little realising that a crisis is just around the corner. Experiences that might bring her satisfaction and fulfilment, such as being allowed to have “a good day” (2.25, 140), are similarly used to provoke anxiety about the future. These examples all conspire to instill the sense of a threat of impending danger.

Appreciation

The ten uses of appraisal with which Amy’s voices describe external events and personal qualities are plainly negative. As regards value, the content of what she writes in her journal (3.90, 445–448) and what she is telling me in our interviews (4.51, 347–348) is dismissed as “crap”. Amy herself is supposedly an object of derision for staff at MIFSA, who consider her “a joke” (4.41, 259–260). The only positive instance concerns being told that she is being tested by God to prove if she is ‘worthy’ (1.21, 156) to have her demons taken away. However, the opposite appears to be implied as the prolonged nature of her trial suggests that she is found wanting. As suggested in connection with appraisals of affect, there is an ominous corollary to pleasant experiences in her life as her voices use these to intimidate her with threats of retribution that outweigh previous enjoyment. Amy recalls growing up with the threat of “something terrible” (1.3, 6) happening if she talked about her voices and in adult life being intimidated by hearing that “something (growling) r-r-r-really bad” (1.3, 49) would occur if she let herself relax. Equally, her voices also accuse her of secretly wanting things “to go wrong” (1.51, 404–405) for other people.
Judgement

Social esteem: capacity

Most of the twenty-two (31%) judgements associated with social esteem attack Amy's ability to function in the world. These often implicate nursing staff in calling her “stupid” (4.69, 453) behind her back, and either causing her to be “sick” or “crazy” or discovering that she is (e.g. 2.10, 33–34). Where positive appraisals are heard, they are in reference to claims that Amy is only allowed to “do good” (e.g. 2.31, 173–174) or “do well” (4.41, 270-272) until her voices decide to take it all away or she makes “a fool” (2.31, 175–176) of herself. Otherwise, Amy is ridiculed for being “weak” (2.40, 230–231) for not being able to bear the tests God gives her and blamed for having “failed” (3.83, 424) to achieve her personal goals. ‘Weakness’ (1.21, 152) and ‘failure’ (1.21, 153) are also related to any inclination to disclose the existence of her voices, which would invoke the disapproval of others who supposedly also hear voices but comply with the prohibition against talking about them. Associated with negative judgements concerning lack of competence, especially in public, is her alleged inability to “cope” (4.53, 363–364) with stressful situations. Overall, her voices’ derogatory appraisals of her capacity to take effective action have been a severe deterrent to Amy developing confidence in her own skills as well as her ability to share her experiences with others.

Social sanction: propriety, veracity

Judgements that apply to moral behaviour or principles primarily concern attributions of blame and the presence of “evil”. Seventeen out of the thirty-three (46%) instances of the social sanction type of judgement use the word “fault” (e.g. 1.13, 95–96) to hold Amy personally responsible for negative events. These often occur in the context of actions in the past that Amy had no conceivable connection with (3.35, 192–198) and have become so prevalent in her experience that they feature as part of her own self-talk:

3.33, 178-182 Well having the voices blame for so long it’s almost an automatic response now for me to think anything that goes wrong it’s my fault um so I sort of almost-almost skip the step of them blaming me and take on responsibility without them actually giving me responsibility sort of sort of al-almost happens automatically you know makes sense?

The seven references to “evil” either as a transpersonal presence in Amy, for example as a spiritual force in her blood (e.g. 1.29, 242–243), or as a moral judgement of Amy herself (2.47, 261–262). The former use accounts for most of these examples of appraisal. It is in this context that her voices give their approval for her to cut herself as the means of releasing
them, claiming that “it’s okay to let the evil out” (4.18, 65).

In addition to the above appraisals identified under the broad category of propriety are five references to dishonest behaviour (veracity) in which other people are implicated. In particular, nursing staff are alleged to be deceiving Amy by “pretending” (e.g. 1.3, 23–26) that they did not hear voices as it was “part of the game they play” (4.69, 455). Yet, being truthful about her voices is ‘punishable’ (1.21, 153) but harm to others, not to herself, would be the consequence. In the volatile world of cause and effect represented by her voices, a sense of insecurity and uncertainty is evoked that is indicative of Amy’s account on the whole:

4.23, 149-152 it’s a bit like a-a bit like a (She swings her right hand in front of her) pendulum just swinging you know and it may fall at any time and you don’t know when or where you know and so you sort of – you’re always on edge (.) always sort of anxious

**Darby ‘They tell me outrageous things’**

In the three interviews Darby shared with his wife Joan, only two uses of appraisal were identified, both examples of appreciation: value in which his voices refer to the content they represent as “top secret” (2.50, 139) and “confidential” (2.250, 727). The personal identifier of “the thirteenth disciple” (1.51, 194–195) could arguably be considered in terms of value on account of its probable symbolic meaning but its context of use appears to be more designative as a role than evaluative.
Victoria: ‘The voices are actually the ones that told me it was good’

Victoria’s account is distinctive for its inclusion of both positive and negative appraisal. Evaluative language that affirms Victoria’s morale is aligned with her parents, jewellery teacher and God, while the voices of ex-boyfriends are typically insulting. In terms of their use of appreciation, positive voices tend to focus on complimenting Victoria on her artistic skills or affirming their relationship while negative voices disparage her personal appearance and intrinsic value. Judgements are ambiguous in cases when Victoria was praised for her outstanding cleverness (social esteem: capacity) as part of a delusional episode but are otherwise highly offensive in their use of sexual references.

The examples Victoria gives of her voices interacting with her suggest a number of significant themes. These can be broadly distinguished in relation to herself and others. Positive appraisals of Victoria affirm her confidence in her personal worth and her artistic gifts in contrast to the coarse sexual stereotyping of her negative male voices. Importantly, Victoria directly credits her voices with her decision to study jewellery at TAFE as a result of their encouragement (1:93, 433–436). The assurance of her place in a loving relationship is also evident in appraisals confirming both parental and divine endorsement of her specialness. In exaggerated contexts, this has been experienced as outlandish praise of her superior intelligence. Equally, Victoria’s social behaviour is censured, either by her parents for her lack of self-care or hostile male voices, who crudely misrepresent her in dissolute terms. References to others solely concern men, who are represented as predatory or
mindless, with no moral scruples about exploiting her for their own gain.

The overall pattern of distribution in Victoria’s account is very similar to David’s. Most uses of appraisal are of the appreciation type (59%, n = 26) followed by judgement (34%, n = 15) and several references to affect (7%, n = 3). In addition, the proportional difference between the two sub-types of judgement is minimal.

Furthermore, whereas David’s account is uniformly hostile, Victoria’s shows greater variation. Judgements invoking social esteem concern Victoria and are mostly positive while those invoking social sanction are highly negative about Victoria and others. In addition, appraisals involving appreciation largely refer to Victoria and feature marginally more positive than negative evaluations. The few appraisals of affect included relate to both Victoria and her voices and are positive in meaning.
Affect

The three appraisals of affect consist of the sequence “I’m proud of you Victoria=I’m proud of you Victoria” (1.28, 117) and the questionable claim that she’ll “have fun” (4.125, 515) if she goes for a walk at three o’clock one morning. Victoria heard the former after an argument with her parents about smoking marijuana, in which her father said that he wished she was more like her sisters. Sitting alone in her room crying, Victoria comforted herself, hearing her mother’s voice consoling her as she talked to herself. The core sense of satisfaction expressed here highlights the sense of unconditional parental acceptance embodied in the person of her mother. This experience of positive appraisal also invokes an appreciation of Victoria’s value and so is also considered with other examples of appreciation. In addition, Victoria also refers to her voices, especially that of her ex-husband Justin, using mental processes to express feelings of affection that inherently appraise her as an object of desire (1.65, 327). As these have already been treated in terms of transitivity as key examples of their process type, they have not been included here.

Appreciation

Although negative appraisals (n = 12) are referred to nearly as often as positive ones (n = 14), the target of evaluation appears to be more repetitious and stereotyped. These mostly relate to Victoria’s physical appearance, with half (n = 6) describing her as “fat”. This adjective is occasionally recalled in combination with the more moralistic insults “slut” and “bitch” (judgement), but for the most part is used in the context of directives to lose weight (2.33, 239) rather than as formulaic verbal abuse. Other instances of depreciation
include “ugly” (3.45, 211) and devaluations of a more intrinsic nature, namely assertions that she is “useless” (3.45, 211) and “not worth it” (3.45, 212). There is one case, however, in which the appraisal of value is negative in content but functions more constructively as a form of admonishment, namely “you don’t respect yourself” (3.74, 342–343). This is heard as the voice of Victoria’s mother reproaching her for being in the “ridiculous” (3.74, 343) situation of passively watching a friend Syd and his friends getting drunk. Lastly, the mock question “why do you have him?” (3.104, 524–525) that follows the accusation that her father is a paedophile is considered here to be a form of appraisal as it implies a denial of her father’s worth.

