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**Abrupt-joins as a resource for the production of multi-unit, multi-action turns<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

This paper represents part of the output of an ongoing study of clusters of phonetic parameters in the management of talk-in-interaction. Here we report on the sequential organisation and phonetic form of *abrupt-joins*. By abrupt-join we mean to adumbrate a complex of recurrent phonetic events which attend a point of possible turn-completion, and the beginning of an immediately subsequent TCU produced by that same speaker. In doing an abrupt-join, the speaker can be seen to preempt the transition relevance and interactional implicativeness of the first unit. The phonetic features which constitute this practice include duration, rhythm, pitch, loudness and articulatory characteristics of both the end of the first unit and the beginning of the second. Abrupt-joins are a resource used in the building of a particular kind of multi-unit turn, where each unit performs a discrete action with the abrupt-join marking the juncture between them, with the subsequent talk changing the sequential trajectory projectable from the talk leading up to the abrupt-join. One clear distributional pattern emerges from the data: abrupt-joins occur regularly in closing-relevant and topic-transition sequences.

## 1 Introduction

As Schegloff (1987a) has observed, the production of a second unit following a point of possible completion typically requires some kind of work:

...unless a speaker has somehow provided a projection of some extended type of turn (Sacks, 1975; Schegloff, 1980), other participants may treat the end of a first unit (such as a sentence) as an appropriate place for them to talk, and, if they do so and start to talk there and encounter no resistance, the turn will end up with one turn-constructional unit in it. This possibility builds in a structural constraint in the direction of minimization of turn size, systematically providing an occasion for transition to a next speaker at the end of a first turn-unit. Talk by a next speaker which is made up of more than one unit, a "discourse" in one sense of that term, may therefore be treated as a possible achievement -- something that may have taken some doing in the face of potential resistance (Schegloff, 1982).

Schegloff (1987a:104)

One resource for doing this work, and the resource we are concerned with here, will be referred to as an *abrupt-join*. This phenomenon does not appear to have been discussed in the literature, though what we take to be the related practice of *rush-through* has received sporadic mention (see e.g. Schegloff 1982:76, 1987a, 1987b:78, 1996:93, 1998:241). Schegloff (1987b:78) provides the following characterisation of rush-throughs:

a current speaker approaching a possible completion point of a turn-constructional unit (and therefore, a place at which transfer of the turn to a next speaker might be oriented to by parties waiting to talk), speeds up the talk and runs the intonation contour and phrasing across the completion point, getting into a new sentence, (or other turn constructional unit) before slowing down or taking a breath. ...This then is a technique for a speaker to try to get past a unit's possible completion point and into a next unit, before another can use the first unit's possible completion as the occasion for effecting a turn transfer; it is a device, usable in an *ad hoc* way late in a turn, for unilaterally extending its size, without having planned to do so.

Schegloff (1987b:78)

The phonetic details of the abrupt-joins in the 'two-unit, two action' turns we describe in this paper differ a number of particulars from the descriptions of the practice of 'rushing through' which Schegloff provides. For instance, in abrupt-joins we find very localised tempo effects and 'disjunctive' prosodic characteristics rather than the 'integrative' patterns Schegloff describes. However, one core part of their interactional import - the pre-emption of a turn-in-production's transition relevance by the 'early' production of a second unit - is the same.

In what follows we attempt a systematic characterisation of the turn-design, phonetic form and sequential distribution of abrupt-joins. The analytic account that we develop

arises from a collection of some 150 data fragments which share particular phonetic characteristics. These were drawn from around 20 hours of talk-in-interaction which included telephone conversations, radio phone-ins and face-to-face interaction.<sup>2</sup> In all of these fragments speakers appear to be mobilising clusters of particular phonetic features, around the potential end of units of talk, in order to build multi-unit turns. The collection has yielded remarkable regularities in both interactional function and fine phonetic detail, and it is some of those regularities which we document here. Section 2 sets out the interactional analysis of abrupt-joins; section 3 provides a detailed description of their phonetic characteristics; section 4 examines two cases of multi-unit turns where the development of talk provides for a multi-unit turn, and where we do not find abrupt-joins; section 5 draws together some conclusions which arise from this report.

## 2 Multi-unit, multi-action turns which change the sequential trajectory

On occasions speakers may produce multi-unit, multi-action turns which are brought off in the absence of any resources in the turn- or sequence-so-far which provide for the continuation of talk in that turn space. One resource for this involves a complex of recurrent phonetic events which we refer to as an abrupt-join. One such case is exemplified in Fragment (1), which comes towards the end of a telephone call and forms part of a rather elaborate closing sequence. The turn of interest occurs at line 20. In order to get a sense of the two actions embodied in this turn it is appropriate to work up the sequential environment which occasions it. Ilene has called Jane to check with her what time she may be visiting Ilene's house that day. As all members of Ilene's family are likely to be out of the house, Ilene proposes that "if you come over I'll put the key underneath the mat". However, immediately following this, Ilene raises the issue of whether or not Jane already has a key to the house ("Haa- you've got a key though haven't you"). Jane at first denies she has a key ("no I haven't"), then acknowledges that she does have one "somewhere" but doesn't know where it is. She claims that she is just on her way out but will look for it when she gets back. The discussion about the key gets dropped and other business ensues, but is taken up again in the call closing. The site of the abrupt-join is denoted by the symbol ►.<sup>3</sup>

### (1) Heritage.I.18.3.okay.how

1	Ile:	[well anyway that's up to you when you come .hh uh::
2		uh we'll put a key under under the mat
3	Jan:	a:right then
4		(0.4)
5	Jan:	[ok a y]en ah- I'll have a (.) good
6	Ile:	[right]
7	Jan:	look tonight for the for the other key I'm sure it's
8		on[e of
9	Ile:	[uh- oh- cuh Edgerton says you've got it
10		you've got o[ne (yes)
11	Jan:	[in one of the handbags I'm sure I've
12		got one but [I ca:]n't look for it no(h)w=
13	Ile:	[ye::s]
14	Ile:	=[ n o : ]
15	Jan:	=[huh .hu]hh

16 Ile: o[kay  
17 Jan: [I've got to ru(h)un  
18 (.)  
19 Ile: alright  
20 Jan: .hh okay▶how're you feeling  
21 Ile: oh I feel fine  
22 (1.0)  
23 Ile: absolutely fine  
24 Jan: You do  
25 (.)  
26 Jan: alright. you [had a good slee:p  
27 Ile: [yeh  
28 Ile: yes thank you=  
29 Jan: =you're no[t ih: [you're not white anymoh.hh!  
30 Ile: [yeah [yeah  
31 Ile: no u-hawde(h)h n(h)o ha I(h)I(h) loo(h)k t(h)iehh  
32 heh .hhhh  
33 Jan: o:khha(hhh)y [.ihhhhh  
34 Ile: [o:kay  
35 (.)  
36 Jan: bye[:  
37 Ile: [so we'll see you later  
38 Jan: o:ka[y  
39 Ile: [bye:  
40 Jan: bye:

At line 2 Ilene reintroduces the matter of the house key by reiterating her offer to put one under the door-mat for Jane. The talk then moves into a possible pre-closing sequence at lines 3 - 6 with Jane's "a:lright then (0.4) okay" and Ilene's reciprocal, overlapping "right" (Schegloff and Sacks 1973:303; Button 1987, Button 1990).

However, Jane's continuing talk at lines 5 to 8 initiates a move out of this closing by offering to look for the key later which back-references and re-topicalises the earlier discussion about possession of a key. Ilene's following turn stays with this line of talk by (incursively) reporting her husband's view that Jane does indeed have a key. Jane moves to close the discussion of the key and her subsequent assertion that she "ca:n't look for it no(h)w" gets an aligning response "no:" and an acceptance, "okay", from Ilene. The call then heads again to closing with Jane's figurative expression "I've got to ru(h)un" (line 17). (As Drew and Holt (1998) have show such figurative expressions are closing-implicative: moreover, the one produced here expresses a need to close the encounter.) Ilene orients to this trajectory and produces a 'first close component' (Button 1987) offering no further on-topic talk - "alright". Jane collaborates in this move to closing and produces a second close component (".hh okay", line 20). Now one possible (canonical) way for sequences at closing such as this to run off is to follow close components such as "alright" and "okay" with paired terminal components such as "bye" and "goodbye" (Schegloff and Sacks 1973; Button 1990).<sup>4</sup>

However, in Fragment (1) we find quite a different sequential development. At line 20 Jane's turn begins with a responsive 'standalone' "Okay", with its own pitch contour, which projects no further talk, aligns with the production of the ongoing closing sequence, and makes relevant the production of a first terminal component from Ilene.

