Audibly not saying something with clicks

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Abstract

This paper explores the use of clicks — a non-verbal vocalisation — in everyday talk. It is argued that clicks are one way of not saying something, i.e. of not producing talk when talk was due. While many clicks occur alongside verbal material, which provides a method for participants to ascribe an action to the turn in which they are embedded, many do not. The paper explores the linguistic (especially phonetic), sequential and embodied resources available to participants to make sense of such clicks. It is argued that some clicks have properties of linguistic organisation: they have non-arbitrary form-meaning mappings. Other clicks by contrast are interpreted more as ad hoc, singular events. The paper contributes to a less logocentric view of talk-in-interaction. Data is in British and American English, from audio and video.

Introduction

The presence and absence of talk

The presence of talk (whether spoken or signed) is a defining property of conversation. But conversation is full of places where there is no talk, and sounds that are not manifestations of language as linguists delimit it. This paper explores one type of sound in places where talk is absent: clicks, which are not considered to be linguistic elements in English.

The absence of talk has interactional import. As Schegloff (2007: 19-21) points out, the absence of talk is noticeable and accountable – for example, when the preceding action has made relevant a verbal action of a certain kind but instead of producing that action, the recipient remains silent. Levinson (2013: 108) shows how participants ascribe to others, through their silence, different kinds of action, according to context, such as being unable to do something, or the projection of a dispreferred response. Participants interpret the absence of a response as disaligning (e.g. Drew & Walker 2009: 2412, on complaints; Stivers and Robinson 2006: 373). This paper explores the absence of talk, but the presence of a vocalisation in its place.

Prior research has shown that clicks in English (and, to a lesser extent, other languages: Pinto & Vigil 2019 on Spanish, Trouvain 2016 on German, Paschen 2019 on Russian) have several functions, including marking incipient speakership, indexing the start of a new sequence (Wright 2011a) and forming part of a word search (Wright 2005). They are also used in displays of affective stance (Ogden 2013). Clicks use the same vocal apparatus as speech, and thus are vocal (but not verbal) articulations. In this paper I will argue that clicks display an orientation to the relevance of saying something now; but what that 'something' is is often underspecified. Clicks are thus a way of audibly not saying something.

Design features of clicks

Phonetically, clicks are velaric ingressive suction stops made with two closures: one of the back of the tongue against the velum (soft palate), as in a [k] sound (hence 'velaric'), and a second one further forward. For the purposes of this paper, this is against the back of the teeth (dental) or the bony ridge just behind the teeth (alveolar). With these closures (hence 'stop'), air is sealed between the upper surface of the tongue and the roof of the mouth. The tongue is then pulled downwards (hence 'suction'), and the front closure is released abruptly, and air flows inwards (hence 'ingressive') which causes a noise to be made.

The anterior closure for clicks can be released centrally or laterally. With central release, the centre of the tongue is taken away from the alveolar ridge, as in [t], before the velar closure is released, giving [!], a central alveolar or dental click. This sound is transcribed as 'tut' or 'tsk' in literary texts or '.tch' in Jefferson-style transcriptions. For lateral release, the side(s) of the tongue is released, as in [tl] where there is no intervening vowel (as in e.g. 'kettle' or 'mantle') – this results in [ǁ], the 'giddy up' sound made to horses. I will argue that there is a functional difference between centrally and laterally released clicks in English.

While response tokens with vocalic articulations (like 'oh', 'aw') are easily and meaningfully modified with duration, intonation, voice quality, vowel quality, loudness, different types of onset and offset, etc., clicks are momentary consonantal sounds, and cannot be manipulated in most of these ways. They can be repeated: single, double, and multiple (three or more) clicks seem to be distinguished in English. Clicks can be also accompanied by lip rounding.

With their short duration and rapid noisy onset, multiple clicks can function like a metronome (Ogden 2013). Clicks can be rhythmically integrated with preceding or subsequent talk, or with each other. In the illustrations in this paper, the rhythmic beat is taken to be the transient spike of the release of the front of the tongue. Other rhythmic beats, where marked, are taken to coincide with pitch prominences, or – failing that – amplitude peaks close to intonational prominences (for a complete description of this, see Ogden & Hawkins 2014). The term 'interval' is used to refer to the stretch of time between two rhythmic beats. 'Isochronous' intervals are intervals that have the same duration, ±15%, and sound rhythmic: beats are not precise moments in time, but short temporal windows in which clusters of physical events co-occur, so rhythm is a Gestalt. Multiple clicks may be produced isochronously.

In addition, I will show that clicks are often accompanied by visible behaviours which are temporally coordinated with them, especially facial expressions such as eyebrow flashes or winks. Language is embodied, and sensitive to its physical and spatial context (Mondada 2016a: 340; Perniss 2018; Sandler 2018: 1). Studies of sign language and gesture over recent years have led researchers to explore how different semiotic streams combine to produce meaningful packages (e.g. Enfield 2009, Cormier, Schembri & Woll 2010). In phonetics, a growing number of studies in visual prosody explore how speech (vocal, verbal conduct) and other bodily behaviours are coordinated (e.g. Loehr 2007, 2012; Prieto et al. 2015). However, this work mostly fails to engage with interaction. Recent work in Conversation Analysis (CA) shows that bodily behaviours are central to the formation and

ascription of action (e.g. Kendrick & Drew 2016). Although conversation is full of meaningful non-verbal conduct, such as laughter, silence or nodding, linguistics remains logocentric. This paper contributes to a less logocentric view of language by exploring how clicks and accompanying embodied resources are used in interaction.

Data

The clicks in the collection in this paper are deliberate articulations, which are not analysable as vegetative sounds in preparation for speaking (Scobbie et al. 2011, Ogden 2013, Kendrick & Torreira 2015). Deliberate clicks are noisy (Trouvain 2014), which means they are made with vocal effort, including strong suction. Clicks are often positioned at interactionally salient locations, such as immediately after an action becomes recognisable in another participant's talk, or before or after a speaker's own turn constructional unit (TCU). Occasionally a participant recycles a click from another speaker. These two observations indicate that clicks are deliberate also from a participant's perspective.