Positive appraisals are mostly recalled in connection with Victoria’s artistic interests. These include various reactions praising her jewellery designs and studies at TAFE, ranging from “nice” (3.16, 38) and “good” (1.93, 440–441; 2.10, 60–61) to the more effusive adjectives “really great (...) really wonderful” (1.93, 435) and “fantastic” (3.49, 228). Other examples occur in the context of Victoria’s relationships, in particular with God. The affectionate affirmations “you’re my mate” (1.46, 245), “we’re mates” (3.25, 81) and “you’re my favourite” (1.46, 249) express solidarity at the same time as enhancing Victoria’s personal value. In addition are the two expressions of pride included as appraisals of affect above (1.28, 117) affirming her essential worth. Standing in lone contrast with the denigrations of Victoria’s appeal is one reference to the voice of Syd expressing pleasure at being in her company with “oh it’s great to catch up” (2.10, 62) after she had met up with the actual Syd.

Judgement

Social esteem: capacity, normality

Most of the six (14%) judgements either refer to Victoria’s superior intellect or praise her recent efforts at TAFE. The former were heard when she was ill in the context of the government conspiring to kill her because she was “extraordinary and oversmart and too smart for everyone else who knew these government secrets” (2.25, 131–132). Equally, she also recalls hearing her voices calling her “a stupid fat bitch” (2.45, 441–442) at times when she has felt very low. More current experiences are of hearing her voices complimenting her on her skills at designing jeweller (1.93, 435; 3.49, 228–229).

Social sanction: propriety

Judgements invoking tacit standards of behaviour are extremely insulting. Apart from calling Victoria a “bitch” (2.45, 441–442), the other negative uses of appraisal involve the
representation of Victoria as an object of sexual desire. This is graphically illustrated in her aggressive male voices reviling her as a “slut” (1.62, 320; 3.45, 210–211) who is supposedly guilty of sexual misconduct. As well as expressing moral disgust at her unproven promiscuity, her voices accompany its use with the depreciating adjectives “fat” and “ugly” to amplify the word’s shameful connotations and perhaps even suggest a physical decline by association. Negative judgements concerning the norms of behaviour also extend to other men, whose interest in Victoria is discredited through claims that they only want to talk with her for money or sex (3.35, 129–131). In connection with the issue of sexual impropriety, Victoria hears the voice of her mother chiding her for being “really careless” (3.76, 364) for exposing herself to the risk of rape after Syd’s drunken party, denouncing him as “a prick” and “a jerk” (3.74, 360). The remaining instance concerns the false accusation that Victoria’s father is “a paedophile” (3.104, 524), a damning condemnation that may be associated with Victoria’s own traumatic experience of rape as a child.

Mark: ‘I would argue (it) is an exercise in egocentricity wouldn’t you?’

Although Mark draws on evaluative language to describe the content of his voice, he gives few examples of his voice making appraisals. Twice he directly refers to his voice construing ‘suicidal thinking/ideation’ (2.197, 596; 2.199, 602–603) while at other times he uses more expressive language, for example ‘doom and gloom’ (1.6, 60) and ‘futility and despair’ (1.59, 218). When Mark cites examples of his voice expressing ‘nihilistic’ thoughts (1.6, 59), they take the grammatical form of the sentence as a whole, as in “oh no I-I really can’t do this” (2.201, 607). It does not appear to urge him to take his life through either a command to self-harm or a critical insult. Rather, he hears himself disbelieving he has the resources to cope. In a broad sense, the few examples of appraisal identified are associated with the use of material processes asserting a lack of confidence in his capacity (judgement: social esteem) to continue managing stressful situations (2.201, 607) as well as mental processes construing a critical absence of inclination (affect) to do so (1.6, 61).
As an auditory representation of Mark’s thoughts, his voice is heard in the first person and uses evaluative language to represent appraisal as a pair of opposites about his personal experiences. This occurs in the context of a process of deduction aimed at identifying the reliability of his ideas for his business project. In particular, appraisal in its more narrow sense is used by Mark’s voice as part of a self-reflective sequence to clarify the nature of his mental reality.

Only eight specific instances of appraisal were identified over our two interviews. These all apply to Mark and consist of judgements of social esteem (63%, n = 5) and (38%, n = 3) appraisals of negative affect.
As Marks’ voice echoes his own thoughts about himself in the first person, the distinction between Mark as hearer and his voice as speaker blurs. Separate roles are possibly apparent in the interaction patterns identified in Chapter 5, such as in the use of questions to suggest ideas. Appraisal in its narrow sense is used by Mark’s voice as part of a self-reflective sequence to clarify the nature of his mental reality. On a humorous note, Mark suggests that his voice may indicate a self-centred preoccupation with his own experience in which the roles of appraiser and appraised correspond:

1.65, 238-240; 69, 244-247 (He takes in a deep breath and lets it out) Hu-uh well I would argue is an exercise in egocentricity wouldn’t you (He bursts out in a rare show of laughing and I join in) (…) Ah well I mean you know if the constant thought is on I as opposed to others then uh one could reasonably argue that I’m a very egotistical person (He sniffs) but perhaps the ego-istic component is-is of concern to me…because usually there’s current concerns that impinge upon me

All of Mark’s appraisals are thus focused on himself.

**Affect**

The three appraisals of affect occur in the same sentence and are associated with insecurity and unhappiness:

2.27, 102-104 Well when I become ill uh it’s congruent from the point of view that uh uh “yes I’m in a spot of bother um a spot of bother uh because I’m ill or very depressed”

Although the use of the modifier “a spot of” and the quaint term “bother” both serve to minimise the difficulty of the situation Mark finds himself in, the intensifier “very” with a
more blunt evaluation of mood together emphasise the underlying emotional cause by way of compensation. In addition to these are several mental processes, treated earlier in terms of transitivity, with which Mark’s voice expresses disinclination.

**Judgement**

**Social esteem: capacity**

More explicit cases of appraisal are found when Marks’ voice debates whether his ideas are achievable or symptomatic of his illness. This occurs in the context of a process of deduction aimed at identifying the reliability of his ideas in which alternative terms are represented as a pair of opposites. Questions relating to Mark’s business project juxtapose judgements about the logic of his plans (n = 2) with concerns about his mental health (n = 3):

1.104, 338-339 Yeah I have this thought that I – I sort of say to myself ‘hey hang on hang on is this rational or is this the result of me being ill?’

**Summary**

The general picture that emerges is that appraisal, as principally represented through the use of adjectives and noun groups, is most active in the region primarily mapped by judgements of social sanction (propriety) and expressions of appreciation (value), followed by judgements of social esteem (capacity).

![Participant overview (%)](image)

Key findings include:

1. Shirley’s account is the most evenly spread in terms of distribution, especially if mental processes representing emotions and desires excluded from the appraisal analysis are
taken into consideration. In contrast with other participants, the content of her voices slightly favours judgements of social esteem over those of social sanction. Leaving aside Darby’s and Mark’s accounts, which feature only a few examples of evaluative language, the descriptions of the voices of other hearers tend to concentrate on appraisals that represent hearers in terms of either their own innate value as people or their ability to function effectively in the world as agents of their own actions.

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<th>Overview of voice appraisal (%)</th>
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<td>Affect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judgement: Social esteem</td>
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<td>Judgement: Social sanction</td>
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2. On the whole, appraisals of feelings, moods, and desires are realised through the transitivity system as mental processes. Nevertheless, both the accounts of both Joan and Darby are unusual in featuring no representation of affect through either appraisal or transitivity. Arguably, a number of judgements of social sanction, such as “bitch” (Victoria 2.45, 441–442), indicate extreme antipathy on the part of voices and so are in a sense projected appraisals of affect (e.g. “I hate you”). In addition, the case of Joan’s voices telling her that she is going to “burn in hell” (1.62, 227–228) is representative of God’s anger. Although similar examples of the propriety type of judgement of social sanction, which are threatening rather than insulting in function, have been treated in terms of speech act and transitivity, the overlap of these different linguistic systems attest to the multilayered texture of voices.

3. It was as a result of their supposed failings that participants such as David were told that they were unloved (2.20, 52; 4.55, 201). Condemnation on issues of morality appears to be strongly evident in Joan’s account as well as Amy’s. This focus on the theme of judgement may be connected with the Christian beliefs that are important for both
women. In contrast, an appreciation of personal and artistic worth is evident in David and Victoria’s accounts. They are judged for what they offer the world in terms of their intrinsic value and practical skills. For Shirley, judgements mostly concern her mental capacity and are unusual in that they are positive unlike the fault-finding of her previous voices that were male.

4. The overall pattern of the focus of appraisal was consistently centred on hearers with minimal explicit reference to voices themselves. However, comments about other people, such as friends, family and hospital staff, as well general situations that invoke key themes for Joan (24%), Victoria (16%), Shirley (15%), Amy (14%) and David (13%). These were typically negative, concerning shameless or tabooed behaviour, anger, stupidity, deceit, predatory desire and disastrous events. Only in Shirley’s case were there several examples of positive appraisals about life in general but which were questionable in their realism.

5. Voices thus appear to be chiefly preoccupied with evaluating the alleged significance of what hearers and other people mean and acting as arbiter regarding the correctness of their behaviour. Their content is derivative in that much of the material they rehearse as critics and judges is drawn from the hearer’s life and relationships but in which the voices are positioned as an apparently separate point of reference. Appraisal highlights the role language plays in hearers’ experiences, particularly in areas in which they are highly vulnerable to attack, namely self-respect as regards their individual value and self-confidence in their abilities.
8 Discussion

This linguistic study of voices examines how people refer to the voices they hear through the four perspectives of naming, interacting, representing and evaluating. These perspectives were introduced in Chapter 1. It was acknowledged at the outset that voices are a phenomenon that continues to defy straightforward classification. For example, agreeing on what it is we are referring to depends on the view taken. This lack of agreement becomes more problematic when the people who have these experiences try to talk about them to those who do not. Indeed, it was recognised that the act of talking itself about voices is often discouraged due to professional misgivings from clinicians and personal feelings of shame and stigma from hearers. This awkwardness in communication was contrasted to the major role hearing voices played from the Middle Ages until their later clinical categorisation as auditory verbal hallucinations. Written accounts of voices then became the prerogative of medical doctors fronting the emergent discipline of psychiatry.

