Making Arrangements:
Remote proposal sequences and attendant structural phenomena in social interaction

Stuart Ekberg

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

School of Psychology
University of Adelaide

February 2011
# Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................ iv  
Declaration ....................................................................................................................... vi  
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................... vii  

Chapter 1: Introduction: Making arrangements in interaction ........................................ 1  
1.1 Making arrangements as a special status, closing relevant topic ...................... 3  
1.2 Arrangements as an accountable social practice ............................................... 6  
1.2.1 Accounting for a particular arrangement ................................................... 7  
1.2.2 Mutual accounting for arrangements ......................................................... 8  
1.3 Context relevance in designing actions that make arrangements ................... 10  
1.4 Proposals for an arrangement.......................................................................... 14  
1.4.1 Immediate proposals ................................................................................ 15  
1.4.2 Remote proposals ..................................................................................... 18  
1.4.3 Requests as remote proposals .................................................................. 21  
1.4.4 Remote proposals as a possibly broad action type .................................. 23  
1.5 Aims of the thesis ............................................................................................. 24  

Chapter 2: Data and methodological approach .............................................................. 27  
2.1 Data source....................................................................................................... 27  
2.1.1 The data source: Community and Home Care .......................................... 27  
2.1.2 Community and Home Care in Australia ................................................... 29  
2.1.3 Sites of data collection .............................................................................. 31  
2.2 Conversation analysis as a research methodology .......................................... 32  
2.2.1 Studying naturally-occurring talk-in-interaction ....................................... 33  
2.2.2 ‘Unmotivated examination’ of participants’ methods ............................... 37  
2.3 Project procedures ........................................................................................... 39  
2.3.1 Data collection .......................................................................................... 41  
2.3.2 Transcription ............................................................................................. 43  
2.3.3 Analysis: Single episodes of interaction .................................................... 44  
2.3.4 Analysis: Collections of interactional phenomena .................................... 45  

Chapter 3: Foundational findings in conversation analysis ............................................ 47  
3.1 Turn-taking organisation .................................................................................. 47  
3.2 Sequence organisation ..................................................................................... 50  
3.3 Preference structure .......................................................................................... 53  
3.4 Repair organisation ........................................................................................... 56  

Chapter 4: Prospective informings as proposals for remote action ............................... 63  
4.1 Background....................................................................................................... 65  
4.1.1 Remote proposals as an action type ......................................................... 65  
4.1.2 Accounting for remote proposals ............................................................. 69  
4.2 Initiating and outlining prospective informings ............................................... 70  
4.2.1 Some ways of initiating prospective informings ....................................... 70  
4.2.2 The function of ‘outlining’ prospective informings ..................................... 72  
4.3 The components of prospective informings in the CHC data corpus .............. 76  
4.3.1 Accounting for arrangements .................................................................. 76  
4.3.2 Informing the client of a substitute arrangement service ........................ 78  
4.4 Accomplishing a multi-unit prospective informing ........................................ 81  
4.4.1 A pragmatic resource: Informings of consequential occurrences ........... 82
Appendix F: Report to collaborating agencies .............................................................. 231
Appendix G: Running sheet and slides of presentation to agency employees .......... 236
Appendix H: Resources for recruitment and training ................................................... 260
Abstract

In this thesis, I contribute to the study of how arrangements are made in social interaction. Using conversation analysis, I examine a corpus of 375 telephone calls between employees and clients of three Community Home Care (CHC) service agencies in metropolitan Adelaide, South Australia. My analysis of the CHC data corpus draws upon existing empirical findings within conversation analysis in order to generate novel findings about how people make arrangements with one another, and some of the attendant considerations that parties to such an activity can engage in:

**Prospective informings as remote proposals for a future arrangement** – Focusing on how employees make arrangements with clients, I show how the employees in the CHC data corpus use ‘prospective informings’ to detail a future course of action that will involve the recipient of that informing. These informings routinely occasion a double-paired sequence, where informers pursue a response to their informing. This pursuit often occurs even after recipients have provided an initial response. This practice for making arrangements has been previously described by Houtkoop (1987) as ‘remote proposing.’ I develop Houtkoop’s analysis to show how an informing of a future arrangement can be recompleted, with response solicitation, as a proposal that is contingent upon a recipient’s acceptance.

**Participants’ understanding of references to non-present third parties** – In the process of making arrangements, references are routinely made to non-present third parties. In the CHC data corpus, these third parties are usually care workers. Prior research (e.g., Sacks & Schegloff, 1979; Schegloff, 1996b) explains how the use of ‘recognitional references’ (such as the bare name ‘Kerry’), conveys to recipients that they should be able to locate the referent from amongst their acquaintances. Conversely, the use of ‘non-recognitional references’ (such as the description ‘a lady called Kerry’), conveys that recipients are unacquainted with the referent. I examine instances where the selection of a recognitional or non-recognitional reference form is followed by a recipient initiating repair on that reference. My analysis provides further evidence that
the existing analytic account of these references corresponds to the way in which participants themselves make sense of them. My analysis also advances an understanding of how repair can be used, by recipients, to indicate the inappropriateness of a prior turn.