The original data is taken from CallHome (a corpus of American phone calls, available from the Linguistic Data Consortium, https://catalog.ldc.upenn.edu/LDC97S42). The original collection of 168 clicks (Ogden 2018) was supplemented by video data from the Rossi Corpus of English, and videos publicly available on YouTube, consisting only of deliberate clicks, and not including clicks that handle self-repair, word search, incipient speakership or index a new sequence. The data is both American and British English, audio and video.

The study follows the techniques of Conversation Analysis, alongside auditory and acoustic phonetics, and observations of participants' visible conduct. The phonetic transcription follows the principles of GAT2 for English (Couper-Kuhlen and Barth-Weingarten 2011) and Mondada (2016b).

I will argue that deliberate clicks have some arbitrary form-meaning mappings, and are somewhat conventionalised, which are properties of linguistic signs. The paper starts with single standalone clicks; examples here show clicks as alternatives to spoken turns. Next, we look at multiple clicks, whose rhythmicity can be recruited as a device for demonstrating alignment. We then move to post-positioned clicks, which serve as post-completion stance markers: I show that centrally vs. laterally released clicks display different stances. Finally, I discuss some of the broader findings and implications.

Single standalone clicks

Clicks frequently occur in displays of affective stance. One common location is after tellings of trouble (e.g. Jefferson 1988: 428) or complaints, where a display of either sympathy with the teller or alignment with the teller's stance towards the trouble is relevant (Ogden 2018). When clicks are accompanied by lexical material or a response token as in (1), the ascription of action to the turn is relatively straightforward, because the accompanying lexical material in such cases makes the action of the TCU recognisable.

1 (a). 'Sympathy'

```
! oh dear that's a shame
! <<creak> (oh::/aw::)>
! <<p> oh I'm so sorry>
```

1(b). Alignment with the teller's stance

```
`Oh gee:. ! hh° god
! oh my God
! °hhh↑`oh my goodness
```

Examples 2-3 show standalone clicks in response to troubles tellings or complaints. They appear soon after a trouble or complaint is recognisable, and do not disrupt the progress of the co-participant's turn.

2. CallHome en_5254.484-500.dreadful and cold (audio)

```
06   A      =so whY: are his pArents pUnishing me.
07          (1.1)
08   B      hm=
09   A      =they were really (.) ↓`drEAdful.=
10          =?and ↑thE[:n-] and `↑vEry very `cOld.=
11   B   ➔           [ ! ]
12   A      =.h [?and you know ?I have just been
13   B          [hm.
14   A      SO devoted and SO loving=
```

3. CallHome_en_4822.1176-1191.piano (audio)

```
6    A      .h but I if I don't y'know slow it dOwn a
7           little i'll nEver be able to prActise
8           piAn[o]
9    B   ➔      [!] [.hh]
10   A              [I w]ouldn't be able to do anything
```

Unlike in (1), it is difficult to ascribe an action more specific than ‘affiliation with the teller’ (Jefferson 1988; Stivers, 2008) to these standalone clicks. In Example 2, B’s click, positioned after a complaint about A’s parents-in-law, responds to this complaint in overlap with an expansion of A’s TCU in line 9. The teller treats it much as a continuer: as an adequate response for now, that does not disrupt the telling, but allows the telling of troubles to progress, perhaps with ‘emotional heightening’ (Jefferson 1988: 428), as in lines 10-12-14 in Example 2, and line 10 in Example 3. In these examples, a standalone click does not commit its producer to an explicit stance like ‘sympathy'.

In Examples 4 and 5, talk does not come where projected; but the click and its accompanying features of production nonetheless audibly (and visibly) provide a non-verbal, but vocal, response. By producing an audible, vocal sound in second position, the producer of the click orients to the relevance of a response. As the click is in the position for a second pair part but is not designed as a second pair part, it serves as a comment on the prior action, rather than as a response to it. Not verbalising this comment leaves it to the recipient to infer what is not said (but could have been).

Example 4 contains what lay observers think of as a stereotypical example of a click displaying disapproval: a click with an eyeroll (Fig. 1). The extract is from a British TV programme, Gogglebox. Leon and June are watching the TV cook Nigella Lawson while the camera records their reactions. At the end of the extract, the camera cuts away, so it is not possible to see how either of them treats the click.

4. Nigella on Gogglebox 00.36 well busted (video)

```
01   L       vEry at`TRACtive; (0.2) Ni'GElla,
02           (0.5)
03   L       ↑wEll  &`BUSted.    &
     j               &presses lips&
04           (0.3)
05   J   ➔   *!
             *eyeroll-->
06           (0.5)*
     j         -->*
07           +  (0.9)  +
     j       +headshake+
```

Leon’s assessment (l.1) gets no uptake from June. She projects no response to Leon’s assessment of Nigella: at line 02, she sits still, watching the TV screen, and does not move,

shift her gaze to Leon, or produce an audible in-breath. At line 3, Leon gives an account for his assessment, and does so in a sexually provocative way. The delay in line 4 projects a dispreferred next action.

Fig. 1. June's click + eye roll (Example 4, line 5).

At line 5, June responds to Leon's assessment with a click followed by an eyeroll and a headshake. This is a slot where a verbal response (including disagreement) would be relevant, but with her click and physical behaviour, June audibly and visibly disaligns with Leon. She does not verbalise what it is about his assessment she is rejecting. Additionally, the whole sequence takes place in view of the camera/observing audience. June's response is not formatted as a second assessment, and it can be understood as an assessment of Leon's assessment: a metacomment on his prior actions. The click + eyeroll leaves the speaker's precise stance literally unspoken. The import of June's comment is not explicit, except to disalign with Leon's prior action.

In Example 5, a click occurs at line 11, in the slot for a second pair part, where a verbal response would have been possible:

5. RCE02 Two Friends 04.08 al fresco (video)

```
01   R      are you ᵛCOLD,
02   L      ᵛmhM,
03          *(0.9)*
```

```
     r      *.....*
04   R      *cOver yourself Up PROperl[y.    *
            *reaches to take hold of her coat*
05   L                                [*yeah but (.) ooh
     r                                 *helps her with her coat-->
06   L      there's DIRT all (on/round) the back of my *(0.5) [THING.
07   R                                                        [yeah
     r                                              -->*rubs her coat-->>
08          (0.3)+(0.2)
     l           +gaze at R-->
09   R      and whOse fAUlt is THAT.+
     l                          -->+
10          (0.6)
11   L   ➔  [!]
12          (0.6) &  (0.5) ^(0.2)   &^( 0.3)£  (0.8)    £(04)
     r            &silently giggles &
     r                    ^gaze at L^
     L                                    £opens mouth£
13   R      looks like you've been doing some al fresco fun
14   L      ah-hn-hn-hn-hn .heh ((high pitched pulsed laughter)
15          (1.0)
16   R      he he
```

R and L are sitting outside. L starts to pull her coat up her back, an embodied display of trouble (Kendrick & Drew 2016: 8f.), which R picks up on in line 1. At line 4 he suggests a remedy, but using a phrase that suggests that she is improperly dressed. She resists this, and accounts for her resistance at lines 5-6; in the meantime, R helps her to pull her coat on and cleans it.