As well as situating this study of the accounts of voices given by research participants in a historical context, such background information was provided to illustrate the centrality of language to the description of personal experience. This is particularly relevant as the experience itself is constituted as language. This study has been influenced by:

1. Schutz's concepts of intersubjectivity and multiple realities (1962, 1967, 1976), which informed my approach to interviewing hearers. This approach also took into account my lack of clinical training and experience in mental health.
2. Speech act theory (Austin, 1955/1975; Searle, 1969, 1976), which provided the basis for an analysis of voices in terms of purposeful and meaningful interactions that express different forms of social behavior.
3. The model of grammar pioneered by Halliday (1985a) and subsequently revised by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), which offered the analytical tools for systematically describing how voices use language to represent the world as the experience of different types of action.
Appraisal theory (Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005), which framed the identification of the language voices used to positively or negatively evaluate hearers, others and themselves.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 examined current understandings of hearing voices in terms of the four perspectives of naming, interacting, representing and evaluating by drawing on clinical, phenomenological, cognitive-behavioural and relational descriptions of voices. Despite several important studies that primarily focused on the language voices used to interact or evaluate, distinctions between categories were often based on ‘folk’ assumptions, left unexplained or not organised into a systematic framework. In addition, analyses were routinely conducted across large sample sizes that did not permit the investigation of the accounts of individual hearers to build up a profile of the verbal behaviour of their voices. Furthermore, no study analysed the grammar of the language attributed to voices. The few references found concerned such linguistic domains as morphology, and did not provide insight into how language was used as a resource for generating meaning.

The qualitative design of this study (Chapter 3) provided information regarding the approach taken to talking with participants in open-ended or guided interviews. This method of obtaining data is exemplified in previous studies of hearing voices which privilege the participation of the hearer in authoring their own account. The process of transcribing interviews was also discussed and, as the coding criteria differed according to the analytical focus, the process of categorising data was explained for each of the four sub-questions. In the case of coding how voices interacted with hearers, the rationale for dividing the data into direct speech (quotes) and indirect speech (reports) was clarified. As voices are only accessible through what hearers relate, this study recognises the role speech frame plays in structuring how the linguistic content and verbal behaviour of voices are expressed.

In Chapters 4 to 7, I presented the results of each analysis in the context of individual participants in terms of the language used to refer to their voices (naming), and the language voices themselves used to interact, represent and evaluate. Each form of analysis was systematically divided into hierarchical categories to provide a fine-grained examination of the data. These categories were supported with glossaries or tables with examples in the Appendices to illustrate their meaning. In each chapter, overviews were first given to identify patterns of language use across participants’ accounts. Detailed results were then presented at the level of individual hearers to produce a comprehensive analysis of the
linguistic content of their voices.

This discussion chapter first presents the key findings of this study and their significance in relation to what previous studies have found. Second, I will discuss the contribution made by this study to understanding the role of language in construing the reality of voices for their hearers. In closing, the limitations of this research will be acknowledged before suggesting possible avenues for future research in partnership with hearers and therapists.

**How do hearers refer to their voices?**

Previous studies have primarily focused on classifying the type of entity through which voices are personified with the aim of compiling a typology of identities that enables researchers to categorise voices as for example, human or non-human, familiar or unfamiliar, or living or deceased (Badcock and Chhabra, 2013; Karlsson, 2008; Mawson et al., 2011; Rhodes et al., 2005). In Chapter 4, this study instead focused on how hearers use language to try to make their experiences understandable to another person. More specifically, this study limited itself to the noun groups, including the term ‘voices’, used to designate these experiences. This emphasis on the various forms of description drawn on enabled the identification of patterns in how hearers talk about what they heard.

Hearers drew on five different categories of naming to refer to their voices. Just under half (46%) of all references to what participants heard consisted of the term ‘voice’. In fact, this was the preferred name for four out of the seven participants. The next most popular means (27%) was for participants to describe their experiences in their own words. Each hearer developed their own repertoire of metaphors and expressions for personalising what their voices were like. Hearers also referred to their voices by name as well as by descriptive epithets (15%) that they seem to have created to identify their voices as recognisable individuals. They also made use of names or designations (8%) that appear to have originated with the voices themselves. The least used form of reference was clinical terms (4%).

It was the second category – descriptions that hearers had coined during interviews – that offered the most opportunity for further analysis. Nine thematic sub-groups were identified from which participants created their own personal palette. Most participants drew on at least five ways of describing their voices in terms of their personal experience. Although the term ‘voice’ generally served as a default form of reference, descriptions representing a variety of subjective, figurative and impersonal themes were key elements of how
participants talked about the lived experience of their voices. These description referred to voices as a type of communication (43%), person (17%) and mental activity (13%). Within these sub-groups the particular words used not only ranged from positive to negative but included numerous facets of the one theme. For example, voices as experiences of communication included: ‘conversation, argument, interaction, telling, talking, story, chatter, opinion, dialogue, commentary and monologue’.

The individual nature of what hearers experience was varied among participants as to the types of description preferred. Insights into the personal world of participants were gained by identifying the themes expressed by the words used. This was also evident in the use of the term ‘voice’, which could be incorporated into vivid expressions that were suggestive of the hearer’s emotional and mental state. These insights complement studies of voices which typically question hearers about the identity of their voices while leaving their idiomatic forms of reference unexamined. This form of linguistic enquiry could motivate psychiatrists to encourage their patients to talk about their experiences in their own preferred idiom. By contrast, David had not told his psychiatrist that he called his voice by name as he reasoned that this was not something to tell the psychiatrist. Such knowledge could encourage further discussion of David’s voices in psychosocial terms as part of therapeutic treatment and not only as a clinical symptom (Chadwick, 2006; Jackson et al., 2010; Mawson et al., 2011) It was in relation to these personal associations and meanings that David’s partner Carol had helped him consider what his voices signified.

Although it was beyond the design of this study (given for example the variation in the number and scheduling of interviews) to trace comprehensively any changes or developments in the way hearers talked about their voices over the course of our conversations, Mark serves as an illustration of the tension that can exist between competing ways of referring to these experiences. In the space of only two meetings, Mark provided a number of examples in which he drew on a range of different descriptions. Initially, he used the professional discourse of his former work as a psychiatric nurse to objectify his voice as a discrete phenomenon for discussion with his psychiatrist. In contrast, he also used more personal language to develop his description of the emotional content of his ‘nihilistic’ thoughts (1.6, 59). Equally, he could stretch language to accommodate the paradoxical nature of his voice as ‘a monologued sort of dialogue’ (1.41, 153). However, when talking about the development of his business plan, he describes his voice in familiar, human terms.

These findings suggest the value of Schutz’s (1962, 1967, 1976) theories of intersubjectivity.
and multiple realities as a rationale for investigating how hearers talk about their voices. They recognise that the context in which such problematic experiences are discussed is a meeting place between different worlds of meaning. This understanding privileges the perspective of the hearer as the starting point for developing a shared language for referring to voices. Such an approach encourages hearers to draw on a diverse range of descriptions to speak for themselves about what it is they live with. How participants in this study refer to their voices reveals a complex mixture of idiomatic and conventional forms that defies their reductive definition as a hallucination. Simply put, talking about voices requires listening to how people talk about them. Recognising these linguistic patterns offers psychiatrists and therapists a guidepost to possible areas for discussion with hearers that develops rapport as well as providing a more revealing account of their voices that extends beyond the mere classification of their identity.

How do voices use language to interact?

A primary characteristic of voices is that they often speak in sentences in which the words used coalesce to express a unified function to show communicative intent. In short, the language itself is a form of interpersonal action. Importantly, the sense of intelligence that a purposeful use of language displays is a contributing factor to the perception of voices as real beings. Consequently, the potential impact voices can have on hearers is a source of major concern in psychiatry. However, the description of the behaviour of voices is often not adequately supported with linguistic evidence with which to elaborate its findings. Chapter 5 of this study provides an extensive analysis of voices as speech acts with which to characterise their verbal behaviour.

A question that is accorded importance in any clinical consultation with a patient with voices is ‘What do your voices say?’ However, subsumed within this is the matter of how hearers represent what they hear. Although they may recall the exact wording in cases where a voice is experienced as a clearly audible utterance, hearers may experience the gist of a communication without discerning any specific words. Equally, verbatim quotes may not be exact replications but a type of shorthand for capturing the overall sense. Furthermore, hearers may choose to eschew a literal representation of their voices through using direct speech by retaining their role as narrator. This allows them to continue to ‘author’ to a greater or lesser extent the structure and content attributed to their voices. Such reports in contrast to quotes are typically embedded within the hearer’s surrounding ‘telling’ as another form of narrative action (Yule, 1998). In both cases, hearers can be said to ‘convene’
or even ‘subpoena’ their voices in that voices are ‘re-voiced’ through what hearers say. Hearers by proxy come to represent their voices.

