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ABSTRACT

A study of the phonetics of everyday conversational interaction looked specifically at the occurrence of the "oh" particle, a signal of the receipt of new information. Focus was on the phonetic characteristics of the "oh" utterance in this context. Data were drawn from British and American recorded telephone conversations. It was observed that when the "oh" particle is freestanding, the pitch characteristics are very constrained, with only falling pitch movement evident, and the utterance is designed to end the telling of the news or curtail the topic. The more common "oh"-initiated turns with additional structure, either indicating listener assessment or soliciting the next utterance, are routinely placed at the end of a topic/news-informing and often have a rising pitch movement. A third type of "oh" utterance includes a partial repeat of the prior turn. Two subtypes can be identified, with similar but slightly different phonetic details. The fourth type of "oh" utterance consists of freestanding "oh" tokens in response to informings initiated by the news-bearer, with phonetic characteristics dependent on the previous turn. The final utterance type is an "oh" signaling surprise, with a rising-falling pitch. A 21-item bibliography is included. (MSE)

Conversational Phonetics: Some Aspects of News Receipts in Everyday Talk

John Local

CONVERSATIONAL PHONETICS: SOME ASPECTS OF NEWS RECEIPTS IN EVERYDAY TALK

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1. Introduction

Phonological theory is in a mess. The mess is of two kinds - the 'theory' isn't really theory, and there is an almost total lack of genuine interest in relating the so-called phonological analysis to a serious and sensible phonetics. These days phonology often seems to be more concerned with pictures on paper (pick up any book on autosegmental or metrical phonology) and specious universality than with the abstraction of categories from speech, the specification of their contrastivity-domains and the explication of their exponency or phonetic interpretation.

In the recent past, along with colleagues at the University of York, I have been engaged in an attempt to sort this mess out somewhat. This attempt has two distinct strands. One is work on phonological theory (Kelly and Local, 1989), computational phonology and high-quality natural-sounding speech synthesis (Coleman, 1989; Coleman and Local, in press; Local, in press; Local and Coleman, 1991). The other centres around work on phonetic detail in everyday conversation (French and Local, 1983; Local (to appear); Local, Wells and Sebba, 1985; Local and Kelly, 1985, 1986; Local, Kelly and Wells,1986).

The second aspect of our work, on the phonetics of interaction, has been concerned with showing that close attention to phonetic detail combined with conversation analytic techniques can reveal interesting and important regularities in the organisation of everyday talk. We have employed a particular kind of detailed impressionistic parametric phonetic observation to describe and understand the ways in which speakers deploy phonetic resources to undertake interactional work of various kinds. Although this work focusses on conversational interaction, it is conducted with the same theoretical assumptions as our

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general and computational phonological research. Its initial thrust came from the a concern to construct rigourous, data-respecting theories of the organisation of the sound systems in languages. As such it represents what we take to be a serious attempt to get to grips with phonetic detail and, in a Firthian manner, 'renew the connection' of the analysis with the behaviour of everyday speakers.

In this paper I will discuss some analytic observations arising from this second strand of our work on the phonetics of everyday conversation. The statements I make are intentionally restricted in scope for it is clear that only by conducting tightly organised micro-analyses of talk can we hope to come to a proper understanding of the general architecture and functioning of speech in interaction.

2. Preliminaries

The particle 'oh' turns up in a wide variety of forms and locations in everyday conversation. It may be employed as a way of displaying 'sudden remembering' (Jefferson, 1978: 221-222) and it is one of the many ways of displaying affiliation or interactional alignment with coparticipants.

The impetus for this work comes from an extraordinarily interesting paper by John Heritage (1984). In that paper he discusses in detail the functioning and sequential placement of 'the particle "oh"' which is 'used to propose that its producer has undergone some kind of change in his or her locally current state of knowledge, information, orientation or awareness.' (299) What I present here is an attempt to build on Heritage's analysis and to try and unpick some of the phonetic aspects of 'oh' in its function as a 'change-of-state token'. In particular, I shall try to highlight the extent to which phonetic parameters are intertwined with lexis and syntax in the interactional functioning of 'oh'. In doing this I shall point up the need to be very careful in assigning 'meaning' to pitch contours. In order to make sense of the phonetic details we observe, the analysis must be situated in an interactional framework where the categories of the analysis are carefully warranted, or justified, by the interactional behaviour of the participants themselves and not simply by the armchair intuitions of the analyst. This requirement is one of the central tenets of conversation analytic (CA) research. At the heart of CA is an attempt to come to an

understanding of the skills which ordinary speakers deploy in constructing and participating in socially organised interaction. This involves the recognition that contributions to interaction are 'contextually oriented' (Heritage, 1984: 242). Heritage observes that:

> 'This contextualization of utterances is a major, and unavoidable, procedure which hearers use and rely on to interpret conversational contributions and it is also something which speakers pervasively attend to in the design of what they say.'

On the whole, linguists have been singularly reluctant to address this aspect of everyday language behaviour. It is salutory that even in the hey-day of sociolinguistic studies little attention was paid to the formal linguistic correlates of *interactional* behaviour. One British linguist, however, was notable for his interest in such matters. In 1935 J R Firth called for a form of enquiry that treated speech forms as contextualised productions. In making his appeal Firth was careful to warn against developing nothing more than 'a loose linguistic sociology without formal accuracy' (31). The conversation analytic strategy of research is one way of answering this type of warning. Conversation analysis requires that any analytic claims about social interaction be warranted by means of 'participant orientations'. That is, the analysis proposed must be tied to, and grounded in the observable behaviour of participants in the interaction. This stringent requirement reflects an endeavour to make analytic claims commensurate with a participant's analysis. CA thus has important implications for all studies of spoken language in that it provides a formal method which can free analysts from traditional reliance on their own intuitions.

The work I report on here is still in a preliminary state, although, as I will show, there are interesting systematicities to be elicited from this data and provisional analysis. Consequently, the paper will concentrate on the description of a representative selection of data fragments with a minimum of theorising.[1]

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[1] The data fragments are drawn from some 20 hours of British and American English tape-recorded telephone conversations. Although I have been selective in the fragments I present, in order to give some range of

2.1 Phonetic characteristics of Freestanding Oh as a display of 'news receipt'

In order to give some preliminary indication of the focus of this paper consider data Fragments 1 - 6: (The representation of the data fragments retain Gail Jefferson's original transcription conventions. For an explanation of these conventions, which are those routinely adopted in the Conversation Analysis literature, see Atkinson and Heritage, 1984: ix - xvi.)[2]

(1) NB 1.6: 2

Emma: Yeah. I thought maybe Carl wz out albacore fishin.

Lottie: He went out marlin fishing last night.

→ Emma: ↓Oh:

(2) NB II.1: 2

Emma: Bud's gon'play go:lf now up Riverside he's js leavin'

(0.2)

→ Lottie: Oh:.

(0.5)

Emma: So: Kathern' Harry were spoze tuh come down las'night but there wz a death'n the fam'ly, so they couldn' come so Bud's as'd

---

possibilities, I do not think that I have misrepresented what is going on. The turn of interest is indicated by an arrow in the margin.