R's turn in line 9 lays the blame for the dirty coat with L, using an interrogative format which provides a slot for a response from L. Either a confirming or disconfirming answer is accountable and problematic (Heinemann 2008: 57), rendering R's question unanswerable. By being in the position for a response, but not constituting a verbal response, L's click serves to comment on, and reject, R's blame in line 9. His joke at line 13, and L's laughter in response at line 14, shifts to a light-hearted account for the dirty coat, defusing any sense of accusation on either side.

In summary, standalone clicks are responsive to a prior action. They are placed after the action they respond to is recognisable. Depending on their position, they may be affiliative and align with a co-participant's current action; or they may display a disaffliative and

disaligning stance: standalone clicks offer an unverbalised (but still audible and visible) comment on a co-participant's conduct. They avoid responding directly to some prior TCU. They avoid talk where talk was relevant, but the basis for alignment with a co-participant is tricky; and they may serve to comment on the action that could have been directly responded to.

The rhythmical affordances of multiple clicks

One affordance of multiple clicks is their potential for isochrony, which can be recruited to handle aspects of turn-transition and relations between adjacent actions. In this section, we explore how the rhythmicity of multiple clicks affects their interpretation.

Example 6 contains a turn consisting of just multiple clicks. A and B are talking about a record by Michael Jackson which was withdrawn from sale following allegations of anti-Semitic lyrics. At line 19, A animates Jackson protesting his innocence.

6. CallHome en_4092 1497-1597.Michael Jackson (USA, audio)

```
17   B       [mmm      ]
18   A       [would yOU] belIEve it,
19           "oh ↑I didn't know it was of'FENsive?"
20           ha ha ha ha ha ha
21   B   ➔   ! ! [ ! ]! !=
22   A           [°h ]
23           =hE's a ↓`FREAK.((laugh))
24   B       <<p l> yeah [   he ] IS.>
25   A                   [((laugh)) ]
26           (.)
27   A       he is `SU:ch a frEAk.
28           (.)
29   B       <<p b> `yEa::h.>
```

A's laughter at line 20 is a post-completion stance marker (Schegloff 1996). Jefferson (1979) treats such occurrences of laughter as an invitation to the co-participant to laugh, and thereby display the same stance. The laughter consists of pulses at isochronous intervals, projecting a temporal slot for B's response. Instead of laughing in this slot, B produces multiple clicks, the first of which is on beat with A's laughter pulses (Fig. 2), thus entraining the rhythm established by A. The laughter pulses have rising pitch, while the clicks have a falling centre of gravity (i.e. falling 'pitch') as the lips are progressively rounded. The clicks orient to the rhythm and pitch of the laughter particles by mirroring

them. By producing clicks instead of laughing, B presents a different and independent stance from A; by entraining A's rhythm and mirroring A's pitch movement, she displays affiliation with something in A's stance at lines 18-19 (Couper-Kuhlen 2012), but she does not verbalise or specify what this 'something' is. As Jefferson (1979: 84) puts it: "while declining to take up one aspect of the utterance (its status as a candidate laughable), [the co-participant] does take up another aspect", which in this case is not verbalised.

A's negative assessment of Jackson in line 23 oriented to B's clicks as affiliative and aligning, and treats B's multiple clicks at line 21 as complete, and as not projecting further talk from B. It is a summary assessment of Jackson, not specifically an assessment of his poor judgement; by shifting the terms of the assessment of Jackson, A makes B's agreement more likely. B's token agreements at lines 24 and 27 (Pomerantz 1984; Stivers 2005) also highlight B's independent stance, while their quiet (<p>) production indicates sequence closure (Ogden 2012).

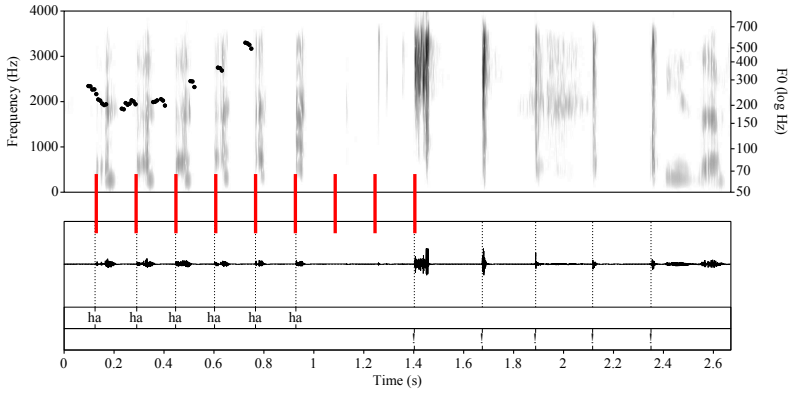

Fig. 2. Laughter and clicks from Example 6. Upper panel, left: A's laughter pulses with F0 superimposed (scale on right y-axis). Upper panel, right: B's clicks. Between panels: isochronous intervals superimposed on laughter and clicks. B's first click is on beat after two silent beats with A's laughter pulses.

Example 7 is similar: pulsed laughter and multiple clicks introduce rhythmicity across the turn space, and provide a recipient with a temporal slot to time their incoming vocalisation. In this case however, the clicks are postpositioned rather than standalone, and come before pulsed laughter. (Here we consider the temporal affordances of this position; examples 11-16 explore in more detail the affective work of post-positioned clicks.)