Generally speaking, participants in this study were more likely to illustrate what their voices said in the form of statements (70%) than directives (25%). They were twice as likely to frame these as quotes using direct speech than report them using indirect speech. This contrasts with Demjén and Semino’s (2014) finding that in a single written account only 14% of voice content was represented using direct speech. The choice of speech frame, namely direct quote or indirect report, suggests to what degree the hearer takes on the role of the voice or wishes to maintain narrative control. These two broad findings show that what hearers foreground in their accounts are voices in the form of assertions which argue the truth value of their propositions and that hearers prefer to represent the immediacy of this experience and their verbatim content by speaking in the person of the voice. Furthermore, the majority of voice content is situated in the context of hearers’ lives and refers to specific events in the world. At a finer level of analysis, statements which predominated across accounts were claims and justifications (26%), accusations, blame and criticism (18%), insults (17%), and plotting, threats and warnings (15%). These types of speech act mostly involve a form of allegation which represents the reality in which hearers live as given by their voices.

By way of general comparison, Berry et al. (2012), who categorised voices as controlling, critical/rejecting or threatening, found that nearly two-thirds (63%) of voices reported were critical or rejecting, followed by controlling (43.8%) and threatening (31.5%). In the present study, the combined group of accusations, blame and criticism with the addition of insults (35%) similarly accounts for approximately twice as many examples of voice content as plotting, threats and warnings. However, the number of directives cited by hearers are lower than found in Berry et al. (2012), representing a quarter of the references to what voices said.

Despite the fundamental differences in research methods, namely counting the number of voices (Berry et al., 2012) versus counting the number of examples of voice content in hearers’ accounts, this comparison illustrates that the prominence given to commanding voices in the literature can obscure cases where voices attack the integrity of hearers and use pejorative language. Nevertheless, a more complex picture of how voices interact with hearers emerges than is suggested by the distinction made by Berry et al. (2012) between controlling and threatening voices. Indeed, by analysing voice content in terms of speech acts, this study found that threats and warnings were often used in the context of controlling
the behaviour of hearers. Functionally, they often appeared to be a form of implied directive in which the threat or warning acted as a deterrent against the hearer taking action.

As regards the use of language to influence the behaviour of hearers, this study categorised a range of provocations to take action as a form of directive. These extended from less direct forms, such as suggestions and advice, to explicit orders. Commands were identified as a form of directive in which the authority and power of the voice was invoked as overriding that of the hearer. In accordance with the literature, commands were differentiated according to the object of harm, that is harm to self or other (Barrowcliff & Haddock, 2010; Bucci et al., 2013). A third category of ‘benign’ commands or ‘day to day instructions’ (Birchwood et al. 2014, p. 28) was too general. Therefore, this study identified regulatory and prohibitive directives to recognise the distinction between instructions directing domestic or personal behaviour, and those preventing hearers from taking actions that they normally would in daily life.

As a result, this study found that four out of five directives concerned everyday activities or personal situations. Leudar et al. (1997) and Fenekou and Georgaca (2010) similarly found that the content of voices was often connected to ordinary tasks and social behaviour. Nearly half of the directives identified in this study consist of regulatory instructions (44%), a further twenty-one percent are prohibitive acts of control, and fifteen percent are mild interventions in the form of acts of advice, reassurance, suggestion and consent. Similarly a small number of voices behaving in this positive manner was noted in the study by Leudar et al. (1997, p. 893). However, despite much of the content appearing to be mundane to the outsider, participants in this study provide numerous examples in which what their voices say affects what they do. Whereas statements typically require the listener to accept or reject the factuality of their content, directives oblige the listener to respond by either complying with or defying their authority. Although a number of the regulatory directives concern routine activities, these are frequently coercive and when used in combination with prohibitions may substantially curtail hearers’ sense of personal agency. Some seemingly minor regulatory directives, such as being told to light a cigarette lighter, can be preparatory to serious acts of self-harm.

The findings generated by the speech act analysis in this study indicate that identifying a voice as ‘commenting’, ‘commentary’ or ‘informative’ does not do justice to the complex range of pragmatic behaviour that voices display in their use of language. This study has shown that basic speech functions such as statement and directive are further shaped by
voices to produce meaningful interactions which can be persuasive or forceful in their manner of expression. The themes revealed support the view that the content of negative voices is strongly associated with relational themes of power and domination (for example, Chin et al., 2009). For instance, the majority of the statements attributed to voices consist of assertions of their superior knowledge of events and behaviour as well as of their effective agency in the world. By contrast, directives typically assume an aggrandisement of authority to enforce action through the hearer as instrument. Although the pragmatics of voices emerged as a research focus in the 1990s, a linguistic description with specific reference to the actual content of what voices say remains a potential area for further development in collaboration with hearers and therapists.

**How do voices represent the hearer’s world?**

Although voices have been broadly described in the literature in terms of their verbal behaviour, no account has concentrated on the role voices play as expressions of linguistic meaning. In particular, little consideration has been given to analysing the grammar of voices beyond occasional references to their use of pronouns and other formal grammatical features. Although such linguistic items can provide measures of verbal fluency and clause complexity, they do not contribute to an understanding of how voices use language to create meaning (Halliday, 2005). Such an attempt represents a considerable undertaking and hence this study – reported in Chapter 6 – has only considered one aspect, namely the choice of verb through which voices represent types of action. By mapping the domains of action that voices refer to, this study contributes linguistic evidence from a functional perspective of how language makes voices real.

Voices not only interact with hearers but construe the world as an entity with which they also interact. Hearers’ voices were found to be primarily concerned with either the dynamics of the phenomenological world, for example events and behaviour, or the attributes and identity of things. The first construes a world of action and change; the other a world of stability and meaning. This finding was indicated through the predominance of material and relational processes across hearers’ accounts. The prevalence of material processes of the transformative type organise action into three main domains of change: constitutive (elaborating) – change by being acted upon; transference (extending) – change through possession or removal; and movement (enhancing) – change in terms of location or motion. Over half (56%) of material processes represent physical action as essentially changing an object into a different form. It is not only that voices refer to the domain of everyday
activities (Fenekou & Georgaca, 2010; Leudar, et al., 1997), it is also that their apparent reality is substantiated through their frequent construal of the physical world in which they actively involved. They principally describe experience as tangible effects on solid matter.

For several participants, voices foreground their role as agents with the power to control events and people. This use of language substantiates their reality as compelling forces in the material world. In addition, voices may use causative constructions to represent highly coercive interventions in which occurrences are caused and people are provoked to act or prevented from acting. The representation of intrusive acts by voices features in a range of speech acts, mainly threats and prohibitions. The use of this grammatical construction in negative speech acts emphasises both the irresistible authority of voices and the helplessness of the individuals they manipulate. In contrast, material processes of the creative type are often used in threats and blaming to depict the world as a volatile place in which accidents unwittingly ‘happen’ as punishment. The outside world thus reflects the alleged immorality of the hearer.

But our sense of reality does not solely reside in the outside realm of matter. It also expressed through the domain of meaning (Halliday, 2005). The other major finding is that the world of relations is an important focus for voices. They use language to interpret the world for the hearer using different categories. For the most part, they evaluate attributes rather than assert identity. Over half (57%) of relational processes involve subjective descriptions of hearers, others and themselves and nearly a quarter (24%) assert the underlying meaning of an event or situation, which are often associated acts of blame. Both these usages are discussed in detail in terms of appraisal.

Although material and relational processes are predominant across hearers’ accounts, the intermediary41 domains of mental and verbal processes constitute the interface of the private domain of thinking and feeling on the one hand and the social world in which communication takes place on the other. A clear distinction emerged among hearers whose voices credited themselves with desires and feelings (Shirley, Victoria and Mark), voices that targeted those of hearers (Amy) or other people (David), and voices that made few references to subjective experience (Joan and Darby). Hence, the domain of mental processes is possibly a region in which variations may contribute to the individuality of hearers’ experiences. In regards to verbal processes, these often featured in prohibitive

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41 See the reproduction of the front cover of Halliday (1994) as Figure 2 in Chapter 1, and Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2014, p. 216) depiction of the “grammar of experience” as a circle.
contexts, such as Joan, Amy and Darby not being allowed to talk about their voices.

In terms of their pragmatic behaviour, the language voices use to communicate has been compared to that experienced in everyday social interactions (for example, Thomas et al., 2009). This study found that the overall distribution of process types used by voices in participants’ accounts is similar to that commonly found across a variety of language uses. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 215) and Matthiessen (2014, p. 150) argue that the three primary process types in English are material, mental and relational, with material processes marginally ahead of relational processes. The accounts participants gave of the language used by their voices thus accords with the prominence given to the physical domain of doing and happening on the one hand and the semiotic domain of being on the other that is generally evident in more familiar uses of language. In addition, the internal world of sensing represented by mental processes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999) also features in hearers’ accounts as a less prominent but still significant feature of what voices say. To sum up, in terms of a functional model of language, how voices use grammar to represent experience appears to be representative of everyday human communication.

How do voices appraise hearers, others and themselves?