2 Although I employ conventional conversation analysis transcriptions throughout, I have detailed impressionistic parametric phonetic records of relevant parts. I also have extensive corroborative acoustic analysis of the features I discuss.

Bill tuh play wih the com'ny deal so I
guess he c'n play with im ↓so

Lottie: Oh:: goo:d.

Emma: WHAT A MISERBLE WEEKE:ND.

(3) Rah II: 1

Jenny: =Hello there I rangy'earlier b'tchu w'r
ou:t,

Ida: =Oh: I musta been at Dez's mu:m's=

→ Jenny: ØaOh::. h=

(4) Rah B 1DJ(12): 1

Ida: Ye:h °h uh:m (0.2) I've jis' rung tih
teh- eh tell you (0.3) uh the things 'av
arrived from Barker'n Stone'ou [:se,
[
[
→ Jenny: [Oh::::
(.)

Jenny: Oh c'n I c'm rouind, hh

(5) HG II: 25

Hyla : So I don'know'f ah'll g'char] ged
the seventy fi'c(hh)ents(h)'r not

Nancy: =No I don't think you will but- (.) might
git charged something=
(0.3)

→ Hyla: Oh:.=

Nancy: =Unle: - you know w't you shoulda

do:ine?=

Hyla: =Call'the operator en said I gotta wrong

[number,]

[ ]

Hyla: [u-Ye:a:]h,=

(6) Trip to Syracuse

C: She decided to go away this weekend.=

E: =Yeah

C: °hhh (.) So that (.) y'know I really don'

have a place ti'stay

→ E: °hO:::h. (0.2) So you're not gonna go up

this weekend?

In the current data all the freestanding news-receipt 'oh's' exhibit a number of common features:

(1) they may or may not have an initial glottal stop but they never occur with a final glottal stop (cf the Question-Answer-Oh sequences discussed below).
(2) They are all done with falling pitch movement (which ends low in the speaker's range) although the range and starting pitch height varies from token to token.
(3) They are are variably extended in time, though typically they are rather short in duration and done with tense articulatory setting.
(4) They may be accompanied by creaky voice quality but not by breathy voice quality.

(5) They are typically diphthongal - and clo~ ' .ck (either throughout or in the closing part . the diphthong).
(6) They are often produced in the environment of pauses (usually following micro-pauses).
(7) As Heritage (1984) indicates they routinely terminate news-telling or informing sequences and subsequent talk is done by the oh-producer. That is, when speakers deploy such oh-tokens, they are typically placed at points in the talk where the informing in progress is possibly complete or may be strategically deployed to signal that as far as the 'oh-producer' is concerned the news-informing is for practical purposes complete.

Evidence for the sequence terminating potential of these oh-tokens can be found in both sequential and phonetic aspects of the talk. We can observe that we routinely find new topics (or reversions to previously curtailed topics) being started after such oh-productions (NB 1.6:2; NB II.1:2). These topic changes are frequently lexically marked with disjunctions such as 'but' (Rah II:1) and with marked upgradings in pitch and loudness features of the utterances (NB 1.6:2; Rah II:1) . Another possibility is that the oh-producer performs a subsequent turn-soliciting question (Rah B 1.1.12:1; Trip to Syracuse; HG II: 24) - in itself a nice piece of evidence that the producers of these oh-tokens are sensitive to the sequential implications in that by employing one of these tokens they have effectively terminated the telling sequence and that this gives them the opportunity/right/necessity of doing the next turn at talk.

From these fragments it is will be seen that the pitch characteristics are very constrained; only *falling* pitch movement is illustrated. One account for this pitch choice is that a falling pitch contour here strongly projects finality/completeness (a common assertion in the intonational literature but see Local, 1986 and Local, Kelly and Wells, 1986 for a detailed refutation of this claim), and that coparticipants orient to this in not continuing with their talk or in proposing topic changes. But what happens if 'oh' is not produced with

falling pitch? What if it were to be produced with rising pitch? Does this get the informer to progress the informing? Somewhat unexpectedly, when I searched through the data I had difficulty in finding news-receipt 'oh's' done with anything but falling pitch. There are, however, two exceptions. These are shown in the fragments following where the oh-tokens are done on both occasions with rising pitch. Both are somewhat more complex examples but significantly neither straightforwardly supports the notion that the pitch contour is central to determining the terminating potential of freestanding 'oh'.

(7) NB II.1:1

```
   Emma:     Well Bud hadtuh play go:lf uh Thursdee. (.)
             So'e
   Emma:     [didn'take] Sa-uh f-] Fridee o:ff s     [o
             [                     ]                 [
→  Lottie:   [Oh : : : ]i: i : :   ]                 [Yeh
             rode
   Lottie:   down muh my bi:cycle th[ere en:nu:h h] uh=
                                    [              ]
   Lottie:                          [O h : : : : ?]
   Lottie:   =wz nobuddy wa(h)s the ↑i :re.
   Emma:     On ↑Fridee hu[:h?
                          [
   Lottie:                [Ye:ah.
   Emma:     O[h (that's] °a se:h°)
               [        ]
   Lottie:     [I thought]
   Lottie:   Ye:h.
```

(8) NB II.2.2

```
   Emma:     [°hhhhh]Budjs lef'  ]t'play go:lf he's
             [      ]
             [(0.4) ] °Y e h  ah°]
```

```
      Emma:    gotta go tuh Riverside=
→     Nancy:   [↓  o  h : .]
               =[          ]
      Emma:    ['nna comp'n]y dea:l so, °t°h[hhhhh
                                            [
                                            [Oh:.?

      Emma:    ↑GOD[it's bih-]
                   [         ]
      Nancy:       [Tuh River]side tihdai:y?

      Emma:    °hhh Yeah they: theh gun'tee off et
               twelve<it's a comp'ny dea:l so (.)
               th'couple wz spozetih come do:wn tuh (.)
               la:s' ni:ght'n yuhknow k-Harry en Kath'rn
               ther uh keh cz Harry wz gunnuh play k-

      Nancy:   Oh[:.
                 [
      Emma:      ['n comp'ny en then °hhh there wz a
               death in theirfa:m'ly so: (.)    [hhh
                                                [
      Nancy:                                    [Aww:::.
```

In fragment 7, the rising pitched 'oh' is done in overlap with Lottie's turn ' Yeh rode down muh my bi:cycle there en:u:h huh '. Lottie does then indeed appear to continue but the continuation ' wz nobuddy wa(h)s the↑::re.' does not amounts to very much of a development of the telling and it falls to Emma to pursue the informing with her turn: 'On ↑Fridee hu:h?'. One thing to notice here is that, standardly, news receipt 'oh's' are achieved in the clear. (This is, of course, partly a product of them being produced where tellings/informings are complete or potentially complete.) And here Emma's rising pitched 'oh' is placed at a point in Lottie's turn which is potentially complete; so the 'continuing' in Lottie's talk might simply be contingent. Moreover, Emma's oh-token is, in terms of its phonetic constitution, rather

different from the other 'oh' tokens. It is not produced as a diphthong or as a close back (rounded) vocoid instead we have a monophthong of a back open somewhat unrounded quality (see below for further discussion of such phonetic characteristics in the discussion of freestanding oh-tokens in Question-Answer-Oh sequences).