However Jane does not yield her turn and permit the production of such a component. Instead she goes on to produce further talk, marked (among other characteristics) by a distinctive higher pitch reset, which preempts the possibility of Ilene producing a first terminal component such as "bye". Her disjunctive, solicitous state inquiry to Ilene, "how're you feeling", drastically shifts the course of the on-going talk and accomplishes another move out of closing which Jane orients to by producing an appropriately fitted (if somewhat restrained) second pair part response. Jane's shift in the focus of talk runs through to the closing sequence proper of the call.

Note, however, that whatever Jane is doing here with the production of talk beyond the first component of this turn it is not simply or only an attempt to preempt Ilene from coming in and taking a next turn. The talk that Jane produces beyond the first component is shaped as an interrogative question and is specifically designed to elicit a next turn from Ilene. Indeed, Ilene does take the next turn, takes up the new direction initiated by Jane, and responds to Jane's question, with an appropriate second pair part at line 21 ("oh I feel fine"). What Jane's talk past her first unit in line 20 achieves is pre-emption of a particular kind of action by Ilene, shown by her subsequent talk reconfiguring what a sequentially fitted relevant next action from Ilene would be. Jane's subsequent talk following her question seems to be principally designed to manage Ilene taking a *particular* kind of turn - one which was not provided for by the sequential unfolding of the talk - at a *particular* time and place in sequence. In this case it specifically provides a means for suspending the closing relevance of Jane's "okay" and proposes a new, and unforeshadowed, development for the conversation. That this development is unforeshadowed is not mere happenstance. Rather, the precise design features of Jane's multi-unit turn arise from the interactional exigencies with which it deals, with particular reference to sequence structure and issues of alignment, both of which merit further explication. Jane's production of a sequentially fitted "okay" here, rather than moving straight into her enquiry about Ilene's health, is provided for by the development of the talk up to this point. First she initiated the 'closing sequence proper' with "I've got to ru(h)un", and second that same turn offers an explanation of why she couldn't look for the key. A disjunctive movement out of the closing sequence which unilaterally pursues the development of a new topic at this point is clearly a departure from a projectable line of activity, undercutting as it does her move to closing. It simultaneously runs the risk of undermining her explanation of why it is that she can't look for the key: if she has time to talk more, perhaps she has time to look for the key. Therefore, a move out of the closing at her first opportunity in the closing sequence (i.e. by producing the state inquiry immediately following the first close component: Ilene's "alright" at line 19) could have been interactionally problematic. The production of "okay" (which does no work in the service of projection of more talk) represents an alignment with the just-launched move to closing, while the production of more talk immediately following "okay" ensures that she effects the move out of closing, that she does it at that moment, and that it comes off as 'unplanned'.

In Fragment (2) we observe a similar organisation, here involving resistance to possible topic closure or new topic start-up by a co-participant.

(2) TG.oh



1 Bee: eh-you have anybody: that uh: (1.2) I would know  
2 from the English department there  
3 Ava: mm-mh !t I don't think so  
4 Bee: oh▶did they get rid of Kuhleznik yet hhh  
5 Ava: no in fact I know somebody who ha:s huh [now  
6 Bee: [oh my  
7 godhh[hhh  
8 Ava: [yeh and s' he says you know he reminds me of  
9 d-hih-ih- tshe reminds me .hhh of you meaning me:  
((continues with talk about Kuhleznik and other  
teachers))

One important feature of this sequence is the issue of whose topics get taken up in the course of the talk. The two-unit, two-action turn we focus on here, (line 4), is particularly concerned with handling this issue.

Ava and Bee used to attend the same school until Bee transferred to another. They are talking on the telephone (Bee has called Ava) after a longish period of not communicating (Schegloff 1996:57). Among other things things, Ava has been responding to a question from Bee - "and how's school going" - by describing some of the activities she's engaged in at school. As we join this fragment, Bee proffers another new topic, (teachers at the school known to both of them) "eh-you have anybody: that uh: (1.2) I would know from the English department there", at lines 10 to 2 (Schegloff 1988); but this too gets rejected in Ava's turn at line 3, "mm-mh !t I don't think so". Bee receipts Ava's negative informing response with "oh" at the beginning of her immediately next turn. The "oh" is quiet and produced with its own falling intonation contour low in Bee's pitch range (the fall over the whole token is some 2.4 semitones). "Oh" produced with its own pitch contour, constitutes a free-standing TCU and as such need not be followed immediately by further talk from current speaker. In this position (following a second pair part), and delivered with such phonetic characteristics (i.e. not as part of an 'oh-prefaced' response Heritage 1998), "oh" can serve as a 'sequence closing third' Schegloff (1995), and thus make relevant the initiation of a new sequence, by either speaker, in the next turn position. In producing the "oh" as a freestanding token, Bee has produced sequentially fitted talk and an appropriate action, given Ava's negative informing. However, as "oh" is a potential sequence closing third, which provides for Ava to talk next and initiate a new sequence, Bee is risking the closing down of the sequence (and the possible topic which her question had opened up) by Ava. However, as in Fragment (1) (line 21), the possibility of a co-participant coming in and initiating talk is preempted by the production of more talk from the current speaker (Bee) which implements the distinct task of pursuing topical uptake from Ava: Bee resists topic closure and makes a second try at keeping her topic proffer alive (line 4) by asking "did they get rid of Kuhleznik yet" and producing it with increased loudness and high pitch reset at its beginning. In response to this second try from Bee, Ava takes up the topic and collaborates in its development and the talk continues on the topic of Kuhleznik and other teachers known to both Bee and Ava.

A similar multi-unit multi-action turn, with an abrupt-join occurring between the units, occurs in Fragment (3) at lines 6-7.

(3) Holt.5.88.1.5.20.finger

1 Rob: I just fee::l:- (0.4) if they're going to go the  
 2 wa::y: of the modern schoo:ls there's an awf:ul-  
 3 they're caught between the two that's their pro[blem  
 4 Les: [that's ri:ght  
 5 (0.3)  
 6 Rob: and they've got to go:: (. ) you know really get  
 7 their finger out▶what do you think of Ann Percy  
 8 (. )  
 9 Les: .hhhhh we::ll do you kno:w e-I wuh- I: have a  
 10 certain sneaking respect for her  
 11 Rob: mm[:  
*((continues with discussion of Ann Percy and other  
 changes in the organisation of the school which mean  
 that Robbie will not get a permanent post there))*

Robbie and Leslie are both supply teachers and the talk prior to this fragment has been about a local school which Robbie's children attend. While currently satisfied with the school, Robbie identifies that it is stuck between 'formal' and 'modern' methods (lines 1-4). The sequence is being brought to a close - Robbie has secured agreement from Leslie ("that's ri:ght") and then produces the figurative expression "they've got to go:: (. ) you know really get their finger out" (lines 6-7). Drew and Holt's (1998) discussion of figurative expressions draws attention to such expressions being employed as a summary assessment of a telling just delivered. As in their cases this is what we find here with the figurative expression produced by the same speaker who delivered the telling (Robbie).<sup>5</sup> According to Drew and Holt (1998:506) the 'standard sequence' after a topical summary involving a figurative expression, runs off as follows:

1. Speaker A: Figurative expression
2. Speaker B: Agreement (or other expression of contiguity)
3. Speaker A: Agreement/confirmation
4. Speaker A/B: Introduces next topic

However, this is not the organisation displayed in Fragment (3), though the way the sequence runs off can be elucidated with reference to this standard sequence. Robbie's talk at line 6 makes relevant a response from Leslie which will display her appreciation of Robbie's assertion (note also the 'soliciting' "you know" at line 6) that the school needs to make improvements in the way it conducts its business. On the basis of prior talk Leslie might be expected to assent to Robbie's assertion. This would provide the basis for a sequence closing. However, Robbie does not stop talking after completing the figurative summary. Instead she proceeds, as in Fragments (1) and (2), to go straight into her next unit, and produces a wh-interrogative which is designed to solicit talk from her co-participant: "what do you think of Ann Percy", eliding stages 2 and 3 from Drew and Holt's 'standard sequence'. Following a figurative expression in the kind of sequence explicated by Drew and Holt, *either speaker* may initiate a new topical development. Drew and Holt (1998:506) refer to the elision of stage 3 as a

"significant variation" of this organisation, but this alone does not ensure that A gets to bring about the next topical development. Only the elision of stages 2 and 3 by speaker A (in this case Robbie) will ensure that speaker B (Leslie) does not get to initiate next topic, or indeed resist topical closure. By employing the abrupt-join, Robbie elides these stages, securing for herself the space in which to produce further talk.<sup>6</sup>

The analytic domain of 'abrupt-joins' is turn-organisation and turn-taking organisation in that they pre-empt the opportunity to talk after projectable possible completion by interdicting the co-participants' possible starting up. They do this, in part, through the systematic manipulation of the temporal characteristics of talk (see section 3) so that they provide for an early/earlier than expectable opportunity to produce talk following the possible completion. To this extent abrupt-joins resemble the descriptions of rush-throughs in the literature. In our data, speakers mobilise these abrupt-joins to build turns which change the trajectory of the talk in a single turn as in fragments 1-3. They do this by fitting some unit of talk to the sequential trajectory of the prior sequence, and then affecting a change of trajectory in the post-join unit, which simultaneously seeks to constrain what would constitute a relevant response from a co-participant. Fragments 4 and 5 provide further illustration of such changes of direction of the talk.