Research regarding the language voices use to make comments about people emerged from studies which considered how voices talk to hearers (for example, Goodwin et al., 1971). This interpersonal view focused on reports of people who heard their voices swearing at them or making derogatory remarks. Although their categorisation as controlling and commanding has attracted more attention in the literature because of safety concerns (for example, Birchwood et al. 2014), the effects of insulting voices on hearers has recently begun to be studied in more detail because of their equally negative character. Evidence suggests that hearing voices is frequently an experience in which hearers are themselves being appraised. Voices are often critical and attacking, even if not actually dangerous by telling hearers to harm themselves or others (Gilbert et al., 2001; Legg & Gilbert, 2006). For instance, Leudar et al. (1997) found “[t]he informants judged voices much less frequently than the voices judged them … Voices, therefore, do not just act as [pragmatic] monitors of actions; they also judge persons” (p. 895). The very real capacity of voices to be destructive in their evaluations of hearers, added to their frequent loudness, can lead to hearers experiencing depression and attempting suicide especially if associated with commands to self-harm (Simms, McCormack, Anderson, & Mulholland, 2007).
The analysis in Chapter 7 found that most participants heard voices that commented positively or negatively on their character and abilities. Appraisal was typically used in insulting remarks but was also evident in speech acts that expressed praise as well as criticism and blame. For some participants, voices appraised the hearer’s own feelings and behaviour. Evaluative language was thus a resource that formed the core of the most directly personal of speech acts. Arguably, the negative content of many voices would not be as great if voices were merely experienced as audible strings of words. But in each account, the particular focus of derogatory evaluations affected hearers. A key finding is that the evaluative language that voices use typically concentrates on assessing hearers’ value, competency and moral integrity.

Each hearer’s account provides a distinctive impression of the attitude that their voices expressed. These appraisal ‘signatures’ ranged across a number of key themes that were directly relevant to hearers’ feelings about themselves. Significant appraisals were those in which personal worth was despised, intelligence and abilities were ridiculed, and any sense of self-respect disparaged. These categories of appraisal provide a linguistic foundation for Legg and Gilbert’s (2006) adaptation of Greenwald and McGuire’s (as cited in Legg & Gilbert, 2006, p. 518) research into shaming behaviour. The four areas of “(a) conformity, (b) prosocial behaviour/selfishness, (c) sexual behaviour/attractiveness and (d) status competitive behaviour” (Legg & Gilbert, 2006, p. 518) appear to bear relation to the appraisal category of judgement. For example, (a) and (b) suggest the sub-type of social esteem (normality and capacity), (b) the sub-type of social sanction and (c) aspects of appreciation and social sanction. As with a transitivity analysis of grammar, an appraisal analysis can be taken to a very delicate level of investigation. When used to a fuller extent, it can identify the shared values and positioning for power that underpin all language use (Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005).

The appraisal patterns identified in this study also lend themselves to further consideration in relation to McCarthy-Jones and Davidson’s (2013) argument that experiences in which the need for love has often been unmet, or worse abused, are often a core feature of the content of their voices. They draw on the classical Greek terms for different expressions of love to organise their thematic mapping of hearers’ relationships with other people and their voices. In terms of their ideas, central to David’s account are claims made by his voices denigrating his experiences of ‘eros’, or intimate love. They also make disparaging attacks on his competency, which pose the risk of demotivating David and eroding his feelings of ‘thelema’, that is “the desire to do something, to participate, contribute and recognise oneself
as a worthwhile person” (McCarthy-Jones & Davidson, 2013, p. 369).

Appraisals of value (appreciation) and capacity (judgement: social esteem) are similarly found in Amy’s account, and may also indicate that her sense of ‘thelema’, in which she feels worthy and capable, is a vulnerable area for her. On the other hand, Victoria’s male voices both vilify and support her in terms of ‘eros’ while the voices of her parents positively appraise her through expressions of ‘storge’, or parental love and pride. In addition, God appraises her in relation to ‘philia’, or friendship, and her jewellery teacher encourages feelings of ‘thelema’ about her artistic talents. Accusations, attributions of blame, and claims are likely to provoke feelings of guilt and shame in hearers even when, as is the case in this study, they are false (McCarthy-Jones & Davidson, 2013). These often entail judgements of social sanction, which dominate the accounts of Joan, Shirley and Amy. Challenging these spurious indictments involves hearers accepting the fundamental fact that they are personally innocent (McCarthy-Jones & Davidson, 2013).

Appraisal could be extended to include speech acts that do not make overt use of evaluative language, for example accusations and threats. Claims that mishaps occur as punishment for misdeeds could also been considered as forms of appraisal in the broader sense. However, for the purposes of analysis, the concept of appraisal was applied in accord with its narrow linguistic definition to adjectives and nouns whose meaning signalled the speaker’s attitude. This tighter focus at a more salient level of investigation permitted the identification of the type of personal areas where hearers may be most vulnerable to attack. Although this appraisal analysis did not include verbs of feeling and wanting, having been discussed in terms of transitivity in the previous chapter, nevertheless it was not possible to summarise the results without recognising their contribution to the role played by appraisals of affect as a whole.

Overall, the language of appraisal appears to play a significant part in carrying the personal and human attributes of voices, whether they are demons, spirits or known people, and so exerts a significant influence on hearers. The linguistic approach to appraisal (Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005) offers a practical resource for identifying how positive and negative evaluations accumulate through the verbal content of voices. As its focus is primarily lexical, appraisal analysis overlaps with pragmatic and grammatical accounts in that evaluation is typically expressed within the function of a speech act and the structure of a clause. As a result, these three perspectives combine to describe to a high degree of resolution how the language of voices powerfully evokes the reality of another speaker.
The reality of voices

This study has shown that voices constitute a nexus of linguistic resources. Previous research has focused on voices in terms of their pathology and phenomenology as well as hearers’ belief systems and their sense of relationship to their voices. However, the role of language in constituting voices has on the whole been minimised and as a result the area of linguistic research considered redundant. It is suggested that one reason for this oversight has been the absence of an approach based on a functional model of language that combines a set of complementary perspectives from which a rich account can be produced. Such a systematic analysis recognises that the question of how hearers represent their voices is a complex matter in which the role of language in realising the meaning of experience is a core element.

By eschewing the use of structured interview schedules and questionnaires, research participants were accorded the right to be the experts in regards to their own lived experience and what they chose to share. As interviewer, my role was closer to that of the mediaeval inquirer whose interaction with hearers encouraged them to author their account of their voices for themselves (Obermeier & Kennison, 1997; Riddy, 1993; Spearing, 1998; Windeatt, 2004). Participants generated their own distinctive ‘voice prints’ composed of narratives, interpretations and examples of what their voices said. Voices as a spoken phenomenon were thus situated in the context of a spoken account. In short, voices were heard in the retelling. Furthermore, in contrast with previous research, this study recognised that the verbal representation of voice content is constituted in the language that hearers used to talk about those interactions. Hence, the choice of speech frame, namely direct quote or indirect report, was identified to highlight the extent to which hearers took on the role of the voice or maintained narrative control.

Each of the linguistic analyses then took a different perspective by tracing the most prominent ‘whorls’ to address the main research question of how hearers represent their voices. Mapping voices with these four instruments thus provided the means for describing voices in terms of real acts of communication. The resulting descriptions indicate that the distinctive relationship hearers have with their voices is construed through the same social-semiotic resources they share with other people in everyday life, namely function, meaning and language. Indeed, if voices could not be considered in terms of the four sub-questions developed for this study, they would not produce such a compelling experience of personal interaction for each hearer.
In considering whether it is permissible to speak of the reality of voices, it is as well to be reminded of Leudar and Thomas’s (2000) comment that “John Austin (1962b) recommended that one should answer the question ‘Is it real?’ with ‘Real what?’” (p. 201). Hence, the answer that this study suggests to that question is that hearers represent their voices as real interactions. Expressed bluntly, the language heard in the form of voices is real. They are arguably as real as the more common experience of inner speech or self-talk. Fernyhough (2004) draws on Vygotsky’s (1962) theories of childhood psychological development to provide an account of voices as a disruption of the normal mental activities of inner speech. Fernyhough (2004) suggests that whereas private speech is typically fragmentary or abridged as a linguistic form, voices represent a grammatically reconstituted form of self-talk nearer to complete sentences.

It is partly due to this experience of a more substantial use of language that leads hearers to misattribute their thoughts to voices belonging to other speakers (Fernyhough, 2004). Central to Vygotsky’s (1962) account is the form of inner speech being dialogic in adults as a consequence of verbal interactions with caregivers during infancy. Children progressively model their own mental behaviour on this dialectical experience by vocalising their thoughts to themselves while playing or problem-solving. As a result, the universal experience of “inner speech is irreducibly dialogic in character” (Fernyhough, 2004, p. 53) although its use of grammatical structure eventually becomes so reduced as to be redundant. In the case of voices, however, this linguistic ‘compression’ is reversed.

But what becomes apparent from the different accounts given by hearers in this study is the conceptually complex problem of what “accent of reality” (Schutz, 1962, p. 230) to accord to their experiences. For example, it would seem that most participants would consider their voices in their behaviour as being closer to ‘people’ than ‘language’. Darby is the apparent exception, and in this regard his several references to his voices as ‘stories’ (2.125, 325) suggest an engrossing narrative, which is nearer to describing the content of his voices in terms of language and meaning. Part of the issue may lie in how hearers interpret the sound of someone speaking. Leudar and Thomas (2000, p. 205) observe that:

Voice hearers usually construe voice-talk as more than just sound – they typically invest it with at least a communicative agency. Should voices be considered to be the same sorts of persons as the voice hearers and other people? Perhaps not literally.