*Post-possible-completion accounts* – In a case study of a problematic interaction, I examine a misunderstanding that is not resolved within the repair space, the usual defence of intersubjectivity in interaction (cf. Schegloff, 1992b). Rather, I explore how the source of trouble is addressed, outside of the sequence of its production, with a ‘post-possible-completion account.’ This account specifies the basis of a misunderstanding and yet, unlike repair, does so without occasioning a revised response to a trouble-source turn.

By considering various aspects of making arrangements in social interaction, I highlight some of the rich order that underpins the maintenance of human relationships across time. In the concluding section of this thesis I review this order, while also discussing practical implications of this analysis for CHC practice.
Declaration

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.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being
made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright
Act 1968.

I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the
web, via the University’s digital research repository, the Library catalogue, the
Australasian Digital Theses Program (ADTP) and also through web search engines,
unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of
time.

Stuart Ekberg
February, 2011
Acknowledgements

While much of this thesis involved solitary work, the shape, quality and tenor of what follows would be vastly different without the involvement of the following:

The staff and clients of three community and home care agencies. Although they cannot be explicitly named, this work would, of course, not be possible without their participation. Episodes of their 150 individual lives are the subject for this thesis, and I hope my analysis respects the integrity of those lives.

Amanda LeCouteur, the principal supervisor of this thesis, for encouraging me to work with conversation analysis during my doctoral studies. Throughout my candidature, Amanda has supported a range of opportunities for my professional development, and this study would not be the same without Amanda’s guidance and support.

Shona Crabb, the secondary supervisor of this thesis, for being an excellent intellectual sounding board throughout my candidature. Shona’s social and emotional support has been exceptional, and displays a keen understanding of postgraduate training as more than just an intellectual exercise.

Celia Kitzinger, for being an enthusiastic mentor in the workings of conversation analysis. Chapter 7 of this thesis is a direct result of Celia’s mentoring during and beyond my visit to the University of York, and I acknowledge – with appreciation – her willingness to conduct data sessions on my behalf with Jenny Mandelbaum and Manny Schegloff, whose contributions to that chapter I also acknowledge.

Paul Drew, Merran Toerien, Sue Wilkinson, Rowena Viney, Martha Augoustinos, Jaklin Eliott, Ann Weatherall, Alexa Hepburn, Jonathan Potter, Robin Wootfiitt, Tony Liddicoat, Tanya Stivers, Traci Walker, Brian Torode, Clare Jackson, Victoria Dennington, and Kathy Fogarty. These, and no doubt others, have provided helpful suggestions or inspired words that have either directly or indirectly helped to shape the analysis within this thesis. Meeting, working with, and learning from them has been one of the richest parts of my doctoral research.
The variety of financial support that I have received, without which I could not have produced this thesis. I have been grateful for a Faculty of Health Sciences Divisional Scholarship, a D.R. Stranks Postgraduate Travelling Fellowship, a University of Adelaide Research Abroad Scholarship, a Faculty of Health Sciences Postgraduate Travelling Fellowship, and support from the Walter & Dorothy Duncan Trust. I am particularly grateful, and humbled, for financial support from Piers Plumridge and Thirza Thomas, which I used for my travel to York. Beyond their philanthropy, I have cherished their broad enthusiasm for intellectual inquiry and exchange.

Family and friends, for drawing me out of the study of social interaction, to actually engage in some of my own. My parents: Darryl and Trudy, Nannas: Vera and Ellen, brother: David, sister: Alyssa, brother-in-law: Garrett, soon-to-be in-laws: Lindsay, Ken, Matt and Amelia, and friends: Sam Joyce, Angela Kinnell, Jo Collins, Suzie Cosh, Phil Tully, Chrisi Lambos, Ryan Balzan, Tess Cardinal, Brianne Hastie, Matt Walsh, Cassandra McCreadie, Tony and Rosemary Kaines, Les Milner, Jenny Wilson, Karen Bass, Gwyneth Ottrey, Steven Ogden, Alison Wood, Julian Cooling, and many others.

Katie Simmons, for everything. No part of my life and work has been untouched by her positive influence. In contrast to the verbose detail that I provide in the ensuing chapters, I can find no words that capture the multitude of ways in which her presence has changed my life. While I may never find a way to describe what Katie means to me, I continue to revel in our sharing a personal and academic life together.

I dedicate this work to my family, particularly my parents, for supporting my decision to go to university. Their faith in me, and in my future, has made this thesis possible.