7. Salford A & R lateral click 1654 topless beaches (audio, UK)

((Discussion about surfing with sharks))

01	A		I'll just go on the tOpless BEAches;
02	R		yOU WIsh,
03	A		no I know where they Are.
04		➔	‖ ‖ʷ ‖ʷ [‖ʷʷ
05	R		[he he he he he HE HE HE HE HE he he he he]
06	A		AND tItty bArs,
07	R		right, Anyway.
08	A		<<laugh>-[----------]>
09	R		[so where ELse would <<laugh> you wanna gO.>]

Anthony and Ray are talking about visiting Australia. Ray raises the dangers of surfing, which Anthony rejects, and at line 1 proposes a safer (but more risqué) alternative, which Ray rejects as unrealistic in line 2 (perhaps orienting to the co-present female fieldworker). In line 3, Anthony rejects Ray's rejection: he claims knowledge of where the topless beaches are, so he is able to visit them. He then produces four lateral clicks at isochronous intervals of around 180 ms, increasing lip rounding ([ʷ]), thus lowering the resonance: this projects a sense of ending (because it cannot continue beyond a certain maximum). Anthony's multiple post-positioned clicks offer a non-verbal comment on line 3. Ray's incoming laughter pulses start on beat and in overlap with the last of Anthony's clicks (Fig. 3). By entraining Anthony's rhythm, Ray orients to the relevance of a response, and displays an affiliative stance towards Anthony's prior turn.

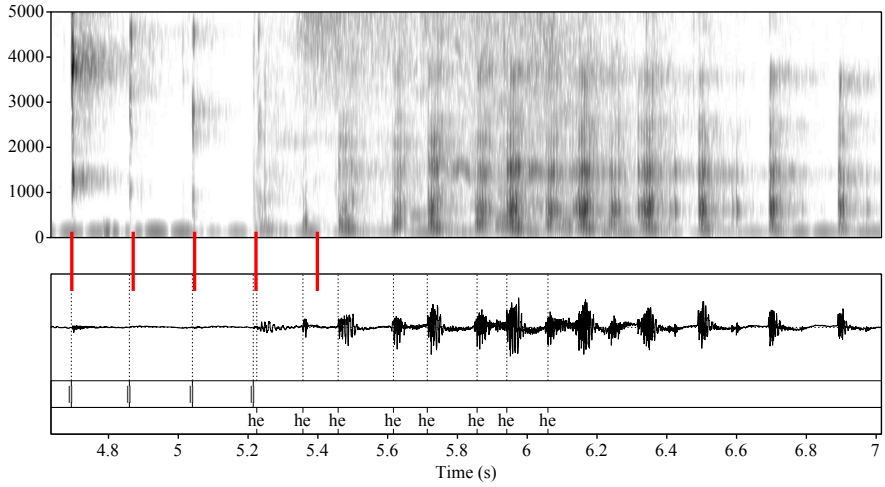

Fig. 3. Laughter and clicks from Example 7. Upper panel, left: A's clicks. Note isochronous timing. Upper panel, right: B's laughter particles (annotated 'he'). Between panels: isochronous intervals superimposed on clicks and the onset of the laughter pulses. R's first laughter pulse is on beat and simultaneous with A's clicks.

Anthony's next action is to extend his turn (line 6) with a more explicit formulation of what he wants to do, which is licensed by Ray's laughter; Ray treats this as something not to be discussed, by proposing a new sequence (lines 7-9). Thus the clicks hint at something that is not said; but when it is said, it is closed down by the co-participant.

Unlike in Examples 6-7, in Example 8, adjacent clicks and laughter particles are not temporally integrated with each other, and the participants are also not so closely aligned with each other. A is recounting for B how a friend has moved into commercial publishing. In lines 14-15, she contrasts the commercial salary with the academic one. This is followed by laughter pulses approximately 180 ms apart. These laughter pulses have progressively more open articulations.

8. CallHome_en_4065.1099-1124.publishing (audio)

```
09   A      =my Other friend just moved to trAde publishing
```

```
10          <<creaky> after years [in aca]dEmic publishing and;>
11   B                            [ˇmm   ]
12   A      .hh um (0.5) <<nas> y'know> (.) =
13          it fEEls like maybe she made a cOmpromise,
14          but it's like three times the mOney
15          as with everything ELse with Industry [and acadE]mics,
16   B                                            [   WO:w  ]
17   A      <<laugh> hi [he hea] ha>
18   B                  [  wOw ]
19     ➔    ! (!) [! ! ! ]
20   A            [.hhh u]hm ((.hhh = in—breath after laugh))
21   B      TErrible [huh]
22   A               [ YE]ah;=it's `aMAzing.
```

In response to mention of the large pay differential between academics and industry, B responds with two 'wow' tokens followed by five clicks (l. 16, 18-19). The 'wow' tokens display an understanding of the pay difference as beyond expectation. The clicks extend B's turn space, and are available as a comment both on B's 'wow' tokens and on A's talk.

The first of B's clicks comes 105 ms after the onset of the final laughter pulse, so it is not on beat with A's laughter. The clicks occur at 150 ms intervals. Examples 6-7 show that laughter and clicks can be mutually entrained, even though one participant laughed and the other did not; in Example 8 they are not, and the participants' perspectives on the pay difference are different and discordant.

By not joining in with A's laughter, but producing clicks instead, B claims a different, but still inexplicit, stance from A. In line 21, B assesses the pay gap as 'terrible'. A's 'yeah' presents weak agreement (Pomerantz 1984) followed by a possibly positive (and therefore discrepant) assessment, 'amazing'. Thus B's clicks are understood as offering a negatively valenced assessment which is unverbalised and different from A's.

Examples 6-8 illustrate one of the affordances of isochronous multiple clicks, which is the establishment of a strong audible rhythm: a kind of vocal metronome (Ogden 2013). An orientation to this rhythmicity with an on- and off-beat incoming can be used to display alignment or disalignment respectively. The next section shows how non-isochrony and sequential organisation can be used as a kind of place-holder.

'Thinking' clicks

Where in the previous examples clicks are rhythmically produced and occur soon after or in overlap with some other vocalisation — which might be laughter or speech — the multiple clicks in the next examples occur after a delay of about 0.4 seconds, and are not

isochronous. They are thus less closely integrated phonetically with the prior talk. Because of the delay that precedes them, and because they occur where further talk by one or the other party has been projected, they display a difficulty in producing further talk immediately. They 'buy time' for something, and are termed 'thinking clicks'.