Hearers thus interpret their experience of their voices in terms of what they mean in terms of action in the world as well as how they behave through what they say. However, voices do
not have the agency to initiate action. Yet it was not on account of the *sound* of a voice that Victoria slept at a bus stop in Port Augusta in order to release refugees, Shirley wore a black wristband or Darby visited churches to receive a blessing. Nor was Joan’s reluctance to talk about her voices in our third interview after a recent psychotic episode only a result of what her voices said, which appears to have been content she had heard before. Arguably, it was the sense of the person of the speaker behind the voice. One probable reason for the compelling force of hearers’ experiences is that the voice appears to represent an executive form of agency, that is, an entity with the capacity to carry out actions in the material world. From this standpoint, the voice is what can be heard of the person who claims to be able to *do* what they *say*. Even if, as in Amy’s case, their threats fail to be acted on, there is still the fear that the ongoing experience of hearing a voice signifies the potential for agency to be realised at another time.

Voices do not need personal names to be considered real. Garrett and Silva (2003) found that although less than a quarter of respondents could refer to their voices by name, nearly all experienced their voices as real. Nevertheless, some hearers may argue against the reality of their voices because this would mean admitting that they would always hear them (Garrett & Silva, 2003). Hearers may also deny their reality under pressure from other people who stigmatise their experiences (Garrett & Silva, 2003). Equally, hearers such as Shirley are not afraid to define reality on their own terms, as in ‘it’s real in that I know they’re there’ (Shirley 1.33, 380). It was Shirley who had resisted contacting me until I had changed my recruitment announcement from referring ‘hallucinations’ to ‘voices’ (1.33, 372–380).

However, there may be a case for making a distinction between considering a voice to be real and interpreting it literally. Garrett and Silva (2003) cite the case of a woman who heard a baby crying and was at first anxious that she might need to look after its physical needs but was able to experience it as a form of emotional connection. Similarly, Shirley believed her very young alter called Baby represented a real emotional need that could be related to through symbolic acts of love or tangible tokens of care (3.48, 249–281; 3.52, 295–306).

Furthermore, the relationships hearers experience with their voices may be more satisfying and meaningful than with other people (Beavan, 2011). In the present study, Amy relates the story of a man she knew, who had few friends and lost his voices as a result of medication (3.72, 339–361). When he realised that he was none of things he had believed about himself, such as thinking that ‘everyone loved him’ (3.72, 342), he took his own life. In summing up the sense of loss he felt, Amy remarks that ‘some people actually find it very frightening not to have the voices when they’ve been used to having them for a long time’ (3.72, 359–361).
Similarly, Romme and Escher (2000) note that a number of hearers do not wish to have their voices taken away. Unless what these hearers experience is no more than a form of ‘pseudo’ friendship, we are left with no alternative but to admit the possibility that for some people their voices are no less real than the people they know in everyday life. Attempts to summarise what people hear in terms of “the illusion that the voice is another person … [with] ‘personlike’ characteristics” (Garrett & Silva, 2003, p. 447) have essentially rejected their experiences, and reduced opportunities for relating to their voices within a therapeutic framework to little more than self-deception.

David’s partner Carol, however, considers David’s voice to play an important intrapersonal function in facing him with beliefs and fears that undermine his core sense of identity and value (3.37, 97–102). Arguably, what is ‘personlike’ about his voice is that it personifies emotional themes in David’s life experiences with other people. His voice can therefore be said to be as real as his thoughts and feelings about himself, with the question of whether they are accurate in content being another matter for discussion. If developing a sense of reciprocity in hearers’ relationships with their voices is considered a positive therapeutic aim (Hayward et al., 2009), then the concept of the ‘person-like’ character of voices is more difficult to sustain than their ‘personhood’. This means relating to a voice as a person not merely like one. Otherwise, hearers are being encouraged to work on developing a relationship with a hallucination, a pathological symptom which by virtue of its unreality cannot be related to.

Behrendt (1998) refers at one point to what hearers experience as “people who are present through hallucinatory voices” (p. 245). For example, hearers may experience what they hear as “people talking about them” (p. 246). Reference to ‘voices’ is what enables hearers to attempt to bridge the divide between themselves and the dominant consensus reality that asserts that nobody was heard to speak. Voices therefore becomes the shared term for referring to an experience that is, however, more significant than its sum of auditory features while at the same time signifying the very essence of personhood through its vocal identity. It is arguable that the reason hearers do not talk about ‘hearing people’ is because by talking about ‘hearing voices’ they are at least granted as possessing ‘insight’ into their condition.

A person who thinks their voices are people is considered mentally ill. From a clinical perspective, only someone with a mental disorder would believe the sound of words was an actual person. This would be a clear case of misperception and misidentification. Indeed, only a mentally ill person would do what a voice told them to do. But people do not act on or
are hurt by mere words and sentences. We respond to language because it is spoken by someone. If we carefully listen to how hearers talk about their experiences, we find that they are really talking about people as voices. Hence, Darby’s continual reassurance to Joan that what she hears is “only voices”, that is, not people. Studies such as Chin et al. (2009), Hayward and Fuller (2010), and Legg and Gilbert (2006) found that hearers described the strategic behaviour of their voices in the same way people would be spoken of, for example as “possessing sensory capabilities like hearing ability (...) a complex cognitive, affective, and behavioural state (and) having intentions” (Chin et al., 2009, p. 7). Studies of hearers’ beliefs about their voices recognise the attribution of intent (Peters et al., 2012) as a key factor towards modifying hearers’ behaviour, particular in regard to acting on voices that issue directives. Beavan (2011) identifies the “compelling sense of reality” (p. 63) as one of the core features of voices and recommends that evidence that “voices are real” (p. 63) be taken seriously in therapy. Indeed, as found in this study, hearers experience their voices behaving as if they “have a life of their own” (Beavan, 2011, p. 70).

Rather than denying the “experienced reality” of the hearer, Larkin (1979, p. 942) suggested that the therapist step inside that reality with the patient and guide them through it. This approach means therapists getting to know the voices as well as an outsider possibly can by listening to them through the person of the hearer. She argued that clinicians should develop an ear for the voices heard by their patients. This intention requires putting aside some of their own professional reservations and taking advantage of the opportunities hearers’ experiences offer as an indicator of their individual needs throughout the course of treatment. Larkin (1979) proposed that the verbal content of voices may be used to identify the needs of patients. During an acute episode patients might need external protection and help against the destructive demands of the voice. During remission, however, the presence of voices may indicate that patient needs are more focused on reality issues and interpersonal concerns.

Therefore, it may be meaningful to consider voices in relation to ‘personhood’, where they may be regarded as personifying dissociated aspects of hearers themselves (Perona-Garcelán et al., 2015) so as to acknowledge their personal relevance and meaning for individual hearers (Beavan, 2011). For example, hearers may relate to their voices as a friend or protective figure who helps them deal with difficult personal issues (Benjamin, 1989; Holt & Tickle, 2014). This is particularly the case in Shirley’s therapeutic work with integrating her alters, and even in Mark’s endeavours to develop his business plans, despite the saturation of much of his account with psychiatric terms.
Alan Turing, the inventor of the prototype of the modern-day computer that deciphered the code used by the German ‘Enigma machine’ during World War II (Hodges, 2014), argued that the key reason for the notion that a piece of equipment could think for itself was that operators could not tell the difference between it and another human when sending and receiving messages (Garrett & Silva, 2003). According to Garrett and Silva (2003),

[in Turing’s view, interaction is the (original italics) essence of how we recognize a thinking entity. The more complex its interactive capacity, the more autonomous, alive, and real an entity appears (p. 447).

Hence, the fact that voices sound human, are grammatically structured, and can sustain a casual conversation in a variety of different ways construes the experience of hearing people or other intelligent beings talking to them (Garrett & Silva, 2003). In particular, it is the realistic combination of verbal interactivity and emotional content that enables hearers to experience a personal relationship with their voices.

The alternative treatment would frame the experience as one of language rather than person. This is closer to what St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross may have intended in their use of the term translated as ‘locution’ to avoid encouraging premature beliefs in the faithful that God, the angels or the Devil had spoken to them. A more dialogic analogy to this is found in Victoria’s frequent references to her experiences as ‘conversations’ (1.32, 172) in themselves, or ‘conversations with people’ (1.9, 27) in which the presence of another interlocutor is made explicit. Although some hearers may be resistant to depersonalising their voices, considering them as acts of communication may help distance them from unpleasant voices.

Darby would probably agree given that he had not heard voices for several years and no longer felt drawn to act on his voices’ instructions. His repeated reassurance to Joan that ‘they’re only voices’ (2.161, 449) is given material weight with his rebuttal of what worries her most, ‘and they can’t harm you’ (2.161, 449). They cannot actually do anything, that is, they have no agency in the world. Nevertheless, Shirley has come to understand that her voices are dissociated parts of her psyche that bore the trauma of her sexual abuse as a child and have continued to carry the pain for her. She experiences a number of them as frightened children who crave love and protection, and much of her time is spent placating them and attending to their emotional needs. In fact, it was the changes in her emotions that accompanied her voices that led her to question her diagnosis with other members of her voice hearers group (2.3, 5–7; 2.10, 36–46). Mark speaks of his voice including a ‘strong
emotive component’ (1.49, 189) that amplifies his nihilistic thoughts. Similarly, Joan describes how her voices begin as thoughts and feelings (2.169, 483–486). Perhaps one of the key reasons for acknowledging the humanness of voices is their apparent emotional core (Garrett & Silva, 2003). In daily experience, a voice expresses the feelings of the person speaking. The voice itself does not have feelings. These come through the voice. However, Shirley, Mark and Victoria experience more than hearing emotion in their voices. They also participate in the emotions they associate with their voices. The personhood of the voice is thus experienced through the emotions they come to feel for themselves. Thus, rather than abstracting the experience in terms of ‘voices personifying emotions’, it might be more accurate to describe the lived experience of the content as being closer to one of ‘people voicing emotions’.