In fragment 8 the rising pitched oh-token is produced at the end of Emma's turn which begins with an out-of-the-blue announcement: 'Bud js lef' t'play go:lf he's gotta go tuh Riverside='. It is preceded by a falling pitched oh-token which is placed at a possible telling-completion point (after 'go tuh Riverside'). However, this first oh-token (which is phonetically like those described earlier) gets overlapped by Emma continuing "nna comp'ny dea:l so' (a turn-yielding construction with a trail-off conjunctional (Local and Kelly, 1986)) perhaps displaying that although the oh-token though was placed at a possible completion point she had more to say. Notice though that, although Nancy produces a rising pitch oh-token, Emma does not orient to it as being a news-receipt which provides for the possibility that the telling is not yet complete. Although Emma is the person to produce the sequentially next talk, instead of expatiating on Bud's golfing trip, she begins an exclamation which prospectively opens up a new topic: '↑GOD it's bih-'. This utterance has the phonetic characteristics of new topic starts: specifically, it is louder and higher in pitch than preceding talk. It is not until Nancy produces the question-framed solicit 'Tuh Riverside tihda:y?' that Emma provides an extended version of her news announcement which in turn gets a high-to-low falling pitched oh-token from Nancy again placed at a possible completion point in the telling. However, this too gets overlapped with Emma doing a continuation which ends, similarly to her first with a trail-off 'so:'. This utterance is then followed by a sequence terminating monophthongal oh-token of a somewhat advanced and unrounded, back half-open quality which is somewhat different phonetically from the qualities observed in oh-tokens considered to this point (for details see Q-A-Oh sequences below).

In summary then, on the basis of the data under consideration, freestanding oh-tokens which display news-receivership have a number of recurrent phonetic characteristics and are designed and oriented to by other participants as relevantly telling-final or topic-curtailing. They are

typically produced with falling pitch, but, on the basis of the two 'exceptions' discussed above, pitch would not, on its own, appear to be a determining feature of their interactional function. If one of the functions of 'oh' in these sequences (no matter what its pitch characteristics) is to propose that its producer was previously uninformed but is now informed, we could see that an entirely appropriate thing for the news-teller to do is to terminate the telling on the basis that speakers avoid telling recipients what they already know (Grice's maxims). To pursue a telling after the production of 'oh' then might reasonably be seen as 'interactional overkill' unless, of course, talk from the 'now-informed recipient' could be taken to indicate that their 'informedness' was incomplete.

2.2 Oh with additional turn components

As John Heritage indicates (1984: 302) free-standing oh-receipts of prior informings are comparatively rare. Indeed the examples I have presented represent the entirety of those I could find in the current data. It is far more common to find oh-initiated turns with additional structure. Typically this is of two kinds (1) some sort of assessment formulation which displays that the producer is dealing with particular aspects or implications of the informing - treating it as carrying good or bad news (eg *Oh no, Oh wow, Oh good*) or (2) Oh plus some kind of next-utterance soliciting component - typically a partial repeat or reworking of the verbal element of the prior informing utterance (eg *Oh you did did you, Oh have you, Oh they're not*). Fragments 9 - 16 illustrate the first of these types.

(9) NB IV. 7: 6

Emma: I:'ve quit s:mokin ↓yihknow en evryth*ing
hh

(0.7)

Barbara: Well wenjih stop tha*t.

Emma: THE DAY YOU LE:FT.h

(0.6)

Barbara: Left wh<u>e</u>:re.

Emma: From <u>he</u>re in Sep<u>t</u>ember=

Barbara: =e-H<u>o</u>w m'ny <u>ci</u>garettes yih had.

(0.5)

Emma: ↑↑<u>NO</u>gh:ne.

→ Barbara: Oh r<u>ea</u>↑<u>lly</u>?

Emma: <u>NO</u>:.

(.)

Barbara: ↑very ↑go<u>o</u>↓*:d.

Emma: VER<u>Y</u> good.= = °<u>hhh</u> ↑WILL <u>YOU</u> ↓AH'LL k-

uhAh'll CALL [<u>YIH</u> D U H]MORROW 't=

(10) NB II. 2: 1

Emma: °hh How you ↑d<u>o</u>in.

Nancy: °t hhh Pretty g<u>oo</u>d I gutta <u>rai</u>:se . h

°hh [hh
[
Emma: [<u>Kuu</u>:u [d.
[
Nancy: [↑Yeh tw<u>o</u> dollars a week.h

(.)

→ Emma: <u>O</u>h[w <u>o</u> : w.]
[ ]
Nancy: [↑↑uh:::h]uh hu [:h hu:h↑]
[ ]
Emma: [Wudee gun:]<u>do</u> with it
a:↓ll.

Nancy: Gol' I rilly I jis don't know how ah'm gunnuh spend all that money.

(11) NB II. 2: 4

Emma: =°hh ↑Jackie looked u:p↑ °h Hey that wz the same spot we took off fer Ho:nuhlulu

(0.3)

Emma: Where they puut him o:n, (0.6) et that chartered pla: [ce,

[

→ Nancy: [Oh: ri↑ll[y?

Emma: [

[y:::Ye:ah,

Nancy: ↑Oh: fer heaven ↓sa: [kes,

Emma: [

[ExA:Ctly

(12) NB II. 1: 2

Emma: Bud's gon'play go:lf now up Riverside he's js leavin'

(0.2)

Lottie: Oh:.

(0.5)

Emma: So: Kathern' Harry were spoze tuh come down las'night pbt there wz a death'n the fam'ly so they couldn'come so Bud's as'd Bill tuh play wih the comp'ny deal so I guess he c'n play with in ↓so

→ Lottie: Oh:; goo:d.

Emma: WHAT A MISERBLE WEEKE:ND.

(13) HG II: 16

Hyla: Getting my hair cut tihmorrow,=

→ Nancy: =Oh rilly?

(.)

Hyla: Yea:[::h,

[

Nancy: [Oh so soo:n?

(14) Rah B.1.VMJ(10): 2

Vera: °hh Uhr:m, uh Val u-ih it's uhr birthday tihday so she's gon do:wn fer a: (0.2) eh: birthday present off Freddy.

→ Jenny: °h Oh l[ovely.

[

Vera: [Eh: b't the'll be up any ti:me now en ah thought oh well ah'll jis give yih a remindih [yih know

(15) Rah B.2.JV(14): 8

Jenny: I'm'nna do s'm spaghetti'n: ( ) n- eh::meatballs f'teafuh this lot now,

→ Vera: Oh lovely.

Jenny: Cz they didn't have u they only had fish fingihs'n chips fih dinnuh,

Vera: °eeYes.°

Jenny: B't thez no↑thing in to:wn.=

Jenny: =Mahrks'n S[pencihs shelves w'↑c l e a : u h.]
[ ]
Vera: [Well they wouldn'stay fer a meal.]