#### (4) SBL.1.10.5.couldn't

1 Ros: huhhhh we:ll uh: golly uh: Bea: it's: it's sweet of  
 2 you to think of me but I just couldn't do it  
 3 [seven days a]week  
 4 Bea: [m m - m m : ]  
 5 Bea: mm hm  
 6 (0.6)  
 7 Ros: no if- if they could find somebody that wants to do  
 8 it weekends I would think about it  
 9 Bea: ( )  
 10 (1.4)  
 11 Bea: uh::mh  
 12 (1.1)  
 13 Ros: but then you know that that is never certain either  
 14 yih know  
 15 (0.2)  
 16 Bea: no::  
 17 (1.0)  
 18 Ros: no:  
 19 (0.3)  
 20 Ros: no: I'm afraid:d (1.8) I'm afraid I couldn't►I  
 21 imagine it's quite sa:d is'n it  
 22 (0.8)  
 23 Bea: uh: (0.6) well d ye:[s:

#### (5) TCI.B.16.5.yah

1 Joa: =[my biggest thing is trying to figure out how to  
 2 cut the neck and around the ears  
 3 Lin: yea[h  
 4 Joa: [that's the hard pa(h)a(h)art=  
 5 Lin: =yeah=

6 Joa: =.m.hhhhh without making it look you know 'cause I  
7 can take the scissors and cut right around his ears  
8 but then you can rilly tell it=  
9 Lin: =[yeah]  
10 Joa: =[too:] so  
11 Lin: ye[ah  
12 Joa: [.t.hhhh that's (.) the part. I got to figure out  
13 how to do: hh  
14 Lin: Yah▶how much did you get at your gift and gadget  
15 party  
16 (.)  
17 Joa: .hhhhhhh uh::: u-seventy I think it wa:s=  
18 Lin: =hm:. .hh I hadda pretty good party .hhhh uh quite a  
19 few people came  
20 Joa: uh huh  
21 Lin: a::nd .hh she s-h-ih this was her last party this  
22 season  
23 Joa: ye:ah=  
24 Lin: =So she sold out of her kit [too. ]  
25 Joa: [.hhhhh] oh: that was  
26 ni:ce=

In Fragment (4) Ros has been working hard to resist a request/offer from Bea to undertake some private nursing care. Bea has been repeatedly pressing Ros to accept and Ros, in turn, has invoked a range of circumstances which militate against her accepting the work. At 14 Ros begins another rejection of Bea's offer - "no: I'm afraid (1.8) I'm afraid I couldn't" - and then immediately effects a change in trajectory from this rejection of Bea's offer to the production of an assessment first pair part - "I imagine it's quite sa:d is'n it".<sup>7</sup>

In Fragment (5), the prior talk between Linda and Joan has been about the difficulties involved in cutting their children's hair at home. Having documented her previously failed efforts (lines 2 to 8), Joan steps back from the empirical details of the situation with the summative reflection "that's (.) the part. I got to figure out how to do: hh" (lines 27 to 13). At this transition relevance place (TRP), as she has at other such places in the fragment (lines 3, 5, 9 and 11), Linda responds with a version of 'yeah', and by doing so addresses the response relevance of Joan's immediately prior talk, while passing up the opportunity to take an extended turn. However, at line 14, Linda produces more talk after her "Yah"-response to the prior - "how much did you get at your gift and gadget party" - which changes tack completely, moving away from matters of cutting children's hair to a home-sales party which Joan has held by means of an enquiry first pair part. The abrupt-join thus marks the juncture between a sequentially fitted (minimal) response to prior talk, and the initiation of a new topic. These changes in the trajectory of talk associated with abrupt-joins would appear to distinguish them, as a practice, from rush-throughs. The latter have not been shown to be systematically mobilised in this way.

Another characteristic which seems to distinguish abrupt-joins from rush-throughs is a striking (contingent) distributional pattern in our data. Though not an intrinsic or criterial feature of abrupt-joins themselves, the device is overwhelmingly used to handle organisational issues which attend sequence or topic closure environments

(e.g. collaboration in, or resistance to, closing; who gets to initiate next topic; what is to constitute next topic). Typically, the talk up to the abrupt-join aligns with the sequence in progress (which is e.g. heading to closing) and the following talk initiates a next action which is not that implemented by the talk preceding the join. So, for instance, in Fragment (1) the first unit is implicative of sequence/call closing while the subsequent unit initiates a moving out of this closure. In Fragment (2) Bee's first unit "oh" makes available the possibility of topic initiation by Ava in next position: the subsequent talk works to undercut this by pursuing the previously resisted topic-proffer. In Fragment (3) Leslie's talk up to the abrupt-join (a figurative summary assessment) implicates sequence closure and the possibility of transition to next topic by either speaker; her subsequent talk seeks to secure that she determines what will get talked about next. Similar configurations are exhibited in Fragments (4) and (5).

It is important to stress that we are not making claims here about sequence or topic closure *per se*. There are many kinds of ways in which sequence and topic closure are managed by participants. Rather our intention here is to notice a systematic distributional pattern in which speakers recurrently employ abrupt-joins.

We also note here that it is a systematic characteristic of first units which are abruptly-joined that they are not designed with any of the lexico-grammatical resources which can be used to project that more talk is to occupy the same turn space. So, for instance, we do not find units ending with abrupt-joins designed as the first item in an "if-then" structure, they do not contain "first verbs", nor are they constructed as initial items of an enumerated list (Schegloff 1982:75).

In each case of turns built with abrupt-joins so far presented, the new trajectory launched by the post-join talk is duly taken up by the co-participant. We only have a single instance, fragment 6, where such a change of direction is resisted and an attempt made to produce what was made relevant, but preempted, at the end of the unit ending with an abrupt-join. Whilst the topic change is resisted, it is resisted for reasons of understanding rather than for reasons of alignment.

#### (6) NO.1.24.gasbill.meter

1           AR:       and that was in nineteen ninety ni[ne  
2           Call:       [uh huh December  
3                    ninety nine=  
4           AR:       =so it's two years later and they haven't got back  
5                    to you and you've not bothered  
6                    [ so I ]presume (0.2) .hh  
7           Call:       [(mm hm)]  
8           AR:       you've managed without a gas meter▶what are you  
9                    doing for heating are you electric heating=  
10          Call:       no well that's (.) th- th- they've actually fitted a  
11                    gas meter in  
                  ((talk continues on particulars of the gas meter  
                  which the caller has had installed, and then on what  
                  action AR sees in the caller's future regarding the  
                  gasbill))

Fragment (6) is taken from a late-night radio phone-in show broadcast in the North East of England. The caller has phoned in to seek advice about his gas bill - he has had the incorrect gas meter installed in his house, with the result that he has not received a bill for two years. Having done a recap of the caller's situation (lines 1 to 8), AR continues from "I presume (0.2) .hh you've managed without a gas meter" into "what're you doing for heating are you electric heating" (marking the boundary between the units with an abrupt-join), his concern seeming to be that if the caller doesn't have a gas meter, he mustn't have gas heating. However, AR's display of understanding ending in the pre-abrupt-join unit ("so I presume you've managed without a gas meter") represents a *flawed* understanding of the facts, as the caller has had a gas meter installed: it has simply been the wrong one. As a result, AR's immediate post-join talk, which attempts the initiation of a new sequence on the caller's circumstances regarding his heating rather than on his gasbill, is responded to with overt correction from the caller, having first dealt with the post-join talk with "No" (cf. Sacks 1987)<sup>8</sup>: "well that's (.) th- th- they've actually fitted a gas meter in". Indeed, the use of "actually" by the caller seems to signal his turn as a counterinforming (cf. Clift 2001<sup>9</sup>). As we have indicated, this is the only case in the current collection where the content of the post-abrupt-join talk is resisted. The reason for the resistance in this instance is clear. In a call such as this, where the caller has privileged first-hand access to information to which AR may not have access, the caller has a right, even a duty, to correct any demonstrations of flawed understanding at the first available moment. Furthermore, that he *didn't* correct the information on its issuing is evidence of the turn-holding function of the abrupt-join employed by AR.