Voices have agency ascribed to them because they are experienced as people and described as interactive entities but within the context of a clinical setting they are accounted for as auditory verbal hallucinations. Despite the movement away from pathological and cognitive models, developmental models continue to subscribe to framing hearers’ experiences as ‘believing voices are people’ while at the same time advocating research frameworks and psychotherapeutic interventions aimed at clarifying their interpersonal dimension. In short, it is argued that it is not possible to have an interpersonal relationship with ‘a voice’. But it is possible with a person whose voice you believe you hear. Furthermore, as Hayward et al. (2014) note, many hearers talk back to their voices but this only makes sense if it is accepted that they experience the interaction as taking place with a person. Indeed, hearers could only describe their experiences as forms of verbal communication and personal interactions because what they primarily hear are people talking. This makes a further shift from conceptualising a voice as a sensory or thought-like stimulus which the voice-hearer holds beliefs about, to a voice as a social, person-like, stimulus which the voice-hearer has a relationship with (Hayward et al., 2014, p. 243, authors’ italics).

It is thus suggested that from a hearer-centred perspective voices are more than ‘person-like’ and are actually experienced as a person communicating through their voice to the hearer. The ‘-like’ is a signifier of the boundary that separates the researcher from the lived experience of hearers. This attitude is pervasive in accounts which recognise that voices are real in the sense that voices really occur (original italics) (…) (with attributes) sufficient to construct not a perfect replica of a person but one in many cases functionally sufficient to sustain an emotionally cathected interpersonal relationship with the patient (Garrett & Silva, 2003, p. 453).
In this diluted sense, the voices only stand in a relationship ‘once removed’. The reality of voices is predetermined for hearers in that they are granted the token status of hallucinations, or symptoms of mental illness. However, in the accounts of hearers in this study, their voices are real for many other reasons. One is that they can affect hearers physically and emotionally as well as influencing what they do in the world. Voices are real to hearers in the sense that they are credited with communicative and executive agency.

This brings us to the question of what “accent of reality” (Schutz, 1962, p. 230) we accord to ‘meaning’. Is meaning real? But, as Halliday and Matthiessen (1999) and Halliday (2005) argue, meaning is not an entity ‘out there’ waiting to be found. It is created through intersubjective experience and interaction. From this perspective, voices reflect social-semiotic behavior in which intrapersonal processes are modelled on interpersonal communication. As such, voices can be said to be meaningful as an experiential or lived reality (McCarthy-Jones, Krueger, Larøi, Broome, & Fernyhough, 2013) that is quite apart from questions concerning their objective status as external entities. Importantly, in the context of psychotherapy, they are often indicative of traumatic events and emotional pain that continue to affect the lives of many hearers. Comparable to the findings of Fenekou and Georgaca (2010) and Goldsmith (2012), most of the participants in this study, namely Shirley, David, Amy, Victoria and Mark freely or begrudgingly accept their experiences as a part of who they are, whether that be their self, mind or illness, and are searching for ways to live with or despite their voices.

On a number of occasions, participants refer to the reality of their experiences. Furthermore, they recognise that reality is relative to whose ‘accent of reality’ is accorded primacy. Bringing individual realities into relationship is of particular concern as it is through the opening of channels of communication with other people that hearers can be helped to move between private and shared realities without feeling isolated by their experiences. Indeed, it is by listening and talking to the participants in this study that the notion of an objective reality that exists independently of its interpreters is surrendered in favour of an intersubjective understanding that is never finalised and needs ongoing negotiation. As Goldsmith (2012) notes, “psychosis is a condition which challenges perceptions and conceptions of reality, questioning whether a singular reality exists” (pp. 243–244).

Perhaps the issue is not between ‘person-like’ and ‘personhood’ as ‘person-like’ and ‘self-hood’, thereby requiring a revision of our notions concerning how to define our sense of self, our experience of identity. Changing negative voices into positive, relatable aspects
of the self promotes emotional and social functioning in which voices are engaged with as ‘self-speak’ rather than alien otherness (Fernyhough, 2004). Perona-Garcelán et al. (2015) argue for a reappraisal of voices not in terms of a perceptual deficit but as “a state of consciousness” (p. 275) that consists of a community of “I-positions” (p. 275) that have become dissociated. As voices are only experienced by the people who hear them, they are in a meaningful sense a part of the hearers’ own identity. Accordingly, relating to voices entails hearers entering into dialogue with themselves so that these dissociated elements can take their place among less intrusive experiences of inner speech or self-talk. From this perspective, what hearers describe in their accounts are their experiences of a person who is heard as a voice that carries elements of their own personal psychology (Perona-Garcelán et al., 2015). This understanding of voices in turn recognises their contribution to the larger conversation between hearer and therapist. It would therefore appear to be merely a matter of time before psychological views of identity that recognise our sense of a personal self as involving a plurality of selves that can be dissociated in psychosis accords voices personhood by virtue of being part of hearers themselves.

Acknowledgement of limitations

A number of limitations affect the scope of this study. First, the number of participants recruited was small. Originally eight showed interest but one withdrew before interviews began. One reason for the lack of response was undoubtedly the original wording of my announcement on the website of the Mental Illness Fellowship of South Australia (MIFSA) in which reference was made to ‘auditory hallucinations’. Although people with voices would have heard their psychiatrists using this term, outside the consulting room and especially in the context of the community support offered at MIFSA, it probably was understood as denigrating their experiences. Despite rewriting the announcement, only Shirley contacted me as a result. During the time I was attending weekly handover meetings and demonstrations of mental health status examinations at two psychiatric wards, I obtained additional ethics approval to send a written request to registrars at one of the hospitals to inform patients admitted with hearing voices about my study. Although this led to my being introduced to several inpatients, they did not contact me on their discharge. In addition, as only people who gave informed consent could be interviewed, it is acknowledged that only those who were well enough to talk about their voices were eligible for inclusion. As a result, the accounts given do not represent the experiences of people still suffering from severe mental illness.
Later in my research, I was invited to meet the *Talking Heads* group and talk about my study when I was nearing the end of my interviews but despite the general interest shown I did not secure further participants. Overall, my inability to recruit more hearers may also be due to my not working in mental health services. As a result, I did not have the daily collegial contact with staff or informal regular contact with potential participants to recruit from within organisations. Opportunities for further research may be forthcoming if the project was undertaken in collaboration with mental health professionals or was developed within a voice hearer’s group with active promotion by members. Indeed, a recent development that is gaining considerable momentum has been the advocacy of the involvement of hearers as integral in designing and conducting research projects (Corstens, Longden, McCarthy-Jones, Waddingham, & Thomas, 2014; Neil et al., 2013; Schrader, 2013).

A second limitation is that the procedure for sending transcripts ahead of interviews to participants was difficult to sustain given time constraints. A more feasible method would be to produce summaries of our interviews as a more readable alternative for participants to receive. Although copies of recordings were made on CD and given to participants in several cases, this also proved to be unsuccessful due to one participant having technical problems playing the discs at home and others who did not like listening to themselves making false starts and hesitating. In addition, the intervals between interviews varied, especially in the case of Victoria due to my constraints of full-time work and managing the transcription of earlier interviews. A more uniform schedule of meetings would be preferable.

A third limitation involves methods for generating data. Participants had initially been asked to keep a journal of their voices but this practice was not consistently observed across the group. Although both David and Amy already wrote about their voices, they expressed themselves using poetry and free writing, some of which they read out in interviews. I was therefore reluctant to interfere by asking them to write out verbatim what they heard as they were developing their own creative processes. Similarly, Shirley maintained a blog of her experiences but chose after our first interview to make several audio recordings, which were included for analysis. However, as Darby no longer heard voices and Joan still experienced distress from her voices, this written component of the study was abandoned. The use of journals to record verbatim examples of voices may be more successfully explored within the setting of a voice hearers’ group in which it is already a part of their practice. In addition, the greater prevalence of smart phones with recording devices would enable research participants to readily record themselves repeating the content of their voices in any location.
A fourth limitation concerns the methods of analysis. Voices were treated as isolated acts of speech. However, voices are communicative experiences of interaction in which both hearer and voice participate (Davies et al., 1999; Leudar & Thomas, 2000; Leudar, et al., 1997). A more comprehensive examination would include analysing patterns of turn-taking if hearers talked back to their voices as well as the language content of their own speech. However, this approach would entail participants either transcribing their conversations or audio recording both parts of the interaction. Either form of data generation could be difficult for participants to manage.

A fifth limitation of this study involves the coding criteria used for each of the four research sub-questions. For example, in regards to the categorisation of voice content in terms of speech acts, identifying the function of an example of language use is partly an intuitive judgement that relies on interpreting the illocutionary force of an utterance in terms of its likely intent. However, the process of classification was guided by any narrative details given of the context in which voices were experienced and the surrounding spoken co-text in which the quote or report was embedded. In addition, video and audio recorded interviews were played for facial and intonational cues to assist with coding.