(16) NB II. 3: 5

Lottie: En Ru:th uh: this fr'end a'mi:ne oh: °hhh
well it (.) e-eh sh- I let 'er
stay et the 'wailian hou:se: >over the
week<. So we're goin uh: (.) e:-eh
t'morruh morning ou:t.

→ Emma: Oh: good. Gunnuh rent a boa:[t? er]
Lottie: [ ]
[Ye:::]ah=
Emma: =Ah[hah?]
[ ]
Lottie: [Ye:]ah.

(17) Frankel TC 1. 1: 2

Geri: hhuh[heh .
[
Shirley: [°hh So 'e tried tih jump in th'car.
( ): hh

→ Geri: Oh: boy,h=
Shirley: =cz I wz Js' getting ou:t.=
Geri: =S[o didju]interdu:ce 'er?
[ ]
Shirley: [( )]
Shirley: Of cou: rse .

Like the freestanding oh-tokens discussed above, these oh + assessment turns routinely occur/are placed at the termination of a topic/news-informing. In fragment 10 Emma's *oh wow* which is produced in response to Nancy's news about being given a pay-rise, simply gets a kind of laughter response from Nancy. It is not until the in-overlap question from Emma: 'Wudee gun: do with it a:↓ll.' that Nancy produces further on-topic talk: 'Gol' I rilly I jis don't know how ah'm gunnuh spend all that money.'

In fragment 12, Lottie's 'Oh:: goo::d.' receipt of Emma's news about Bud's golf trip and the cancellation of Katherine and Harry's visit because of a death in the family, is delicately placed after the turn-yielding trail-off production of 'so'. It is immediately followed by a topic-changing exclamatory turn from Emma (the news-producer) which is produced with increased loudness and overall higher pitch than the preceding turn. Fragments 15 and 17 also evidence the disjunctive phonetics associated with topic starts or restarts (Local, to appear produced after an oh+ assessment turn. In 15, for instance, Vera produces 'Oh lovely' in response to Jenny detailing in what she is cooking for tea. After this turn Jenny does a brief account which serves to motivate her news. Notice here Jenny's minimal response to this '°eeYess°.', after which she offers no further talk or pursuit of topic, can be taken to indicate that her 'Oh lovely' was indeed designed not to be a larger topic-extending turn. What we then get is Jenny producing 'B't thez no↑thing in to:wn.' which restarts a topic (minimally begun much earlier in the conversation) and is explicitly marked with the lexically disjunctive 'but'. This utterance is characterised by an increase in loudness, in overall pitch height and pitch at its beginning which contrasts with her previous (accounting) utterance.

Although we can observe some similarities with freestanding 'oh', from a phonetic point of view these oh-tokens + assessments are rather different. While all the freestanding oh-tokens were produced with dynamic pitch movement, the pitch associated with these oh + assessment tokens may or may not be dynamic. However, they do share with the freestanding tokens the fact they are all produced with initial glottal stops and have utterance prominence (are stressed). Moreover, if the oh-producer is a speaker of an English accent where the phonologically mid back long item in the V-system has diphthongal

exponents, these oh-tokens, like those of freestanding news-receipt 'oh', will be produced as closing diphthongs.

The utterance as a whole, can be, and is often, done with a terminal rising pitch movement. With the exceptions of fragments 9, 11 and 13 all the oh + assessments in the fragments illustrated (and this is the general pattern) are done with terminal falling pitch movement. Like the falling pitch movements discussed earlier we always find these utterances ending low in the speaker's pitch-range.

The oh-tokens, in these terminal-falling utterances may themselves have falling pitch movement associated with them. I can find no generalisation which would determine *when* they have or do not have such dynamic pitch movement. Significantly, the three fragments where the oh + assessment has final rising pitch movement are all cases of *oh really*. On no occasion do we find utterances such as *oh good*, *oh lovely*, or *oh wow* produced with dynamic rising pitch. In retrospect this may seem obvious, given the kinds of pragmatic work which these oh + assessments can be seen to be doing. But its obviousness trades on a naive and unexplicated sense of the 'meaning' of rising pitch. As I have already suggested such an issue may not be nearly so transparent, or well understood as the literature on intonational meaning might lead us to believe. Notice, in this context, that the productions of *oh really* with a rising pitch contour, function in a very similar fashion to all the other oh + assessment tokens and are similarly placed and treated in the course of the interaction - they occur at telling-termination points and they do not appear to engender more on-telling talk from the other participant despite the occurrence of rising pitch. So, for instance, in (9) Barbara's 'Oh r<u>ea</u>↑<u>lly</u>?' which responds to the prior informing (concerning Emma having giving up smoking) is followed by a reconfirmation of the prior information: '<u>NO</u>:.', from Emma, which in turn is followed by assessments from both participants. After this there is a reversion to prior topic concerning Barbara's visit. (As Jefferson, (1981) notes this group of turns - (1) news announcement, (2) 'Oh really?' (3) reconfirmation and (4) assessment - is a regular way in which 'Oh really' news receipts run off. In sequences with 'Oh good' or 'Oh lovely' I have observed that it is quite common to find that the post-oh turn contains some kind of brief account (cf Rah B.2. JV(14): 8) which motivates the prior news-telling.)

Similarly, the 'Oh rilly?' produced by Nancy with rising pitch movement, in HG II: 16 simply gets a reconfirmation from Hyla: 'Yea:::h'. Further talk is not done by Hyla, who made the news announcement: 'Getting my hair cut tihmorrow,', until after Nancy's oh-prefaced clarification utterance: 'Oh so soo:n?'. Again then, we can observe that it is the constituency of the oh-utterance as a whole (its lexical, syntactic and phonetic shape) rather than any single aspect (eg pitch) which work for its interactional meaning and function.

2. 3 Oh plus partial repeats of prior

When we come to examine turns with the second class of oh + additional components we find quite a different sequential organisation operating. These turns, rather than being placed at points of completeness in the news-telling or being deployed to curtail tellings, are typically found where an informing is produced as a '"hearably incomplete" news announcement. They can be seen to be engaged in work to get the news-informant to continue. They are certainly treated in this way. Fragments 18 - 26 exemplify this state of affairs:

(18) NB IV. 13: 1

```
    Lottie:   Fine how'r you[:.
                             [
    Emma:                    [°hh Fi:ne.h h[h]
                                           [ ]
    Lottie:                                [W]utchi]
                                           [       ]
    Emma:                                  [I  W E ]NT
              HOME yesterday ↓m*orning real *early hh=
→   Lottie:   =Oh yih di:d?
    Emma:     °hhhh En CAME BA:CK LAS'NI↓:GHT. Yeh ah
              went home'n wa:::shed 'n,hhh
```

(19) HG II: 2

```
    Nancy:    u-h↓Oh: ,
                  (.)
```

Hyla: [Bu:t]
[ ]
Nancy: [My f]:face hurts ,=

Hyla: =°W't-°

(.)

→ Hyla: Oh what'd'e do tih you.

(.)