One regular design feature of the post-abrupt-join talk is its interrogative structure. Being shaped in this fashion as first pair parts, these units initiate adjacency pairs and as such provide for particular kinds of next talk from co-participant. These interrogative structures can take a variety of formats. In Fragments (1), (3), (5) and (6) speakers employ 'WH-questions' (beginning 'what', 'how'); in Fragment (2) the format is a 'YES/NO-question' and Ros's assessment in Fragment (4) is formulated with a tag-question at its end.

In the following fragment we observe a different kind of organisation of post-join talk. Nonetheless phonetic characteristics around the join (discussed in section 3) and the change in trajectory effected by the post-join talk pattern with the other instances in our collection.

(7) Callhome.5242.really

1           A:           and um (.) what else  
2                       (0.3)  
3           A:           um:: the t[wins are getting] big  
4           B:                       [ oh I had this ]  
5                       (0.7)  
6           B:           what  
7                       (.)  
8           A:           the twins are getting bi:[g ]  
9           B:                                       [really]▶I had this little  
10           bo:y in- um (0.5) to draw his blood today he was six  
11           years old,=

12        A:        =ah hah  
 13        B:        and he looked just like Danny

Fragment (7) shows A having trouble initiating a next topic with her "and um (.) what else" (line 1) and the following gap (line 2) with no speaker making a move to initiate next topic. Following this, at lines 3 and 4, comes the attempted initiation, by *both* speakers, of new topic in overlap. This engenders an other-initiated repair sequence with B curtailing her topic proffer and initiating repair on A's talk. The repair sequence is brought to a possible resolution with B's receipt, "really" at line 9. In being responsive to the topic proffer from A, B's "really" acts as a 'go-ahead' for more talk on that topic from A. But B's subsequent talk interdicts such a contribution by A. The boundary between "really" and the next is marked by an abrupt-join. In the post-join talk B proceeds immediately into a topic proffer which is, presumably, that which was beginning to be produced in overlap with A's talk ("I had this little boy in- um (0.5) to draw his blood today? he was six years old="). This sequence, therefore, shows a variation from the organization of other turns built with abrupt-joins sketched up to this point. The post-join talk is not framed as an interrogative, so rather than overtly soliciting collaboration in the changed trajectory of the talk the speaker moves directly to the proffer of a (locally) new topic.<sup>10</sup>

However, there are two similarities between this and our other fragments which serve to underscore the features we have found to be routinely present in multi-unit, multi-action turns built with abrupt-joins. First, the turn design whereby the post-join talk changes the trajectory of the talk. Second, the abrupt-join is mobilized in order to preempt the action made relevant by the talk leading up to the abrupt-join (in this case, that projectable action would be more on-topic talk from A).

### 3 Phonetic characteristics of abrupt-joins

Having provided a sketch of the sequential placement and turn-design of a representative sample of our collection of abrupt-joins, we turn now to a consideration of the phonetic systematicities in the whole of our corpus of abrupt-joins. Abrupt-joins are characterised by the regular co-occurrence of a number of phonetic parameters encompassing features which have been traditionally dubbed 'segmental' and 'suprasegmental'.

Some particularly salient phonetic details of the practice are:

- \* the abrupt-join typically exhibits 'turn-final' pitch characteristics at its beginning (i.e. the talk leading up to the point of possible syntactic and pragmatic completion exhibits features typical of other designed-to-be complete talk);
- \* there is an audible step-up in pitch and loudness from the last syllable of the first unit to the first stressed syllable of the following unit;
- \* there is a noticeable localised 'speeding-up' on the last syllable immediately prior to the point of possible syntactic and pragmatic completion;
- \* the speech rate of the temporally compressed final syllable is not continued

through the beginning of the following unit; there is often a marked slowing down of pace post the abrupt-join relative to the prior compressed syllable itself;

- \* final compressed syllables are *never* terminated with glottal closure or other features of 'cut-offs';
- \* the beginning of the second unit occurs in close temporal proximity to the end of the first unit.

One striking observation here is that 'doing an abrupt-join' draws on a whole complex of phonetic parameters. Perhaps this is not surprising given the kinds of interactional exigencies which abrupt-joins have to handle, which include at least:

- \* showing that some action is complete;
- \* beginning some new action;
- \* marking that new action as taking a new tack (i.e. not continuing the prior action);
- \* continuing to produce talk.

In sum, the phonetic characteristics of abrupt-joins are distributed over a highly localised domain, clustering around the edges of the two units concerned. There do not appear to be any phonetic harbingers of the practice, or indeed of more talk to come, earlier in the first unit of the resulting multi-unit turn.<sup>11</sup>

### 3.1 Pitch characteristics

In units leading up to an abrupt-join, speakers do not appear to mobilize the kinds of prosodic design features which regularly get used to project more talk beyond the next syntactic/pragmatic point of completion. For instance, we do not find the kinds of pitch features which could be taken to implicate more talk from that speaker. Indeed, pitch features around abrupt-joins routinely exhibit 'turn-final' characteristics: the terminal pitch of the temporally compressed syllables may be as low in the speaker's range as that on other, designed-to-be-complete, final items and the pitch excursions associated with temporally compressed syllables may also be as great as those that on other, designed to be complete, final items. The temporally compressed syllables themselves are either the major accented syllable of the TCU or are in proximal post major-accentual position.<sup>12</sup> In our data these are situated in the last metrical foot of the turn-construction unit preceding the 'join' (for discussion of TRP-projecting accents see Local, Kelly, and Wells 1986, Schegloff 1998, Wells and Macfarlane 1998).

The beginning of the immediately following talk in the second unit is marked by a noticeable, disjunctive step-up in pitch. This step-up is particularly noticeable on the first stressed syllable of the talk following the join. This syllable is routinely higher in pitch than the last stressed syllable prior to the point of possible syntactic and pragmatic completion (and any intervening unstressed syllables). Any unstressed syllables with which the subsequent talk begins are also higher than the last stressed syllable prior to the point of possible syntactic and pragmatic completion. What follows is a characterisation of the pitch upstep for each of the cases presented in Fragments (1) to (7) above. Where measurements are given, they represent the highest



F0 in that syllable: this means that where pitches are falling over the syllable, the calculated upstep in pitch is rather conservative.

In Fragment (1) the F0 of the stressed, pre-join "o" of "okay" is 210Hz, with a slight rise on the following unstressed "kay" (232Hz). There is then an upstep onto the first stressed syllable of the second unit, "how", with a peak of 345Hz: an upstep in musical terms of 6.9 semitones. Fragment (2) has a peak of 221Hz on "oh", though overall the pitch falls. The unstressed "did" and "they" of the subsequent talk have peaks of 263Hz and 303Hz respectively. The first stressed syllable, "get" measures 439Hz, giving an upstep from "oh" of 11.9 semitones: almost an octave. Fragment (3) shows a peak on the last stressed syllable ("out") of 182Hz. "What", the first stressed syllable of the following talk, has a high-point of 450Hz, giving a stressed syllable to stressed syllable upstep of 15.7 semitones. Fragment (4) has a maximal F0 on "couldn't" of 111Hz, which steps up 21 semitones to 375Hz on "I", the first stressed syllable of the post-join talk. In Fragment (5) the F0 on "yah" falls 3.9 semitones from 225Hz to 180Hz (the mean of the falling F0 on the designed-to-be complete tokens of "Yeah" earlier in this fragment is 3.2 semitones). The F0 steps up to 249Hz on the initial unstressed "how" (1.8 semitones), and then again up 10 semitones to the peak of 455Hz on "much". The final stressed syllable of the first unit in Fragment (6), "gas", has a highest F0 of 142Hz, and remains broadly level for the following unstressed "meter". The pitch then rises by 8.2 semitones to the stressed "what" (228Hz): the first stressed syllable of the subsequent talk. Fragment (7) has a high-point of 273Hz on the first (and stressed) syllable of "really", with a peak of 264Hz on the second syllable. The first unstressed syllable of the following unit, "I", has a peak of 291Hz, with a peak of 303Hz on the first stressed syllable, "had". While the upstep is considerably smaller than those discussed up to this point (the upstep is 1.8 semitones), the upstep is still clearly audible.