A more reliable description would entail the cooperation of hearers in the form of respondent validation (Burns, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Studies such as Rhodes et al. (2005) included a participant check of a summary of their coding of delusional ideation. In terms of the present study, hearers could have been asked to comment on a preliminary coding of a sample of voice content in terms of speech acts, or establish the categories themselves with some initial guidance. Alternatively, participants could have been asked to directly comment on what they thought their voices were feeling at the time of speaking. As Legg and Gilbert (2006) observe, a number of examples of voice content may be too ambiguous to classify in terms of pragmatic function without eliciting details from hearers about the emotional tone of voice and perceived intent. In the case of coding voices for the transitivity analysis, reliability would be improved if it was undertaken in collaboration with other language specialists. However, as explained in Chapter 3, owing to the complex nature of the representation of meaning through language, it is recognised that indeterminate cases may still arise (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999; Matthiessen, 1995b; O’Donnell et al., 2008).
Recommendations for development in therapeutic contexts

The linguistic perspective taken in this study is relevant to a number of therapeutic practices in which clients are asked to focus on what their voices are saying as well as how they themselves are responding. A number of these methods involve clients engaging with their voices through transcribed dialogues and experiential role plays. In particular, exploring the functional role of language would complement initiatives taken by the Hearing Voices Movement pioneered by Marius Romme and Sandra Escher, which places hearers’ understanding of their experiences of their voices in the foreground of therapeutic treatment.

Voice content could be discussed in the context of how language acts as a resource for expressing agency, meaning and relationship. Using modified and more accessible versions of the categories in this study, the verbal behaviour voices could be mapped with clients in relation to: what type of action dominates voice content; how voices represent agency; and what role is accorded to hearers compared to voices. Bringing an awareness of these patterns of interaction and representation to their experiences may enable hearers to regain some sense of control over domineering voices by identifying and predicting their content. For example, in their self-guided workbook, Coleman and Smith (2003) provide numerous activities for hearers to build a structured profile of their voices. This could be supplemented with additional resources that focus on key areas of language use, such as common speech acts and forms of appraisal associated with specific voices, as well as inviting hearers to reflect on how they verbally respond to distressing voices.

The therapist-led practice of Talking With Voices (Corstens, Longden, & May, 2012; Corstens, May, & Longden, 2012) provides a framework for hearers to interact with their voices, which are considered to be partners in the therapeutic process. Hearers speak for their voices by repeating their responses to questions and comments from the facilitator. The psychotherapeutic practice of Talking With Voices is premised on the precept that:

[voices represent a part of the person that wants to be heard and acknowledged … In some respects, voices are like ordinary people. They have feelings, motives, shortcomings, and opinions … voices can be interpreted as selves that relate to overwhelming emotional difficulties in the hearer’s life (Corstens, Longden, & May, 2012, p. 97).

As hearers who have experienced Talking With Voices are becoming involved in advising psychiatrists-in-training (Corstens, Longden, & May, 2012), a developed awareness of language features could assist them in describing the content and behaviour of voices.
A practical understanding of language is particularly applicable to the inclusion of assertiveness training for hearers in therapy (Hayward & Fuller, 2010; Paulik et al., 2012). This awareness could help hearers develop strategies for managing interactions with distressing voices as a part of a programme incorporating the ‘empty chair’ and ‘two chair’ enactments used in relating therapy (Chadwick, 2006; Hayward & Fuller, 2010; Hayward et al., 2009). In these dialogical enactments, clients may be asked to speak in the person of their voices and so “bring the utterances of the voice into the room” (Hayward et al., 2009, p. 217). Client and therapist together explore how changes in communication with voices can improve the relationship. Hearers with distressing voices can be supported to map the verbal behaviour of their voices and then devise and rehearse rejoinders to particular instances of voice content functioning as an accusation, spurious claim or threat for example, as well as recognising how these include negative appraisals of the hearer’s value or moral integrity (Hayward et al., 2009).

Furthermore, clients can be guided towards recognising how their voices and people with whom they are in relationship, as well as themselves, use language to construe power and submissiveness, agency and passivity (Hayward et al., 2014; Hayward & Fuller, 2010) As hearers may be asked to write down what their voices say in response (Hayward et al., 2009), a discussion of their verbal content with their therapist drawing on a simplified version of the linguistic tools used in this study may provide further insight. For example, hearers could ‘action’ a transcribed dialogue with their voices in the manner of an actor exploring a script (Caldarone & Lloyd-Williams, 2011). Alternatively, approaches that seek to engage aggressive voices through loving-kindness and compassionate mindfulness practices (Mayhew & Gilbert, 2008) may find it useful to raise hearers’ awareness of the empathic use of language as an interpersonal resource to develop relationship.

Similarly, hearers undertaking a programme of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) could be introduced to the same linguistic tools but with a shift in focus from relating to voices through the pragmatics of language to disengaging from voices by foregrounding their experience as ‘locutions’ or verbiage. This could help hearers who are distressed by their voices to take an analytical position towards their experiences as ‘language in action’ rather than ‘voice in relation’ so as to reduce feelings of being overwhelmed by the personified nature of their voices (Thomas, Morris, Shawyer, & Farhall, 2013). Using simplified categories for voices in terms of their pragmatics, transitivity and appraisal may even be possible as part of a mindfulness approach (Chadwick, 2006; Morris, Johns, & Oliver, 2013). For example, recurrent voices that have been discussed in therapy sessions
and identified as involving for example a threat, a material process or a negative appraisal of value can perhaps be drawn on as a further means of objectifying voices when hearers are noting unpleasant voices during formal and informal meditation practice. However, it is important that hearers are familiar and comfortable with these terms as noting should be a simple act of observation and labelling, and not involve discursive thinking (Germer, 2009; Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Williams, Teasdale, Segal, & Kabat-Zinn, 2007).

Leff, Williams, Huckvale, Arbuthnot, and Leff (2014) have developed a computer software program which allows hearers to interact with negative voices visually and verbally represented as an avatar, or video gaming identity. By imaging the voice so that it can be seen, the aim is to create “a genuine conversational interchange” (p. 167) in which therapists initially control the avatar to support hearers as they learn to develop resilience for asserting themselves when they hear their voices. As the avatar is designed by hearers themselves, it is safe for them to say whatever they want to their creation (Leff et al., 2014). This process initially requires hearers to tell therapists exactly what their voices say so that it can be repeated back by the avatar. All sessions were audio recorded so participants could listen to them again to build up their self-confidence for when they next heard their voices.

Leff et al. (2014) supply a link to an audio excerpt in which the therapist prompts the hearer with specific language to use to defend himself as well as improvising responses as the avatar. Discussing these recordings with participants in relation to the specific language used could enhance the ability of hearers to later monitor how their voices speak to them and what verbal strategies appear to be the most effective. As Leff and colleagues believe that poor self-esteem is associated with abusive voices, identifying what type of appraisal voices make, for example value or competency, may assist hearers to prepare and rehearse in their own rejoinders in avatar therapy. Furthermore, as the supportive comments the avatar expresses later are also recorded, a modified version of the linguistic tools used in this study could enhance this form of therapeutic intervention as well.

**Conclusion**

In her preface to the linguist Noam Chomsky’s *Language and Thought*, Anshen (1993, p. 12) makes this powerful declaration:

> Language is an energy, an activity, not only of communication and self-expression but of orientation in the universe. It is spirit made flesh. The violent muteness, the desperate isolation we experience finally breaks through in language … We need not seek the word; the word is given within us.
And finally, we remember, as Wilhelm von Humboldt, that great philosopher of language has said, “We are human not because we have language but because we are language” (author’s italics).

This study has aimed to manifest the language of voices through the language of the people who hear them by illustrating how language makes hearing voices real. It argues that describing the language is an important step to knowing both the voice and the hearer. By mapping the linguistic geography of voices, it has investigated their form and content so that we can glimpse their meaning and experience. In so doing, this process recognises that the words of the voices become the words of their hearers in the context of talking with others. In this sense, Joan, Shirley, David, Amy, Darby, Victoria and Mark become their voices as they are the only ones who hear them and the only ones who can speak for and about them. But this is a shared undertaking with those who can listen and it is hoped that their feelings of isolation and the strangeness of their experiences are lessened through such interactions. Peer support groups and interpersonal approaches to therapy help bring voices into dialogue. Developing in collaboration with hearers and therapists more extensive descriptions that map how language mediates hearers’ relationships with their voices offers a potential focus for further research. In describing what recovery means to her, Victoria (213–218) says:

> it can be quite a horrible thing to go through but once you’ve gone through it and you come out on the other end—if you get better I think you can appreciate life in a way that you can never before it because you finally have your voice back—you can speak to people—you can go out—you can do things and you’re not constantly confused by a million and one questions going on inside your head

Including an awareness of the language of voices in the conversation between hearer and listener is an important means of supporting hearers in recovering the voice that speaks the language of who they are. This research has contributed to this endeavour by foregrounding the complexity of the linguistic issues that voices embody that challenge their narrow description as solely a clinical symptom.
For last year’s words belong to last year’s language

And next year’s words await another voice …

What we call the beginning is often the end

And to make an end is to make a beginning.

The end is where we start from …

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