Nancy: ↑GOD'e dis (.) prac'ly killed my dumb fa:ce,=

(20) Rah. B. IDJ(12):

Jenny: I[saw Jano this mohrning=
[
Ida: [Yes

Jenny: =in in: uh Marks'n Sp[encers]
[ ]
→Ida: [Oh you did di[dju[y e s,]
[[ ]
Jenny: [Mm:[:. °hh]
She wz buyin a ↑whole load of stuff she siz she's getting

hhh ↑huh[huh]
[ ]
Ida: [hnh]heh-ha-ha-ha

(21) Rah I: 8

Vera: uRight yeh °hh Oh I met Jano:, eh:::m yestihday en she'd hahdda foh:rm from the Age Concehrn about thaht jo:b.h=

→ Jenny: =Oh=she=hahs?

Vera: So: eh she wz sending the foh:rm bahck

[the:n you] know]
[ ]]

→ Jenny: [Oh she di-]aOH:w]'l thaht's goo:d ah'm

s- ↓pleased she applie: [d,
[

Vera: [Ye:s, yes she

appl- eh she: rahng up on th'Mondee

moh:rning. yih [know
[

Jenny: [M:mm Oh goo:d,=

(22) WPC 1. MJ(I): 38

Jenny: It's- the u-roo:ms see:m bigguh:,

(0.7)

Marian: Ye:s[::
[

Jenny: [do:wnst[eh:s,
[

→ Marian: [↑Oh do the↑:h,

(0.2)

Jenny: eh: (0,3) But thev unly got the two

bedroo [:ms,
[

Marian: [°hh

Marian: Ye:s[::'
[

Jenny: [ahnd the: uh:m (0,4) kitchen: um

(23) NB 1. 1: 7

Guy: [°hhh Hey
↑how'bout sh:'ow bout She:rcliffs.c'n yih
git on nere?

(0.7)

Johnny: °khh I think so They ↑cha:rge too much
Gu:[y
→ [Oh doh they?

Johnny: Yeh ↑I ↓think so:,

(24) Rah B. 1. JMA(13):

Jenny: [°hhheh u-hOh: deah °hhh I [went round
Ann: [(Ho:peless.)

Jenny: =lahs' night cuz Ida'd got huhr
fuhr::niture so she'd rung me up
t'[say
→ Ann: [Oh hahs she.

Jenny: Mm[:
Ann: [Dz it look. ni:ce.

Jenny: °hhhh Well it's ↓beautiful fuhrnitchuh.
°hh But eh:m (0.2) the table is
gohrgeous'n the che:z.[It's- it's
rou:nd.

(25) Rah Ii: 17

Ida: Uh I went last Wednesdih yih know °hh Oh
↑by the wa:y=

→ Jenny: =Oh didche ↑keep fi:t,

Ida: eeYhhe:[:s,
[
Jenny: [Didju:=

(26) NB IV.13: 4

Emma: Yih like tih see'er ali:ve

(0.4)

Lottie: °t°hh W'l she doesn'know
anybudd[y,
[
→ Emma: [Oh doesn't[she]
[ ]
Lottie: [N o[::.]
[ ]
Emma: [°Oh]*::.°]

In each of these fragments we find a news-announcement which is receipted by an oh-prefaced utterance. The additional components in these oh-turns typically build on the verb phrase of the prior turn or involve some re-doing of the auxiliary of that turn. Fragments 19 and 25 are somewhat different in this respect and represent an alternative pattern. In 19 the additional components do not rework the verb phrase of the prior utterance. Rather they are couched in the form of a wh-question which builds on the the knowledge, just acquired, that Nancy has been to a dermatologist for treatment for a skin-condition.

Similarly, the additional components of the oh-prefaced turn in 25 address the implications of what has been said : 'Oh didche ↑keep fi:t'.

Jefferson (1981) discusses these 'oh-plus-partial repeat' 'newsmarks' and suggests that they typically occur in an environment 'in which a telling is obviously forthcoming, or is overlapped by a telling, or gets a telling, or is followed by a request for a telling'. Importantly, she points up the fact that in such cases talk is 'either volunteered by recipient . . . or solicited by newsmarker' (79). Thus they are rather different interactional objects from the kinds of oh-news receipts discussed up to this point.

Within this class of turns there are two phonetically and syntactically distinct types. The first type is exemplified by the instances in fragments 18, 20 and 21. In this type of turn we find the oh-token immediately followed by a pronoun + auxiliary verb (there may be additional components as in fragment 20). Fragment 20 patterns along with this first type. In the second type, exemplified by fragments 22 - 26, the organisation of the turn is such that the oh-token is immediately followed by a verbal element + pronoun (again there may be additional components as in fragment 25).

In terms of pitch configurations these two types are rather similar. In both we find turns ending with stepping down or falling pitch movement (fragments 19, 20, the first case in 21, 24, 25 and 26). The precise phonetic details of the pitch in these cases differ. In 19, 20 and the first case in 21 there is a dynamic pitch fall associated with the first auxiliary or verbal element which continues over any remaining material in the turn. So for instance, (with the syllable bearing the prominent, dynamic pitch fall underlined): 'oh whatde do to you', 'oh you did did you yes'. In the case of the second type, rather than dynamic pitch fall we find a step down from the stressed verbal element to the pronoun (eg fragments 24 and 26). Notice that in contradistinction to other oh-turns with falling pitch these ones regularly get treated as requiring the co-participant to pursue the news-telling.

The two types are similar also in respect of their possibility of co-occurrence with rising or upstepping pitch. Again, however, the precise details differ. In the first type (fragments 18 and the second instance in 21) we observe a dynamic rising pitch movement associated with the verb ('did' in both cases). In the second type we find pitch step up from

stressed verbal element to pronoun (fragments 22 and 23). A regular and systematic distinction, in terms of pitch, between the two types is found in the relationships between the pitch of the oh-particle and other items in the turn. In the first type, the oh+ pronoun part (or in the case of 'oh whatde do to you' all the material before 'do') is produced on a level pitch. In the second type there is always a pitch discontinuity between the oh-particle and the following material. So we find (i) a pitch step down from 'oh' to the next word in fragments 22, 25 and 26 (ii) a pitch step up from 'oh' to the next word in fragments 23 and 24.

There are a number of other interesting phonetic features which distinguish this class of oh+ partial repeats from other the oh-turns that I have considered so far. A first observation is that (with the single exception of fragment 19 which involves a repair at its onset) they are not produced in the environment of pauses as are some other kinds of oh-receipts. In the cases I have found, in the present conversational materials, these oh+partial repeat turns are either 'latched' (that is, produced very quickly after the completion of a prior turn, eg fragments 18, first instance in 21 and 25) or produced in overlap towards the end of the news/information giving turn (fragments 20, instance 2 in 21, 22, 23, 24 and 26).

In none of the cases I have found, of oh+partial repeat (whether of the form oh+pronoun+verbal element or oh+verbal element+pronoun), is the oh-particle accented. All the cases I have exhibit 'oh' produced rhythmically short (usually diphthongal or a close back vocoid) and unstressed. In all the oh+pronoun+further material cases there is an interesting rhythmic relation obtaining between the first two elements of the turn in that the oh element and the following pronoun are produced, unstressed, with the same rhythmic quantity (an observably 'equal-equal' relation to borrow Abercrombie's (1965) terminology). Moreover, in contrast to the behaviour of the oh-tokens discussed so far there is a systematic distribution of whether or not they are initiated with glottal stops. In the case of the turns with the structure oh+verbal element the oh-particle is regularly produced with an initial glottal stop, whereas in the oh+ pronoun types the opposite is the case (on occasion lax breathy phonation can be observed in this type).