Over our whole collection, the upstep in pitch from the highest pitch of the last stressed syllable in the pre-join unit to the highest pitch in the first stressed syllable of the immediately following talk averages 7 semitones; unstressed syllables at the beginning of the post-join talk are routinely higher than the last stressed syllable of the pre-join unit, though always lower than the first stressed syllable of the post-join talk.

### **3.2 Loudness characteristics**

As well as a pitch discontinuity across the join between the two units, there is also loudness discontinuity. Typically, there is relative quietness of the final, temporally compressed syllable followed by an increased loudness from the onset of the post-join talk. What follows is an impressionistic account, with relevant acoustic measures, of the loudness characteristics around the site of the abrupt-joins in Fragments (1) to (7).

In Fragment (1) the first syllable of "okay" is loud relative to the preceding talk. The second syllable is audibly less loud, with a peak intensity measure of 3.7dB less than the first syllable. The loudness then steps up first with the 'high energy' glottal friction on the initial articulation of "how", with the increased loudness maintained throughout the word. In Fragment (2) the sequence from "that" in line 10 gets increasingly quiet

as it progresses. Ava's "oh" is also quiet. There is then an upstep in loudness, measuring 9.5dB, to the following "did". This increase in loudness is maintained up to the end of "rid of", thus including the initial unstressed post-join "did they", and the stressed "get". In Fragment (3) there is a percept of increased loudness from "out" to "what" (measurable as 1.8dB), though it is not as salient as in Fragments (1) and (2). However, the placement of "what" very high in the speaker's pitch range (as described above) contributes to the percept of disjunction between the two units. In Fragment (4) Ros's talk, "no: I'm afraid (1.8) I'm afraid I couldn't", is delivered quietly with a sudden falling off in loudness over the end of "couldn't". Her subsequent talk is noticeably louder through "I imagine". Linda's "yah" in Fragment (5) is produced more quietly than Joan's preceding talk and her post-join displays a marked increase in loudness with a 5dB step up to "how much" and continued relatively loud production through "did you get at your gift and". In Fragment (6) the loudness decreases over the end of "meter", though voicing is maintained across the join between the two units. The loudness increases on the unit-initial "what". Similarly, Fragment (7) also shows a decrease in loudness over the course of "really", with a 3.5dB upstep to "I". This upstep in loudness continues across "I had".

Across our whole collection of abrupt-joins the percept of loudness disjunction between the first and second unit is all the more noticeable because of the sudden diminuendo on the final syllable of the unit that precedes the join. Impressionistically these final temporally compressed syllables are quieter than other syllables in the immediately preceding talk. In impressionistic terms such syllables might be described as having 'piano' loudness characteristics (French and Local 1983; Kelly and Local 1989).

### 3.3 Tempo characteristics

It is well documented that ends of units of talk typically exhibit effects such as temporal extension of the final vowels and consonants, and general slowness of pace (interactional work includes Local, Kelly, and Wells 1986; Ogden 2001; Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977; recent experimental work includes Beckman, Edwards, and Fletcher 1992; Dankovicova 1999; Turk 1999). By contrast, one striking phonetic characteristic of abrupt-joins in our data is a localised 'speeding-up' on the last syllable immediately prior to the projectable possible completion point. The effect of this is to produce a noticeably short syllable and the impression of subsequent talk beginning earlier than might have been expected given the tempo of the talk leading up to the abrupt-join.<sup>13</sup>

In Fragment (1), the pace of the talk of both Jane and Ilene is relatively slow. Jane's talk at lines 12-13, in particular is delivered in measured, markedly rhythmical fashion with strong accents on "one", "hand", "sure", "got", "can't", "look" and "now" (mean rate of 6.2 syll/sec, mean stressed syllable rate = 3.9 syll/sec, mean unstressed rate = 9.5 syll/sec). Her claim that she's in a rush at line 18 is also delivered rather slowly (mean rate of 5.8 syll/sec). By comparison her production of the final syllable of "okay" is dramatically faster (a rate of 16 syll/second). Her post-join talk is slightly faster (mean rate of 6.4 syll/sec with unstressed syllables at a mean rate of 7 syll/sec) than the tempo of her talk at line 18 but hearably slower than the tempo set up by the

temporally compressed second syllable of "kay". Jane produces two other turn-final productions of the same word in the same call. The closing of the call runs off as follows:

(8) Heritage.I.18.3.okay.how.closing

1	Jan:	o:khha (hhh) y [.ihhhhh
2	Ile:	[o:kay
3		(.)
4	Jan:	bye[:
5	Ile:	[so we'll see you later
6	Jan:	o:ka[y
7	Ile:	[bye:
8	Jan:	bye:

Both tokens are produced in closing environments and both are produced as stand-alone, TCU final items and are oriented to as such. The first is produced with a noticeably long second syllable which is saturated with, and extended by, laughter and is not straightforwardly comparable with Jane's temporally compressed "okay".<sup>14</sup> Jane's second TCU-final token (line 6 in Fragment 8), however, does provide a good comparator and highlights the temporal compression of the compressed syllable in "okay" - the final syllable of the talk leading up to the abrupt-join at line 21 in Fragment (1) is only 55% of the duration of this token.<sup>15</sup>

In Fragment (2), Bee's "oh" at line 4 is produced at a relatively fast pace when compared with her immediately prior talk. Her talk at line 1 following the 1.2 pause is delivered at a rate of 5.6 syll/sec, with a stressed syllable rate = 4.5 syll/sec. Her stressed, temporally compressed "oh" is produced at a rate equivalent to 7.5 syll/sec. Comparison of this "oh" with other tokens of stand-alone, information receipting "oh" in the same call shows that the temporally compressed "oh" is indeed produced quickly - the duration of the temporally compressed token is less than half (43%) of the duration of the mean of the other tokens.

The compressed syllable, "out", produced by Robbie in Fragment (3) is very short at more than twice the rate (11 syll/sec) of the stressed syllables in her preceding talk (5 syll/sec). Such a rate of production would not have predicted that the TCU-final stressed syllable would have been so short. The stressed syllables in the post-join talk ("think", "Ann" and "Percy") are produced at a slightly slower rate (4.7 syll/sec) than those in the pre-join talk. In this call, Robbie produces seven other tokens of "out" in the clear, of which two are TCU-final and are followed by unproblematic turn-transition. The mean rate of delivery of these two tokens is 2.9 syll/sec; Robbie's temporally compressed "out" is only 31% of the duration of her typical turn-final productions of the same word.<sup>16</sup>

In Fragment (4), the talk up to the compressed "couldn't" ("no: I'm afraid (1.8) I'm afraid I") is slowly paced at around 3.5 syll/sec (ignoring the (1.8) silence); the TCU final compressed syllable is produced at twice this pace (7 syll/sec). Ros's subsequent talk returns to a slow tempo similar to that of her pre-join talk (3.7 syll/sec). Ros produces no other tokens of turn-final "couldn't" in this conversation but she does

produce one turn-medial token: "I just couldn't do it seven days a week". Comparison of the compressed final token of "couldn't" with this token shows that it is 27% shorter than the turn-medial one.

Linda's audibly short "yah" in Fragment (5) is produced at a rate equivalent to 7.7 syll/sec and can be compared with the (eight) other tokens of stand-alone "Yeah" which she produces in the clear as receipts leading up to this point in the talk. Such a comparison shows that the compressed "yah" in this fragment is some 65% shorter than the mean of these other tokens.

The abrupt-join in Fragment (6) comes at the end of a relative long spate of talk by the phone-in show host (AR). His talk prior to the join has been proceeding at around 5 syll/sec (stressed syllable rate = 4.3 syll/sec, unstressed syllable rate = 6.1 syll/sec). The unstressed, compressed syllable at the end of "meter", by comparison, is produced at a rate equivalent to 16.7 syll/sec, which is nearly three times faster than that of the preceding unstressed syllables. The only other token of the word "meter" produced by AR in this interaction is post-pause, and not TCU-final: "I don't know what the average gas bill for yourm .hhh (0.4) meter or your home is". Nonetheless, even this token has a second ('non-compressed') syllable which is some 70% longer than that of the compressed token.

In Fragment (7) the temporally compressed second, unstressed syllable in "really" is produced very short (equivalent to a rate of 16syll/sec). The average rate of delivery of unstressed syllables in B's talk immediately following the join ("I", "this" and the second syllable of "little") is noticeably slower (6.8 syll/sec) and comparison of B's temporally compressed "really" with other interactionally similar tokens in the same call shows that the second syllable of the temporally compressed token is only 25% of the average duration of the second syllable in the other (seven) tokens.

Across the whole of our collection of abrupt-joins, vowels in the temporally compressed syllables are on average half of the duration of other final tokens of the same word or phonological structure and shorter even than comparable medial tokens (typically 30% shorter than medial tokens with the same phonological structure).