The first case has three non-isochronous lateral clicks in response to a suggestion, followed at line 14 by a non-committal answer.

9. RCE Lake 00:34:28 maybs (video)

```
01   A       do you want to get a book from the LIbrary.=
02           we could sIt in the sUn and WORK.
03           (0.86)
04   B       no.= &cause I need to get HOME.
     b            &fidgets with her fingers -->
05           I actually [need   to   be   home  toDAY,  ]
06   A                  [oh, you need to get your- yeah.]
07   B       I've got a FOOD delivery coming,
08   A       toMOrrow?
09           (0.37)
10   B   ➔   *‖ɬ↓ [‖ɬ↓      &[ ‖ ɬ↓::] (0.26) ‖
11   A            [we could &[do that] (0.6)
     b                  -->&
     b       *brows furrowed-->
12           ^ (0.16)*^
     b            -->*
     b       ^gaze avrt^
13   A       &+*because it's SUNn[y.*+
     b       &starts fidgeting with her fingers -->
     b       *sudden brow raise ---- *
     b       +head raise-------------+
14   B                          +[m[aybº- +                    [bs
15   A                            +[shall we+ do that tomorrow [so it's
16           nicer &
     b                            +head dip +
     b          -->&
17           (0.9)
18   A       We don't have to come to campus=
19           =or we could sit by the TREE?
20           (1.2)
21   B       & maybs, maybs.          &
     b       &fidgets with her fingers&
22           (1.7)
23   B       Yeah: (..) cos::
```

```
24   B      I've got so much shit to do, but I need to use my comPUter?
25   B      everything I need is on computer.
```

Example 9 starts with a suggestion from A (lines 1-2), which B rejects (lines 4-7). A revises her suggestion in line 8, and in response B in line 10 produces three non-isochronous lateral clicks which are accompanied by ingressive friction ([‖ ǂ↓] — sucking air in down the sides of the tongue) after a delay, audibly displaying an orientation to the relevance of a response, but not committing herself to any specific response to A's suggestion through talk. After the first click, and in overlap with the other two, A continues her revised suggestion (lines 11-13), orienting to B's failure to accept her suggestion. A's turn in line 13 displays no orientation to line 11 having been done in overlap with B's clicks: there is no reformulation or recycling of the talk in line 11. This suggests that talking in overlap with clicks is not turn-competitive, nor is the progressively of a turn disrupted by another's clicks (cf. Examples 2-3).

B demonstrates minimal commitment to A's suggestion at line 14, and A revises her suggestion in lines 17-18, which B also does not commit to in line 21.

These clicks are a way of audibly displaying 'thinking', 'mulling over': they come in a slot for a verbal response, but delay that response; they are a way of 'not audibly saying something (yet)'.

The second case of thinking clicks comes from two young women discussing what to wear on a night out. At line 28, 'that' refers to the suggestion of not wearing a short skirt.

10. RCE Americans 00:15:18 clothes (video, USA)

```
01   A:     okay, do: you: think it's gonna be wArm enough to go without
02          TIGHTS.
03   B:     (0.5) mm, probably not.
04          (1.14)
05   A:     Do y[ou—
06   B:         [I: don't wanna wear like a skAnky, slutty: (.) SKIRT
07          either 'cause I always do that to [Revs].
((20 lines removed about attracting men))
28   A      ^&+ Uh:m: ((I've-uh—/I vote))  THAT's a good idea?
     a      ^gaze to left -->
     a      >>&plays with grass-->>
     b      >>+plays with grass-->
29          *(0.5)
     b      *gaze down-->
30   B      whAt should I WEAR <<cr> though *now.>
     b                                    -->* gaze straight -->
```

```
31          (0.4)*
     b                -->*
32   B   ➔  *£‖ (0.27) ‖ (0.44) ^‖=£
     b       *gaze to right-->
     b        £ lateral lip opening £
     a              -->^gaze to right -->
33   A       =uh:^m:-
              -->^ gaze down -->
34   B       I have to throw open my closet (and) look at everything.
35          (1.7)^
     a        -->^
```

In line 30 B wonders what to wear. Her gaze is away, and she is playing with some grass in her hands (they are outside). The turn is syntactically, pragmatically and prosodically complete. A shows no sign of responding, either visibly or audibly. B's question is self-talk. After a 0.4 s silence, B produces three lateral clicks with a noisy, fricated release. These clicks mark the continued relevance of the action of the question, but with them B does not yet commit herself to any particular answer.

B's talk at line 30 is produced with low volume and creaky voice, and it is not rhythmical. The intervals between the clicks are 270 and 440 ms. As the intervals are not isochronous, they do not offer the opportunity for either A or B to entrain subsequent talk to them, and indeed, subsequent talk is not rhythmically aligned with them. This suggests that the clicks are not produced here to project a temporal slot for incoming talk. A produces 'uhm' in line 33, which may be the start of a suggestion to B, or another attempt (after several others) to restart her abandoned turn at line 5. In line 34, B starts to propose a solution to what to wear, 900 ms after her clicks. These clicks serve as an audible display that B is continuing to think about a solution to the problem, without yet verbalising it.

The thinking clicks in Examples 9 and 10 are multiple (i.e. more than two), post-positioned, lateral clicks which have slow, noisy release. The intervals between the clicks are not isochronous. In both cases, the clicks delay a verbal response with features of dispreference: fidgeting, gaze aversion, hesitation markers. Difficulties are mentioned in both cases: in the first case, practical and scheduling problems; in the second, striking a balance between being warm enough and wearing something appropriate. These clicks display the relevance of a verbal response, without providing one. Instead, they buy time to provide one. These clicks do not provide a next speaker with a temporal slot to talk, as Examples 6-8 do, and the way they can be interpreted is determined in large part by their

sequential and temporal positioning.

Interactional affordances of multiple clicks

In a sample of telephone speech, cases of two or more clicks accounted for only 4% of all instances of clicks (Ogden 2018), so they are rare. Further research is needed to draw firm conclusions about how they work. Nonetheless, I have shown that they can be integrated with the surrounding talk in very particular and meaningful ways. In all these cases, multiple clicks are responsive to something in prior talk, and adopt a stance towards something in it. However, they do not explicate the stance, and that in itself is a central motivation for their use; but the type of stance can be inferred from aspects of their temporal and phonetic design of multiple clicks in relation to the surrounding talk and sequential placement.