2.4. Freestanding oh-tokens in question-elicited informings

To this point I have dealt only with oh-tokens which are produced in response to informings which are initiated by the news-bearer themselves. I want now to turn to a quite different kind of oh-news receipt which is produced as a response to informings which are elicited by means of questions. The data fragments below illustrate the phenomenon.

(27) Rah A. 1. !MJ(2): 2

```
                    [
Ida:                [Ah thi- et-y-ah: think there wz
                 only about three
                 things ordered was it ohr fouhr.
Jenny:           eh-u-[oh ah think theh wz two: fuh Kim'n
                 two fer I:van.
→  Ida:       Oh:.
Jenny:           B't I(c) I don't know what quite.
Ida:             nNoh:. No[h. A'rright thez about three
                 things theahr.=
```

(28) NB I. 6:7

```
                  [
Lottie:           [Whenyuh go:- thah (.)[yesti-]
                                        [      ]
Emma:                                   [Uh    F]ri:dee.
                          (0.3)
→  Lottie: Oh: .
```

( )

Lottie Uh[(huh?)
[

(29) WPC 1. MJ(l): 1

[
[When dz Sus'n g[o bahck.=
[
[°hhhh

Jenny: [( )
=[
Marian: [u-She: goes bahck on Sahtihda:y=

→ Jenny: =O[h:.
[
Marian: [Ah:n: Stev'n wz heuh (.) all lahs'week'e
only went
bah'yestihda:y.

→ Jenny: Oh:.
Marian: °ıhhhh So: uh 's been qui'u-he[ctic.hh eh
huh h]uh °hhhh

(30) Rah B. 2. IV(14) 1

[ ]]
Vera: [A h :]I thought ah'd a'caught]yuh ah
thought you couldacalled up fuh coffee.
Jenny: Oh:::. Hahv they'av yih yisitiz
g[one then,]
[ ]
Vera: [Theh'v ↓gol:ne. Yes,

→ Jenny: Oh[:ah.]
[ ]

(31) NB 11. 2.: 5

[ ]
Emma: [Oh]ho:w'd[jih do with yer final[s.
[[
Nancy: [°u [°t I:
don'kno:w I
aven'gott'n they'll mai:l my gra:des
yuhknow bu[t
→ Emma: [Ohi:::.
(0.2)

(32) NB II. 2: 21

[
Emma: [Yih know
wher'e is the:n,
(0.8)
Nancy: I have never had any of it retu:rned
Emma, h
→ Emma: Ohi:.
Nancy: At a:ll, so:[I jist assoom thet the
[
Emma: [°( )°
Nancy: notice the e.: the= =telegram thet went
fr'm th'bank w'ss return' becuz he
didn't w:ant to accept it.
(0.4)

Emma: OH:.h

(33) HG II: 25

N: =°hhh Dz he 'av'iz own apa:rt[mint?]
[ ]
H: [°hhhh]

Yea:h,=

→ N: =Oh:,

(1.0)

N: How didju git 'iz number,

(.)

H: I(h) (.) c(h)alled infermation'n San
Fr'ncissc(h)[uh!

[

→ N: [Oh::::

.. (.) Very clever, hh=

H: =Thank you[: I- °hh- °hhhhhhhh=
[
N: [W'ts 'iz last name,

H: =Uh:: Freedla:nd. °hh[hh
[
→ N: [Oh[:,
[
H: [('r)Freedlind=

N: =Nice Jewish boy?

(.)

H: O:f course,=

```
N:          ='v [cou:rse,]
                [          ]
H:              [hh-hh-hh] hnh °hhhhh=
N:           =Nice Jewish boy who doesn'like tih
            write letters?
```

Heritage (1984) remarks of such sequences:

> '... in proposing a change of state, the 'oh' receipt is once more nicely fitted to the Q-A sequence in which it participates. For the producer of a question proposes, with the production of a question, to assume the status of presently uninformed about its substance and thereby proposes as well the the respondent, in answering the question, assume the status of informed... Here then the production of "oh' confirms an answer as an action that has involved the transmission of information from an informed to an uninformed party.' (309 - 310)

Notice, in the light of these observations, that the onus for displaying the satisfactoriness of the information may be seen to fall more on the questioning news/information-recipient than in other cases where the news is proffered rather than solicited. In interactional sequences, then, where we have question-elicited information a recipients, by deploying an oh-token, propose that a possibly complete answer is acceptably complete for the present purposes. Or, in contrast, by the withholding of 'oh', or by the building of the 'oh' turn in a particular way, the questioner can display that they are proposing that the answer is, for instance, inadequate in some way, is not complete or is uninformative. This provides for the possibility that doing or not doing an oh-token in such sequences can have an effect on the production of further news/information from a co-participant. Not surprisingly then, it is fairly common to find question-elicited informings being dealt with, in the first instance, by non-oh-receipts (eg *yeah*, or *mm*):

(34) WPC 1. MJ(1): 2

Marian: °hhhh (.) °Um::° 'Ow is yih mothih by:
th'we:y.h
(.)
Jenny: We:ll she's a:,h bit bettuh:,
→ Marian: Mm[:,
[
Jenny: [eh- She came: do:wn on:
Sahtldee:eveni[ng
[
→ Marian: [↑Oh: did
[s h e a e ,h]
[ ]
Jenny: [fih the fuhr]:s'ti:me.
Marian: Ye:s,
Jenny: Ye[s.( )- ah d]on't know whethuh she came
[ ]
Marian: [O h ↑: : .]
Jenny: ah: didn't= =ring them yestuhday,
Marian: No-o.h
Jenny: Eh:' (0.2) yihknuh ah don't n'whethuh she
came down: lahs:t ni:ght,
Marian: °hh No:.=
Jenny: =Jus depends on 'ow she fee- °hh She's
no:t just ri:ght thou:gh,

In this fragment we see that a first response to a question-elicited informing is a 'continuation' token 'Mm::' from Marian. When Jenny provides a more specific detailing of her mothers improvement out of illness: 'She came: do:wn on: Satidee: evening' this gets a strong news receipt '↑Oh: did she::, h'.[3] Compare also the information receipt produced by Nancy following her eliciting utterance in fragment 35 'Nice Jewish bo:y' for which Heritage gives the following description:

> 'In this case, the respondent (H) confirms the inference with an utterance "O:f cou:rse," which treats the inference as self-evident rather than merely likely. In turn, this confirmation is receipted by N with a repetition of the confirmation . . . which preserves this treatment and asserts it on her own behalf. In effect, the recipient withholds a change-of-state proposal and thus retrospectively proposes that her previous, question-intoned inference is to be heard as having been a comment on something self-evident rather than an inference concerning something still in doubt.' (310 - 311)