### **3.4 Articulatory characteristics**

The phonetic characteristics associated with abrupt-joins that we have described to this point can be grossly labelled 'disjunctive' and serve to mark the 'two-unit-ness' of the pre-join and post-join talk. However, we also find a variety of other articulatory characteristics which occur around abrupt-joins which contribute to their distinctive shape and serve in part to provide a phonetic cohesion between the temporally compressed syllable and subsequent, post-join talk.

#### **3.4.1 Absence of cut-offs**

There are a variety of production resources which can give rise to the auditory percept of compression or foreshortening of words (or syllables) in ongoing talk. Some of these may sacrifice the lexical integrity and identity of the word or syllable

implicated. For example, it is common for self-repair to be initiated by suddenly 'cutting-off' the sound production of a word-in-progress by effecting some kind of abrupt oral or glottal closure (Jasperson 1998, 2002; Schegloff et al. 1977; Schegloff 1979), after which some new item is produced. Such 'cut-offs' effectively prevent the production of subsequent parts of a word leaving it suddenly and audibly incomplete and co-participants may or may not be able to project what the abandoned word was going to be. The final syllables of the pre-join talk we have documented are never terminated with such glottal, or indeed any other, type of cut-off. This absence of cut-offs around abrupt-joins preserves the integrity of the talk around the join, preserves the lexical identity of the compressed syllable and serves to differentiate it from other types of premature curtailments of talk, such as initiation of self-repair. In avoiding these cut-offs speakers doing abrupt-joins display that, while they may be curtailing their talk prematurely (in the very act of not doing typical 'turn-final lengthening' but doing it rather more quickly than might be expected) the progressivity of the talk is not being compromised. Furthermore, as we have shown in the discussion above, post-join talk does not do reparative work on pre-join talk, but rather works towards securing a change of the trajectory of the talk.

### 3.4.2 Close temporal proximity of pre-abrupt-join and post-join talk

A further characteristic of abrupt-joins is that the compressed syllable and the post-join talk occur in maximally close temporal proximity to each other. This temporal proximity is manifest, in part, in the encroachment of phonetic properties of post-join talk on pre-join talk. One characteristic way in which this happens is through what is conventionally referred to as 'assimilation' (Jones 1962; Local and Kelly 1986), whereby the audible place of articulation of some word-final consonant projects the place of articulation of the initial consonant of the up-coming post-join talk. 'Assimilation' is *par excellence* a turn-internal (rather than a turn-edge) phenomenon and its principal interactional function is to project more talk to come (see Local and Kelly 1986 for a fuller account of the interactional implications of 'assimilatory' phenomena.) There are a number of instances in the current data set where some of the phonetic features of the beginning of the post-join talk encroach upon the end of the final syllable of the pre-join talk. For example, in Fragment (3), the consonant at the end of Robin's compressed syllable "out" is produced as a labial stop [p] which projects the labial place of articulation of the initial consonant in the following word "what". Had "out" been followed by silence or turn-transition, the final consonant would have been expected to be an apical stop [t] (as in Robbie's earlier turn-final "out" - "then why don't you get out"), or perhaps simple glottal closure.

A similar kind of articulatory encroachment is found in Fragment (6), where the vowel at the end of the compressed word "meter" is noticeably back and round in quality, both of which characteristics anticipate the backness and rounding at the beginning of the first word of the post-join talk ("what").<sup>17</sup>

Fragment (1) displays a different kind of articulatory encroachment from the 'assimilatory' cases discussed so far. In this fragment we find the post-join talk beginning with audibly strong glottal friction (associated with the beginning of the word "how" ) and we observe that the final vowel of the compressed syllable (the

second syllable of "okay") displays the same strong breathy phonation coincident with the voicing of the vowel portion.

In all these cases then, the close temporal proximity of the compressed syllable and post-join units and the progressivity of talk is highlighted by the sharing of particular phonetic parameters across the join of the two units.<sup>18</sup>

Another kind of phonetic resource manifest at the join of the compressed syllable and post-join units, which also provides for the projection of more talk, is the maintenance of voicing. In the cases we have examined so far there has been a change in voicing between the end of the compressed syllable and the beginning of the post-join talk. For instance, in Fragment (1) the compressed final syllable ends with voicing ("okay") while the post-join talk begins with voicelessness ("how"); in Fragment (3) the compressed final syllable ends with voicelessness ("out") and the post-join talk begins with voicing ("what"). However, in all the cases we have where the compressed final syllable ends with a sonorant (vowel, nasal or lateral sound) and the post-join talk also begins with a sonorant we find that voiced phonation is maintained across the join of the two units. So, for instance, in Fragment (6) there is continuation of voicing through the second syllable of "meter" through the beginning of the occlusion for the labial-velar beginning of "what" and into the vowel of that word. Figure 1 provides a graphical representation of the speech pressure waveform and spectrogram for this fragment with the area of continued voicing shown in the waveform and spectrogram by the bracketted portion indicated by the long double-headed arrow.

===== INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE =====

### **3.5 Summary of phonetic characteristics**

In the preceding sections we have endeavoured to show that abrupt-joins involve a constellation of phonetic characteristics distributed over a highly localised domain centered around a possible syntactic-pragmatic boundary. The characteristics encompass what might conventionally be described as both 'prosodic' and 'segmental' features. In employing the phonetic characteristics we have documented, participants simultaneously display that their talk embodies two distinct actions while also ensuring the smooth progressivity of the talk and the retention of their turn.

### **4 Other kinds of multi-unit, multi-action turns**

There are a variety of other kinds of multi-unit, multi-action turns in addition to those we have shown to be built with abrupt-joins, and which do not seem to be built with the constellation of phonetic features of abrupt-joins. One such type are those where the continuation of talk into a next unit by the same speaker is licensed by sequence structure. Because the continuing talk is sequentially licensed speakers do not appear to draw on the practice of abrupt-joins, which we have shown to be deployed where such continuations are not provided for by sequence structure. Consider, for example, Fragment (9):

(9) NB.II.2.p.11

1 Emm: I think some of these kids need a good job though  
2 too  
3 (0.5)  
4 Emm: get ou:t and do a little wor:k  
5 (.)  
6 a--> Nan: well of course all the kids in this: particular  
7 class you know h are ei:ther full time students or  
8 they work during the day and go to school at ni:ght  
9 Emm: m[m h m ]  
10 a--> Nan: [lot of them w]ork part ti:me u-[a:nd  
11 Emm: [mm h[m  
12 a--> Nan: [go: part day  
13 a--> and part ni:ght .hhhhh uh::m  
14 b--> Emm: they're not real kookie then=  
15 c--> Nan: =several of whom are marriedh (.) oh no: h  
16 (.)  
17 Nan: no: hah-ah the[y may u- l]ook like  
18 Emm: [ mm: m mh ]  
19 Nan: you know I mean we have a couple of real long hai:rs  
20 in .hhhhh

The multi-unit, multi-action turn in Fragment (9) occurs at line 15. In this stretch of talk Nancy, a mature student who has been attending college courses part time, is engaged in defending the very much younger students in one of her university classes to her (sceptical) co-participant, Emma. Emma's initial critical assertion, "I think some of these kids need a good job though too", is countered by Nancy providing an extended detailing of the students' social circumstances and their commitment to study (talk indicated a-->). Emma's response, "they're not real kookie then" (b-->), provides an upshot of Nancy's talk formulated as an assessment of the students. Rather than respond directly, or immediately, to Emma's assessment, Nancy first continues her prior defensive detailing of the maturity of some of the students by adding to her list of their virtues "several of whom are married" (c-->). She then follows this up with talk which completes the action which is still "in the air" i.e. the response to Emma's talk at line 14: "oh no:" (line 15). It is in this way that further talk from Nancy following her initial TCU is licensed by the sequence-so-far - a feature absent from the talk where abrupt-joins have been shown to occur and where turn continuation is not provided for.

Similarly, a number of phonetic characteristics between the two units (i.e. between are "several of whom are married" and "oh no") are noticeably different from those features identified for the abrupt-joins. For instance: there is an absence of the features of localised temporal compression evident on or around the end of "married"; there is an absence of the features of close temporal proximity between the two units which we have seen in the abrupt-join cases, e.g. there is a noticeable, audible release of the final alveolar closure with approximately 100 ms of audible friction marking its release, followed by approximately 150 ms of silence between the offset of audible friction and the onset of subsequent talk ("oh no"); and there is an absence of the diminuendo loudness characteristics typical of the final syllables involved in abrupt-joins, with loudness not markedly different on the two syllables of "married". The significance of this case for our report on abrupt-joins is that where the production of

a next unit which is to perform some new action is licensed by the talk up to that point, an abrupt-join need not be deployed in order for that next unit to be produced.