Pulsed laughter and multiple clicks both allow for one participant to establish a rhythmical pulse. This in turn provides for the possibility of rhythmical entrainment of one co-participant with another. Rhythmicity is clearer in clicks and laughter pulses than in speech, and thus their functionality as projecting devices is strong. A co-participant can use this pulse to time their incoming activity. It has been shown for speech that on-time, on-beat incomings tend to affiliate and align more easily with prior talk than late or off-beat incomings (Couper-Kuhlen 1993; Ogden & Hawkins 2015).

One of the affordances of multiple clicks is that they can be serially modified by changing their resonance, and we have seen two such uses: in Example 6, we saw a symmetrical relation between rising pitch in laughter and falling resonance in clicks; in Example 7, we saw falling resonance in a chain of clicks, which serves as a device for projecting an ending.

Multiple, irregularly spaced, lateral clicks with noisy release ([‖ ǂ↓]) seem to display ‘difficulty’ or ‘a problem’ in doing something. The examples seen are placed after a gap, and are used to buy time for or delay a next action. These clicks are hearable as displaying ‘thinking’ or ‘mulling over’. Other multiple clicks (mostly central [!], but possibly lateral [‖], though with a sharp release, and placed soon after prior talk) seem more oriented to projecting a response from a co-participant.

While individual cases are unique, they draw on broader resources for displaying affiliation: rhythmical entrainment and prosodic mirroring are generic resources for displays of affiliation (e.g. Couper-Kuhlen 2012: 126). Devices such as these iconically display alignment with some aspect of another’s talk. Where laughter pulses and clicks display no rhythmical entrainment, this also reflects a lack of alignment. By using the vocal

apparatus, clicks make speech unavailable, but orient to the relevance of speech now.

Post-positioned clicks

We now consider post-positioned clicks, i.e. clicks which are produced after the verbal part of the turn, but are an integral part of it, and may affect how it is meant to be interpreted. I will focus on central vs. lateral post-positioned clicks, and argue that in the post-completion space, they are associated with different actions.

According to Schegloff (1996: 90) items in the post-completion position bring a TCU to a close, and offer a speaker a chance to display "retroactive alignment towards it, or the consequences of it". Clicks in this position relate primarily to the speaker's prior talk; but as we will see, they may change the way such talk is meant to be interpreted, and thus may change something about the projected next action from a co-participant. Double lateral clicks, [‖ ‖], mark 'collusion' and 'self praise', functions not associated with central clicks, [! !]. This finding suggests that some clicks have features that resemble linguistic signs, where forms and meanings are associated in a conventional, arbitrary way. We start by looking at cases where a speaker produces a turn that is complete syntactically and pragmatically, and displays signs of phonetic and prosodic completion (Local & Walker 2012). We then consider one or more post-positioned central clicks.

In Example 11, M has been complaining about a friend of F's (F is M's sister) who is staying with M. M sees this visitor as an imposition, not least because he is reliant on M to let him in and out of the apartment. At lines 8-9, F issues a challenge to M, as an interrogatively formatted first pair part, and containing a possible solution. M's second pair part (lines 10-13) has two post-positioned clicks prefaced by an audible exhalation (transcribed [m̥͡h]) in line 13.

11. CallHome en_4365.462-480 key copy (audio)

```
08   F      what is the bIg dEAl with just gIving him a kEY
09          and telling him to dO what he wAnt[s,
10   M                                        [WEll
11   M      <<exhale> I [HAhve> to go make a cOpy tOO.
12   F                  [and
13   M   ➔  m̥͡h ŋ̊͡!  ! >
14          (0.4)
15   F      ! (0.166) do you want <<laugh> me to>
16   M      .hh weHEll,
17   F      [give          him] [the keys .hh
18   M      [you know what I'm] [saying.
19          I'm kind of thInking about sAying,
```

```
20          well here's- here- give me a couple of BUcks,
21          <<cr> I'll mAke a COpy>.
```

F's turn at lines 8-9 provides a possible solution to M's problem. It presents this solution as something which would be little effort for M to do ('what is the big deal… just…'). M's response in lines 8-9 is prefaced with 'well', thus projecting a non-straightforward response (Schegloff and Lerner 2009), and is framed in terms of the inconvenience this will cause M — note the formulation 'have to go make', as opposed to 'I need to make'. After the verbal part of the TCU, M marks the turn as possibly complete with a very audible exhale with pharyngeal voiceless friction which is nasally released, [m̥͡ħ]. The first of the two clicks is superimposed on this, and the second one is in the clear: ([m̥͡ħ ŋ̊͡! !]). Thus the clicks are phonetically integrated into the speaker's post-completion space, which contains something close to a sigh (Hoey 2014). They are not, however, rhythmically integrated.

By extending the turn, the two postpositioned centrally released clicks serve to reinforce the imposition that M sees in having this visitor stay with him. F offers to get new keys on his behalf, fixing the problem, but with her laughter, not affiliating with M's stance towards it. At line 18, M treats F as not attending to the thrust of what he said; he then goes on to present his plan (line 19) to deal with the problem (lines 20-21).

In Example 12 a postpositioned click occurs after a compliment. At line 2, L enquires about the bakery which R has set up with her partner, who she has just broken up with. This enquiry receives a lengthy telling that culminates in a report of how many employees they have (line 16). L produces a compliment at line 17, followed by a click post-completion.