Thus, sequences in which we find oh-responses to question elicited informings have rather different properties and potentials with respect to the subsequent development of the interaction. They also typically have a very different phonetic shape from other oh-tokens considered so far. Although all the cases I have been able to track down in the current data are done with terminal falling pitch and like many other oh-tokens are systematically produced with initial glottal stops and may be variably extended in time, they may, unlike the other tokens considered so far, be done with *rising*-falling pitch (eg fragments 29, 31 and the first two instances in 33). They may also (unlike other oh-tokens) terminate with

---

3 See Heritage (1984: 306) for further discussion of this fragment. Compare also fragment 6 (though it is not question-elicited) where E responds to C's reformulation of his informing 'She decided to go away this weekend' with a continuation oriented 'Yeah' which prompts further talk from C formulated as an 'upshot': 'So that (.) y'know I really don' have a place ti'stay'. Her subsequent oh-token, however, displays news-receipt as can be seen in part by her formulation of the consequences of C not making the trip: 'So you're not gonna go up this weekend'.

complete glottal closure (eg fragments 27, 30, 32 and the first instance in 33), and they can be noticeably nasalised. Moreover, their vocalic quality is quite distinct from any of the oh-tokens considered so far. Most frequently, oh-responses to these question-elicited informings are realised as monophthongs. Typically, these monophthongs are back vocoids, usually open or half open. Qualities vary around cardinal vowels 5 and 6; if in the region of cardinal 6 the vocoid is routinely slightly unrounded.

A nice example of the distinction between freestanding oh-token in question elicited informing sequences and in proffered informings can be seen in fragment 29. Here we find the question-elicited informing being responded to with a freestanding 'oh' which has a falling pitch movement and a vocoid somewhat advanced from cardinal 7, and slightly unrounded. This oh-token is overlapped by talk from Jenny: 'Ah:n: Stev'n wz heuh (.) all lahs'week'e only went bah'yestihda:y' which is designed to be a continuation of her preceding response to the question. Following this Jenny produces a canonical freestanding oh news receipt which is done with falling pitch movement, has clear (non-glottalised) phonation and which is diphthongal (beginning in the region of back, advanced, lip-spread,half open and closing towards a slightly advanced and open close back rounded vocoid).

One interesting aspect of the organisation of these oh-tokens is that they are regularly overlapped by further talk from the questioned party. Routinely, this overlapping talk is configured to propose that it is a continuation of the response to the question. In such places we frequently find continuation items such as 'and' (eg fragments 28, 29 and 30). In fragment 32 we find the post-oh turn starting with 'at all' which can be construed as a retrospective syntactic addition/repair to the response to question utterance: 'I have never had any of it retu:rned Emma, h'. These post-/overlapped-oh utterances warrant more investigation than I can give them here. They never occur with the phonetic characteristics of topic starts. Rather they have the pitch, loudness and rhythmic features (including tempo acceleration 'rush-throughs') which typically characterise continued utterances. They may well provide evidence for the delicate task of negotiating the extent to which a response to a question is satisfactorily complete. Despite the production of further, overlapping talk from co-participants the

production of oh-tokens in question-elicited regularly curtails the flow of talk, as the fragments illustrate.

2.5 Oh and 'surprise'

In discussing these oh-receipts of question-elicited informings Heritage points out that the production of an 'oh' receipt 'is not necessarily associated with the degree to which an answer is unexpected'. Certainly, for the fragments I have presented to this point, it would be difficult to locate any interactional behaviour which could be used to warrant any of the oh tokens as being designed as to signal the extent of expectedness of the 'news'.were systematic. Nonetheless, this is a matter of some linguistic and interactional interest for it is quite common to read in books which deal with English 'intonation' that certain 'tones' or 'tunes' have 'meanings' which could be employed for just such a purpose. For example, O'Connor and Arnold, (1961) gloss rising-falling tone when used with 'interjections' as '*greatly impressed by something not entirely expected*' (48); similarly, Roach, (1983) writes of the rise-fall that it 'is used to convey rather strong feelings of approval, disapproval or *surprise*' 119 [my emphasis];). Notice however, that although we get rise fall rise pitch co-occurring with the three 'oh' tokens in fragment 33 that they do not seem to function to signal 'surprise' or unexpectedness of the news being imparted. There is certainly no interactional evidence for such an analysis (see the quote from Heritage above). The complex rising-falling(-rising) contoured oh-tokens in fragment 33 (where the second instance is higher in overall pitch than the first, and the third higher overall than the second) are perhaps employed in some kind of desultory humour-engaged work (this is a jokey sequence with laughter particles occurring throughout). So, for instance Nancy's turn following her first oh-token is simply formulated as a follow up question. Nancy says nothing that would suggest that Hyla's response to 'Dz he 'av'iz own apa:rtmint?' is in any way surprising. Nor is there any interactional evidence in 34 that the rising-falling contour with which Marian's oh-token is produced is accomplishing such work. Rather the oh-token here would seem to be doing some kind of special 'foregrounding' of the detailing offered - that it was the first time Jenny's mother had come down stairs since her illness. The important point here is that if we want to propose that rising-falling pitch is 'doing surprise' it is essential to show that this is

indeed how the participants themselves take it and to point identify the appropriate interactional evidence. These last remarks are offered as a caveat, if one were required, against a simplistic assigning meaning to pitch contours independently of the interactional, lexical and grammatical environments in which they occur (cf Cruttenden, 1986). However, if we examine some of the oh-tokens in the present corpus, it *is* possible to find instances where particular pitch configurations do go around with what we might wish to recognise as 'surprised' receipts[4]. Consider the following data fragments:

(35) RahB. 1. IDJ(12): 2

```
Jenny:    °h Av you seen uhr,.
Ida:      Ye- °h Well she's gon to m: eh: eh:
          Chestuh:.
                    (0.9)
Ida:      Ja[no:,
             [
Jenny:       [↑Jano hahs.
Ida:      ↑Ey?
Jenny:    No she hasn't?
                   (0.8)
Ida:      Ye:s. She's go:ne,
                  (0.7)
Ida:      She went Just before dinner.
                       (0.2)
→ Jenny:  Oh↑:::. Oh[I  ( thought  ), ]
```

4 One means of expressing surprise available to speakers is to use versions of what Heritage op cit refers to as 'assertions of ritualized disbelief, eg "yer kidding," "really?" "did you" etc.' (339).

[ ]

Ida: [She wz in suuch a]ruush,

(36) Frankel: TC. 1. 1:15 - 16

[

Shirley: [°hhh So if you guys want a place tuh sta:y.

(0.3)

Geri: °t °hhh Oh well thank you but you we ha- yihknow Victor,

→ Shirley: ↑OH that's ↑RI:GHT.=

Geri: =That's why we were going[(we)

Shirley: [I FER↑GO:T. Completely.