A second exemplar of a multi-unit, multi-action turn where distinct actions are performed in the same turn space but without the occurrence of an abrupt-join between the units is given in Fragment (10). Again, the constellation of phonetic features which constitute abrupt-joins is not employed across the join between the two units. This fragment is discussed by Heritage (1998) in his analysis of *oh*-prefaced responses to inquiry. Ivy has rung to ask Jan if she would like a lift with Ida and a friend to a local town. At lines 1 and 2 Ivy outlines arrangements for the outward part of the trip "...but then, prompted by Jan's equivocal response at line 4, she raises a possible problem for Jan - the timing of the outward journey. [lines 7 to 10]...Jan's response rejects this as a difficulty but raises another potential obstacle - the timing of the homeward journey." (1998:292)

(10) Rahman.C.1.16.2.oh

1 Ivy: and then (.) she'll pick you up on the way: down  
2 then as I said  
3 (0.3)  
4 Jan: well it's a [bit]  
5 Ivy: [is ]  
6 Jan: eh in a[h it  
7 Ivy: [is that too early  
8 Jan: eh- no no it's not too early it's  
9 just uh how long is she going to be in  
10 Middles[borough thi[s's the] th[ing].  
11 --> Ivy: [.hhh [o h : ] [She's got to be home  
12 by .hh just turned half past eleven quarter to  
13 twelve  
14 (0.6)  
15 Ivy: she's got to be in then because .hh Robert is going  
16 out  
17 Jan: oh I see well [I din- yeh-eok-ahm  
18 Ivy: [yeah

Heritage observes that Ivy's responses at lines 11 to 13 "perform two distinct actions, each responding to one of Jan's prior actions." (292) He notes that the initial "oh" (line 11) "is produced with its own falling intonation contour. It constitutes, and is designed to constitute, a free-standing turn-construction unit in its own right. With it, Ivy acknowledges Jan's response to her question" (292-293). The action implemented by Ivy's second turn-constructional unit, which is concerned with how long the driver plans to be in Middlesborough, "addresses the issue that Jenny raises. Thus Ivy's 'oh' is designed to be separate from the remainder of her turn, and to perform a distinct task: acknowledging Jenny's response to her earlier question" (293).

As in Fragment 9, the phonetic details of the join between "oh" and "she's got to be home..." are noticeably different from those cases where abrupt-joins are used to build multi-unit, multi-action turns. For instance: there is an absence of the features of localised temporal compression evident on or around the end of "oh", e.g. "oh" is 15% longer in duration than the vowel in the turn-medial "home" by the same speaker: the



temporally compressed vowels in abrupt-joins were reported as being typically 30% *shorter* than equivalent medial vowels by the same speaker; there is an absence of the features of close temporal proximity between the two units which we have seen in the abrupt-join cases, e.g. approximately 180 ms intervene between the offset of "oh" and the onset of friction for the following "she's"; and there is an absence of the diminuendo loudness characteristics typical of the final syllables involved in abrupt-joins on "oh" (cf. especially Fragment 2). The significance of this multi-unit, multi-action turn for our analysis of abrupt-joins and the interactional work which they handle is that while in this case we have two actions being performed in a single turn, the second action is not undertaking the topically disjunctive work which we have shown the abrupt-joins to be designed to handle.

A consideration of Fragments (9) and (10) throws into relief two aspects of multi-unit, multi-action turns. First, multi-unit, multi-action turns need not always be built with abrupt-joins. Second, multi-unit, multi-action turns built without an abrupt-join between the units have a different constitution and interactional import than those we have shown to be built with abrupt-joins.

## **5 Conclusion**

The practice of abrupt-joins that we have described provides a way for speakers to build a multi-unit turn and undercut the sequential implicativeness of an action at a particular place in the ongoing organisation of talk-in-interaction. We have also claimed that it provides a way for speakers to manage issues which cluster around sequence/topic closure and change. In doing an abrupt-join speakers work to secure for themselves more talk beyond the transition relevance of possible TCU completion without having given prior indication that they were in the process of constructing a long multi-unit turn. The phonetic characteristics and localised domain of the practice are especially felicitous in this respect. Temporal compression occurs late in the TCU and is centred on or proximally after the major pitch accent of the TCU in the last metrical foot of the TCU. If a speaker were to implement features of temporal compression too early (e.g. start accelerating and modifying the pitch contour), then it is possible that in tracking what the speaker is doing, co-participants could make use of these constitutive features of the talk and seek to begin their own talk so that the preemption of the TRP did not come off.

The phonetic characteristics of abrupt-joins which we have described are not found in sequences of other multi-unit, multi-action turns such as those exemplified by Fragments (9) and (10). In those cases there is no evidence of local speeding up with sudden loudness diminuendo coincident with the last syllable of the first unit, or of close temporal proximity between the two units, or of diminuendo loudness characteristics on the final syllable before the start of the second unit.

The design features of abrupt-joins serve to bring off the turn as two distinct units implementing two distinct actions. By employing the kinds of disjunctive phonetics (pitch, loudness, tempo) described here participants can display that what they are now doing with their post-join talk is not sequentially connected with what they have previously been saying, while the cluster of other phonetic characteristics provides for

the projection of more talk to come from the same speaker. In this respect, our findings are commensurate with other findings on the role of pitch and loudness in marking something as 'new' (see e.g. Couper-Kuhlen 2003; Goldberg 1978).

Conventional linguistics approaches typically draw a distinction between phonetic parameters such as pitch, loudness, tempo, rhythm and voice quality on one hand and vocalic and consonantal quality on the other. These two groups of parameters are allocated (usually without serious defence) to different, independent phonological systems -- prosodic, non-segmental, on the one hand and segmental on the other. One of the aims of the analysis we have presented here is to challenge such an artificial separation of phonetic parameters by providing a more thorough-going account of the phonetic detail which is associated with the practice of abrupt-joins.

As well as trying to understand how talk-in-interaction works and how particular linguistic features operate in its constitution, we are also interested in reconfiguring our understanding of the conventional categories of description employed in linguistics (particularly linguistic-phonetics and phonology). This is principally because the functional basis of these linguistic categories seems to us at best problematic but also partly because these unexplicated descriptive categories (e.g. intonation, gross bits of phonetics, surface syntactic organisation) often seem to be drawn on as if unproblematic in accounts of talk-in-interaction.

*A priori* assumptions about the putative importance or otherwise of particular phonetic parameters and what they might do seem to us to be extremely dangerous. We think that it takes serious phonetic and phonological work to show not only that something is there and systematic, but that it is also relevant to the participants. When (or indeed if) we wish to say things about the work that fine phonetic detail does in talk, it is crucial to start with a sequentially grounded account of action and all the analytic work that that entails. We need to ask what bundles of phonetic parameters are mobilized (along with other material) as resources to accomplish specific actions and tasks at specific places in interactional sequence.

In doing this we can also begin to reconfigure our understanding of the constitutive elements of phonetics and phonology (and other linguistic descriptions which we may rely on in analysis) and begin to explicate in a serious fashion the different systems of phonological contrastivity which operate at different places in sequential organisation. Such an approach should significantly enhance our ability to give a cogent account of the polysystemic and multistructural linguistic constitution of talk-in-interaction. That is, we can begin to understand linguistic categories as emergent entities and properties of the unfolding talk.

### **Appendix: Transcription conventions**

Transcriptions of talk-in-interaction are presented in Courier font, employing a modified orthography. The presentation transcriptions given here aim for enhanced readability wherever possible, while representing features which (i) are useful to the analysis presented here, (ii) are part of the sequential organisation of talk (e.g. gaps, overlaps) and (iii) have been shown elsewhere to have interactional significances (e.g.

audible breathing, abrupt cut-off of speech production with oral or glottal closure). It is important to note that these presentation transcriptions are not the data, and should not be treated as a substitute for the original audio recordings.

- [ aligned square brackets mark onset of overlapping talk
- (.) "micropause" (pause of less than 0.1s)
- = "latching" talk (talk starts up in especially close temporal proximity to the end of the previous talk)
- : sustention of sound (the more colons the longer the sound)
- (0.8) pause (in seconds)
- h outbreath (each "h" representing 0.1s)
- .h inbreath (each "h" representing 0.1s)
- ( ) unintelligible talk; the space between the parentheses indicates the duration of the unintelligible talk
- (yes/is) uncertain hearing
- (( )) description rather than transcription e.g. ((laugh))
- goo- abrupt oral or glottal cut-off
- !t the exclamation mark is used where a stop articulation is released with ingressive airflow; the following symbol denotes the place of articulation (in this case, alveolar)

## Notes

1 This paper was written while the first author was in receipt of a British Academy Research Readership and the second author was in receipt of an AHRB Postgraduate Studentship in the Humanities. We are very grateful to Tony Wootton, Manny Schegloff and two anonymous reviewers for insightful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Email: lang4@york.ac.uk (Local); gw115@york.ac.uk (Walker).