12. CallHome 5254.871 bakery (audio)

```
01   L      you're sti-
02          you're still working and running the bakery?
03   R      .h well wha- thi- this cafe bakery thing
04          yeah we do it together,
05          but I'm doing the bakery stuff,
06          and the res[taurant actually
07   L                 [! hh.
08   R      mostly it's running by itself
09          I'm not (*) b- really there very little now
10   L      [oh                    good]
11   R      [at the beginning I was bak]ing [every       day]
12   L                                      [I was gonna say]
13          you can teach people how to do that an[d
```

```
14   R                                              [yeah
15           no we have three bakers, three chefs, ten clea-
16           we have about twenty-five people working there.
17   L   ➔   ↑thAt's `↑aMAzing cA[thy.     [!=
18   R                           [I knOW .h[h
19           =and every time there's something beautiful or wonderful
20           he fucks it up
```

The compliment contains a strong assessment term, 'amazing', which is produced high in the speaker's pitch range, and a post-positioned address term, which reinforces a positive stance toward the recipient (Lerner 2003: 187). The click is rhythmically integrated with the preceding talk: the main accent in R's turn is on beat with L's rhythm. The intervals between the asterisks in the transcript below are approximately 470 ms apart:

```
      *       *       *       *       *
L  thAt's aMAzing cAthy            !
R                      I   knOW   .hh
```

R's talk is in overlap with the end of L's turn and followed by an in-breath projecting more talk. So R treats L's turn-so-far as complete, and if L's click is projected, this is not consequential for the placement of incoming talk. R's next TCU, at l.19, is a complaint about her partner: in other words, the success of the business is ascribable to her rather than to him. While compliments are routinely rejected or downplayed (Pomerantz 1978), in this case, the compliment is accepted and turned into a complaint about L's ex partner.

The rhythmical integration of the click into L's turn accomplishes several things: it marks the click as being part of the same turn; it extends the rhythmicity of the turn for longer, thus offering a rhythmical pulse for the co-participant to draw on in the timing of her incoming talk; and it temporally extends the action of complimenting. While the click offers a comment on the turn, this comment is inexplicit. Through its rhythmical integration with prior talk, and the action of complimenting in the turn, the click displays an affiliative stance with R.

The post-positioned centrally released clicks of Examples 11-12 display a stance towards something in the speaker's own TCU. In Example 11, the clicks draw attention to an imposition laid on the speaker by the person he is complaining about; in Example 12, the click intensifies a compliment. In both cases, there are aspects of phonetic design which serve to integrate the clicks with the prior turn, so they can safely be regarded as extensions to the TCU, and therefore offer something that complements it. By extending a TCU in this way, a speaker also provides for a longer window in which a response can relevantly be

made without seeming late; but the advantage of a non-verbal extension to the turn is that any incoming talk is less prone to be heard as competitive.

The phonetic integration of post-positioned clicks with their prior TCU may be one way to mark the click as post-positioned, and not as e.g. the kind of click that projects a new sequence. If a post-positioned click is not hearable as belonging with its prior TCU, there is the risk that it will not be understood as modifying the prior TCU in some way.

The precise action of post-positioned clicks is intimately tied up with the speaker's affective stance. In the next section, we see a case where the meaning is more conventionalised.

Post-positioned double lateral clicks

The final set of examples all have in common two lateral clicks, [‖ ‖]. They are postpositioned after turns which involve some element of implicit self-praise (as in Example 7) and/or an impropriety: it may be obscene, or a joke at someone else's expense. At the same time, the clicks invite (and usually receive) an affiliative 'knowing' response from the recipient, which includes an appreciation of the action delivered in the previous turn. So these examples both offer a comment on what has just been said, and also project a collusive response from a co-participant.

In Example 13, Ray and Anthony are friends. Anthony is in his late teens, and Ray is 11 years older. Ray is teasing Anthony about 'babysitting' him.

13. Salford A & R lateral click 1764 girls (audio, UK)

```
01   R       when I'm looking after you at yours
02           [in a couple of weeks]
03   A       [ha  ha  ha  ha  .he]
04           [he   he   he   he  (.)  .he]
05   R       [are you gonna be on best be]haviour
06   A       $vNO,$
07           I want yOU on (.) ONe night, to go awAy
08           (1.3)
09   A       'cos [there's [a few [GI:RLS-
10   R            [right   [okay  [we'll TALK about that
11           another nIGHt,
12   A   ➔   <<p>all rIght> [‖ ‖] [<<pp> cut>]
13   R                           [he      he]
```

At line 5 Ray talks about Anthony's behaviour while Ray is 'babysitting'; Anthony

suggests that Ray should let him have the house to himself. His account for this involves ‘a few girls’ (l.9), leaving it unspoken what his plans are if Ray leaves him alone. Ray moves to close the discussion down by deferring it (lines 10-11), which Anthony goes along with with his ‘all right’ (l.12). Anthony now produces two lateral clicks. This, along with Anthony’s ‘cut’ in l.12, is an orientation to a co-present (female) field worker, and the process of being recorded.

Anthony treats Ray’s suggestion to talk about it another time (and not ruling it out now) as one step towards Anthony getting what he wants; so Anthony has managed to get Ray to collude with him. As Ray’s laughter at line 13 comes *after* the clicks, it displays an appreciation of the collusion they imply, rather than of Anthony’s agreement to Ray’s suggestion to defer the discussion.

Example 14 contains a joke which is also an impropriety. The data is taken from a TV show, First Dates, where people are set up to have a date together over dinner. Sameer and Ciaran have just met, and in line 16, Ciaran flirts with Sameer using a double entendre and two post-positioned lateral clicks.

14. First Dates Ciaran Sameer cock 2.35 (video, UK)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REc93yCy4ss

```
01   C       ↑chEErs.
02   S       yeah che[ers  ]
03   C               [((*))] to mEEt you.
04   S       hAppy-uh CHInese new yEAr,
05           *glasses clink*
06   C       (`s) that ((the)) year of the:::
07   S       <<all, p> pAnda.>
08   C       ↑↑PAN[da?
09   S           [<<all> I think it’s a pAnda?=
10           I’m sure it’s>=
11   C       there is ↑N:O pAnda in the ChinEhEhEse new yEAr.
12   S       & what is it=
     s       & gaze at B -->
13           =yEAr of the::
14           (0.56)
15   B       ↑I don’t ↑KNOW.
16   C   ➔   ^I thought & it was a& cOck.^*+  ‖ ‖ &  *  +
             ^gaze at B-----------------^*winks at S*
     s               -->&gaze at B& gaze at C-----&
     c                                  +lifts drink+
```

```
17   B       c[(ould be)
18   B      ^&[((laughter))^&
     c      ^gaze at B------^
     s      &gaze at B------&
19   B      he's HOPing
20          ((all three laugh))
21   C      mm
22          ((glasses clink))
23   C      HERe's to thAt.
24   S      ↓yeah.
```

Sameer proposes a toast in line 4, but gets the wrong animal in the Chinese calendar. This leads to an extended sequence to resolve which animal it is. With his gaze in lines 12-13, Sameer directs his inquiry to the barman; so what had been an issue between Ciaran and Sameer now involves all three. At line 16, while gazing to the barman, Ciaran suggests it is year of the 'cock', an obscene double entendre which also fits the structure 'year of the X'. This frames his suggestion as something that the barman could have said, and sequentially it fits with providing the answer the barman does not have the knowledge to give at line 15.