(37) WPC:1:MJ(1): 7 - 8

Marian: N[o : ,

[ ]

Jenny: [it's a]s:safe seat fer everythin:g['ehhr,

[

Marian: [°hh

(0.2)

Jenny: Reahlly,

Marian: i-Thaht's ra[h ih tis relly ye:s:, yes,=
[
Jenny: [So:.
Jenny: =End eh,
(0.3)
→ Marian: ↑Oh:: ad didn't realahz it wz so neah
coorss it's Ma:y
next week °hh
Jenny: Ye:[s

(38) NB:II:4: 8 - 9

Emma: God I can't go inna boat fer a long
time'e siz ↑no boating er
no::,
(0.2)
Emma: [[GO:LF,]
[[ ]
Nancy: [[Bud was]n't playing go:lf?
(0.7)
Emma: No:
→ Nancy: ↑oh:↓ :.
(.)
Emma: [[°hhhh<]
[[ ]
Nancy: [[I js:<]

(0.2)

Emma: [[N O : ,]

[[ ]

Nancy: [[thought they] prob[ably] would be]

playing] ah]

[ ]]

]]

Emma: [No:] BILL'S

]↓GAH:N] NE]X'[DOOR]

[ ]=

[°khh]

→ Nancy: [[Oh::: tha]t's r[* i g h t

] y * e a : h,]

=[[ ] [ ]

]

Emma: [[yih ↓kno*w] [THEY'VE ch]ecked ou:t.

]So=

Nancy: =°ee[Ya:h°

[

Emma: [°hhheeahhoo IT'S JIS KAHNA DU:LL,

Ghod whatta m::iser'ble

miser'ble:

Nancy: °tch °hhah

Emma: w[ee]ke:n'.

(39) NB:III:I: 3

Fran: °hhhhhh Oh: come o:n. [I could]n' j's
come down the:re, hn=
[ ]
[H m : ?]

Ted:

Fran: =°t°hh I got two other kids. remember?

→ Ted: Oh:: that's ri[:ght,

(40) NB:III:I: 2

Fran: ((f)) Wul when didju guys go:::.

Sharon: Ah: Saturday? hh

→ Fran: ((f)) Oh: fer, cryin out loud. I thought
it wz the e:nd'v
th'mo:nth you were go:::i:[n.
[
Sharon: [Mm-mm, hh

In all these fragments the oh-tokens are done with high, wide-range rising falling pitch. And there would seem to be grounds to claim that this pitch contour was contributing to a display of 'having been misinformed (rather than uninformed) but now informed in fragments 35, 37 and 40, and of 'recollection' post a wrongly assumed state of affairs in fragments 36, 38 and 39. In fragment 35, Jenny's oh-receipt turn has a lexical formulation of her previous assumption: ' Oh I thought' which is followed shortly by what might constitute the grounds for her misinformedness 'she sid she wz getting visito:rs.' In fragment 36 Shirley's '↑OH that's ↑RI:GHT' (where oh is done with

40

wide rising-falling pitch) is followed in her next turn by an explicit lexical formulation which in proposing her forgetfulness offers an account of her previous talks and also proposes that she has now undergone a change-of-state in terms of realisation (cf also 38). Fragment 39 provides two further instances of oh+ rising falling pitch contour functioning as displays of revisions of understanding. In this sequence Nancy seeks clarification about whether or not Bud (Emma's husband) was playing golf. On being told 'no' by Emma Nancy produces an oh-token realised with rising-falling pitch. Emma makes no lexical response to this, and Nancy produces a display of the assumption underlying her prior question: 'I js: [=just JKL] thought they probably would be playing' which is overlapped by an emphatic negative from Emma. Emma then provides an account of Bud's movement in part explanation which is in turn receipted by Nancy with a rising-falling pitched oh-prefaced turn which acknowledges Emma's account and her previous misassumption.

The following fragment presents a somewhat more complex instance in that the oh-token is not followed *in the same turn* by such components.

(39) WPC:1:MJ(1): 8

```
     Marian:    [[He go away nex'Suu(h)nde(h)h.
→    Jenny:     ↑oh[(dih yi)
                    [
     Marian:        [°hhh
     Marian:    eh hhin heh huh
     Jenny:     ↑Not this next.=
     Marian:    =°hh This neh-iss Sun(dee dit °hhh
                                      [
     Jenny:                           [This Sundee comi:n?
     Marian:    Did we no:t tell you:,h
                          (.)
```

Jenny: ↑Eh: wuh

Marian: A[h ↑think we must'v dun,]

[ ]

Jenny: [I knew I knew you w'r]goin

awa[:y bt ah d]idn'ah wz=

[ ]

Marian: [Y e : s,]

Jenny: =thinkin it wz[wa:l we were awa:y.

Nonetheless, examination of this fragment reveals that there is clear interactional evidence that Jenny's oh-token produced with rising-falling pitch is engaged in a similar kind of work. The oh-token is accompanied by what is most probably a version of 'do you' these last two words are produced with an overall rising contour (step up from 'do' to 'you' and a slight dynamic rise on 'you'). We have seen previously that such formulations are typically employed to get the news-informant to continue and are routinely placed as new receipts when the informing is 'hearably incomplete' or is being treated by the recipient as incomplete. The next talk from Jenny is also formulated as a question which seeks clarification of Marian's 'We go away nex'Suu(h)nde(h)h'. Marian's response is to confirm the negative question formulation.. However, Jenny's continued pursuance of the precise day in question 'This Sunday coming' is an indication that the matter is not yet resolved and that she is still not appropriately in command of the information. Marian's next utterance addresses Jenny's problem and attempts to locate the basis of her informedness: 'Did we no:t tell you:,h'. Jenny eventually provides a formulation of the extent of her informedness which offers evidence that the production of her oh-token earlier was, in part, engendered by being presented with information which stood in contradistinction to a previously held understanding: 'I knew I knew you w'r goin awa:y bt ah didn'ah wz=thinkin it wz wa:l we were awa:y'.

Oh particles accompanied by rising-falling pitch contours, then, may accomplish displays of having been misinformed and displays of forgetfulness. There are insufficient instances in the present corpus to say whether there are systematic phonetic differences between these two types of utterance. However, one property which they have in common is worth noting. The oh-particle prefaces more talk from the same speaker which has an explicit display of the previous misinformedness or forgetfulness. This distinguishes them from other oh particles with rising-falling contours, such as those in fragments 33 and 34. On the basis of the present data it would seem likely that, irrespective of the intuitions of linguists, rising-falling pitch contours with 'oh' accomplish the 'surprise' of previously misinformed precisely when they have such explicit formulations accompanying them.

3. Conclusion

As I implied at the beginning of this paper, remarkably little is known in detail about the phonetics and phonology of naturally occurring talk. Virtually nothing of interest is known of the *interactional* implications of particular kinds of phonetic events in everyday talk As long ago as 1959, David Abercrombie drew attention to this gap in knowledge. In a paper, addressed to language teachers, entitled 'Conversation and spoken prose' he suggests that one reason for this is that what 'linguistics has concerned itself with, up to now, has almost exclusively been spoken prose.' (4) He concludes that 'Genuine spoken language of 'conversation' . . . has hardly been described at all in any language, whether from the phonetic, phonological, or grammatical point of view.' (1965: 9) This paper is an attempt the redress the balance somewhat and to examine one small aspect of the phonetic organisation to be found in the everyday talk of ordinary people.

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