2 A range of speakers are represented and a range of varieties of British and American English, including a number of non-standard varieties.

3 This symbol was chosen (i) as it has some iconic value and (ii) to avoid confusion with symbols currently in use, such as the 'less than' sign (<), the descriptions of which are not always phonetically consistent, and typically only figure in transcription symbol glossaries (see e.g. Schegloff 1987a:112, Ochs, Schegloff, and Thompson 1996:464, Schegloff 1998:261, Jefferson 2002:1382). The result was a lack of confidence on our part in using any previously employed symbol in our transcriptions.

4 A case in point:

NB.IV:14:13

1 Emm: and u-uh I'm w- I'm with you  
2 Lot: yeah  
3 Emm: alright  
4 Lot: okay [honey  
5 Emm: [bye dear=  
6 Lot: =bye

5 We note also that Robbie alters/aborts what she was going to say ("and they've got to go: (.)" and self-repairs with the figurative "really get their finger out". This is similar to what happens in Drew and Holt's Fragments (2) and (3) where speakers begin to produce a literal version of something but then undertake self-repair which substitutes an idiomatic/figurative expression for the original version.

6 It appears that this provides a way of allowing Robbie to move step-wise to revealing that the school is going to lose a class (because of falling numbers) and that she is therefore unlikely to get a permanent post at the school.

7 It is not entirely clear what Ros is assessing as "quite sad" - either the nature of the work with the patient, or the state of the patient herself. However, nothing of analytic importance to the task in hand rests on either reading. What is important is the unilateral change of direction in the talk.

8 We are grateful to Manny Schegloff for drawing our attention to this noticing.

9 While the work done by "actually" in this instance seems to be comparable

to that outlined by Clift (2001), it should be borne in mind that she only deals with TCU-initial and TCU-final occurrences of 'actually': our instance is TCU-medial.

10 There seems to be a similar organisation in the following fragment: the post abrupt-join talk is not interrogatively formatted and it immediately proffers next topic.

TG.so

1 Bee: !t (m'n)/(and) they can't delay much lo:nger they  
2 [just wanted] uh-.hhh=  
3 Ava: [ o h : ]  
4 Bee: =you know have another consulta:tion  
5 Ava: ri::ght  
6 Bee: and then deci::de  
7 (0.3)  
8 Bee: b[ut u]h  
9 Ava: [oh:.]  
10 Bee: eh:: who knows  
11 (0.5)  
12 Ava: I know  
13 (0.3)  
14 Bee: you know.  
15 (0.4)  
16 Bee: so▶I got some lousy cou(h)rses th(hh)is te(h)e(h)rm  
17 too  
18 Ava: kehh huh!  
19 Bee: .hhh[h m- ]  
20 Ava: [w-whe:]n's your uh weh you have one day you only  
21 have one course uh

In addition, both sequences find participants trying to keep the talk going, and attempting to initiate topics centered around current speaker (cf. the other fragments sketched up to this point). On the basis of this noticing, it might be wondered whether talking about oneself is a feature of topic proffers in locations where topic generation has been problematic.

11 One upshot of this observation is that it is not the case that abrupt-joins are deployed around units of talk where a speaker is engaged in quickly and overtly wrapping up some sequence in order to go on; rather, their short domain of application allows them to come off as 'unplanned' (see especially the discussion of Fragment 1 above).

12 What we are calling the 'major accented syllable' has equivalence with 'pitch peak' which has also been used in this context (e.g. Schegloff 1998). We adopt the phonetically more agnostic term to avoid any suggestion that we ascribe analytic priority to pitch over other constituting phonetic characteristics of this phonological construct (Local, Kelly, and Wells 1986, Wells and Macfarlane 1998).

13 There is no universally agreed approach to the analysis of the tempo and rhythm of naturally occurring talk which corresponds to the ecologically veridical percepts of lay and professional analysts (though see Couper-Kuhlen 1993 for some

suggestions). Nor is there a universally agreed domain over which tempo characteristics in talk-in-interaction should be computed. We adopt two ways of giving a sense of the durational relationships implicated in abrupt-joins: (1) by giving gross measures of average syllables per second (syll/sec) around the locus of the join and (2) wherever possible, by expressing the duration of the immediately pre-join syllables as a percentage of the duration of interactionally comparable tokens of the same syllable in the same lexical item elsewhere in the speaker's talk.

14 Comparison of the second syllable in this 'long' "okay" with the one in the temporally compressed "okay" unsurprisingly shows that the compressed syllable is very much shorter - only 19.5% of the duration of that in the token at line 1 of Fragment 8.

15 Jane's "okay" at line 6 is almost identical in duration to Ilene's token at line 2 - it is only 10 ms shorter overall.

16 Even if we take this syllable to be the lexical item 'up' (as suggested by Gail Jefferson's original transcription), which might be expected to be of relatively short duration as it has a phonologically short vowel rather than the diphthong found in "out"), its production is still noticeably fast when compared with the duration of the only other TCU-final token of "up" in this call which gets treated as transition relevant - the temporally compressed syllable is 39% shorter than the TCU-final "up" token.

17 The 'unassimilated' vowel quality produced by this speaker in "meter" at other points in this interaction has the quality of a somewhat retracted and lowered (non-round) Cardinal Vowel 3.

18 It would seem that the highly localised domain of this assimilation restricts the possibility of it being an interactionally relevant marker of the pre-plannedness of the post-join talk. However, it does not seem appropriate to develop this claim further here.

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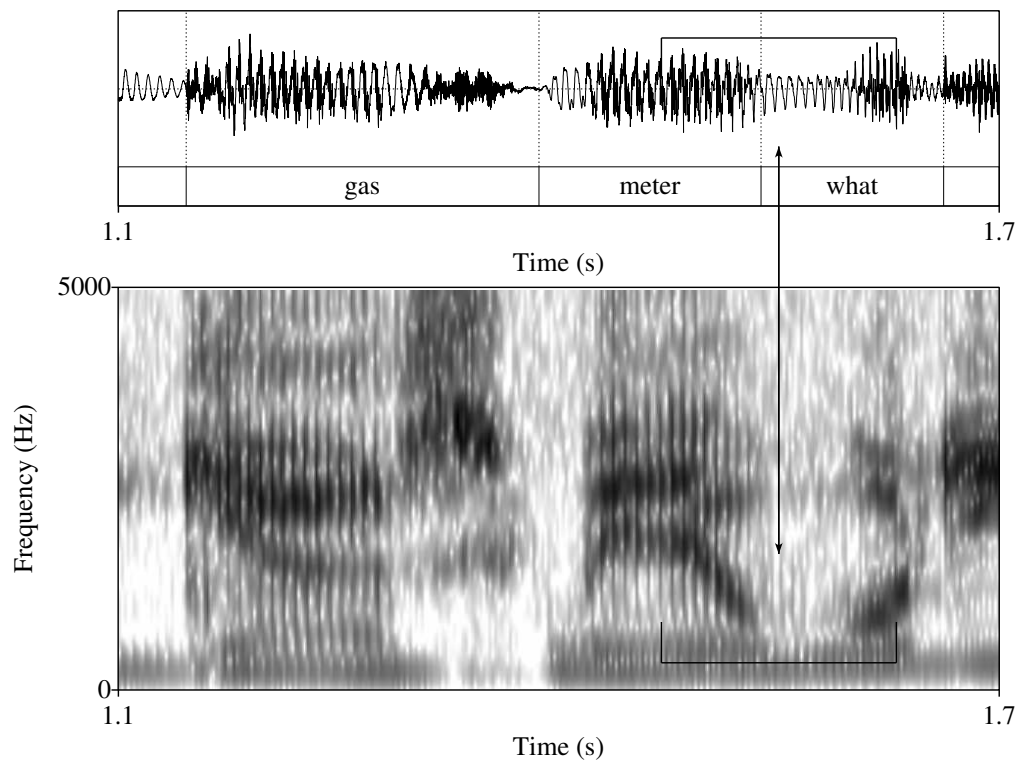


Figure 1

Figure captions:

Figure1: Labelled speech pressure waveform and spectrogram from NO.1.24.gasbill.meter (Fragment 6)