Ciaran produces two lateral clicks with his gaze to Sameer. He winks at Sameer and raises his glass towards him. This change of gaze direction invites Sameer to appreciate the flirt and the double entendre. In line 19, the barman's gaze is towards Ciaran as he makes a comment that orients to the obscenity, and to the situation of the other two being on a date. Thus he colludes with what is implicit in Ciaran's flirt.

Fig. 4. Ciaran winks at Sameer (Example 14, line 16), while raising his glass and producing two lateral clicks after an obscene double entendre.

In Example 15, we see two lateral clicks which are partly reciprocated by the co-participant, and which strongly hint at a shared but unspoken understanding between the participants.

15. RCE28 lake 21.04-21.54 best participants (video)

```
01   B       I ↑`thInk you'll dO quite `WELL,
02           becAU::se- you've- (0.7)
03           `PUt the effort into your `REsearch, -so;
04           (0.9)
05   A       <<p, cr, l> `mm.>
06           (0.68)
07   A       [<<p>          (myeah)>]
08   B       [and you have the ↑`bE]st par`TIcipants;
09       ➔   [{‖+br ‖+br}
10   A       [hooray!
11       ➔   <<$> {‖+br} yeah>
12   B       He's not replied.
13           (2.0)
14           He (blatantly) hates me.  !HA!.
```

A has been doubting the quality of her research; her friend, B, reassures her (lines 3 and

8). At line 8, B produces what looks like a compliment, followed by two lateral clicks with eyebrow flashes (+br). A produces the same multimodal construction at the start of her turn at line 11, except with only one lateral click. With this reciprocation, she confirms B's assessment, and then B returns to a prior activity, checking her mobile phone.

B's eyebrow flashes and clicks set up a rhythmic pulse. A's pre-turn click is after a beat of silence, on beat with B's clicks; and A's verbal contribution starts on the same beat, as shown below:

```
              *     *     *     *     *     *
B       -pants     ‖     ‖
b           br    br    br
A                                  ‖     hooray!
a                                  br
```

By recycling much of the form of B's clicks, and by placing them in this temporal slot, A displays alignment and affliation with whatever B is doing with her clicks. It is hard to prove the case from the data itself, but the clicks imply that B is one of A's participants, so they retrospectively change the action of line 8 from a compliment into something like self-praise. This creates a sense of collusion: A and B have a shared understanding which they hint at but do not verbalise.

All the cases of post-positioned lateral clicks have two elements in common. Firstly, something is not said, but is hinted at, in the turn which prefaces the clicks. The clicks highlight that the turn should be understood in this way. Secondly, the clicks invite a co-participant to appreciate something 'clever' in the turn: there is an element of unspoken self-praise in these turns. In the context of a joke, this means an invitation to appreciate the joke; in other cases, the self-praise is rooted in the speaker's success in manipulating or achieving something in a situation (as was also seen in Example 7).

The next-turn treatment is commonly also non-verbal: laughter or reciprocation. Whatever is hinted at by the speaker who clicks is not unpacked or spelt out by the recipient, but is appreciated, and thereby demonstrably understood.

These lateral clicks have a consistent form, and also relatively consistent functions. It can be considered therefore that two central clicks, [! !], constitute a different construction from two lateral clicks, [‖ ‖]; so the two form a minimal pair, and at least [‖ ‖] is multimodally produced.

Conclusions

The key argument of this paper is that clicks are a way of audibly not saying something; and that it is often difficult to say precisely what that 'something' is. Clicks allow participants to display an orientation to the relevance of talk without committing themselves to the things that speech (and the concomitant word selection) commits them to. This vagueness and ambiguity – 'low codability' – of clicks is interactionally useful. Many clicks are used in the context of a social impropriety: sexual allusions, obscenities, or self-praise, or other socially 'improper' actions. In other cases, saying what is unsaid could put the (non-)speaker in an awkward or conflictual position. Clicks are a resource for not making something explicit, without letting it pass by unremarked-on.

Some practices involving clicks are recurrent and recognisable, even if they are not frequent. Among such clicks are the [click + eyeroll] (Example 4) or two lateral clicks with a wink (Example 14). These clicks, along with their sequential positions, placement in a turn, and accompanying bodily behaviours such as facial expressions, headshakes and eyebrow movements, are best understood holistically as multimodal gestalts (Mondada 2018), or multimodal constructions (Andrén 2010, 2014). They display elements of linguistic conventionalisation: e.g. the association between two post-positioned lateral clicks and interpretations like 'collusion' or 'self-praise' (Examples 13-15), is arbitrary and conventional.

Other clicks are ad hoc, singularities, whose meaning is best understood compositionally. These clicks draw on iconic or indexical resources for their interpretation, including: placement in the turn, position in sequence (and paradigmatic contrast with what could have been said in the same slot), rhythmicity and rhythmic integration, and so forth. This paper has shown examples of all of these resources, which help participants to produce interpretable vocalisations, but without the specificity of verbalisation.

As a non-verbal but nonetheless vocal resource, clicks can be used to extend turns or produce turns which are 'in' speech but not 'of' it. Since they use the vocal channel, clicks are intimately connected with speech; as non-verbal elements, they allow things to be inferred, or alluded to, while simultaneously remaining literally unsaid. Thus in many cases, clicks suggest an interpretation, but leave it just below the surface, unsaid but recognisable. Their ambiguity and vagueness allow something to be vocalised but not verbalised.

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Transcription conventions

Transcriptions follow the conventions of GAT2 (Couper-_Kuhlen & Barth-Weingarten 2011). The main features are:

- Accent bearing syllables are marked with cApitals; NUclear accents have MORE capitalisation.
- Intonation contours are marked iconically: ` fall, ‘ rise, ^ rise-fall, etc.
- Unit-final pitch movements are marked with punctuation marks:
  - ? rising to high
  - , rising to mid
  - – level
  - ; falling to mid
  - . falling to low
- Qualities with longer extents are presented between < > brackets: p piano, quiet; f forte, loud; cr creaky.

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