

The interactional organisation of initial
business-to-business sales calls
with prospective clients

by

Bogdana Huma

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to break new ground by investigating the interactional organisation of real events that comprise live business-to-business “cold” calls. Despite being a ubiquitous part of everyday life, we know very little about how “cold” calls are initiated, progressed, and completed. “Cold” calls are unsolicited telephone encounters, initiated by salespeople aiming to get prospective clients (“prospects”) interested in their services, with the distal goal of turning them into clients and the proximal goal of getting them to agree to an initial meeting. “Cold” calls are often treated as a nuisance by call-takers, and salespeople must deal with reluctant gatekeepers, recurrent sales resistance, and the occasional hang-up. The training they receive often draws on outdated theories of communication and is rarely supported by empirical evidence. Thus, this study not only addresses an important domain for interactional research, but also fulfils a practical necessity for empirical research that will inform sales training and improve callers’ and call-takers’ experiences.

The data comprise 150 recorded calls supplied by three British companies that sell, service, and lease office equipment. The data were collected, transcribed, and analysed within an ethnomethodological framework using conversation analysis and discursive psychology. The first analytic chapter outlines the overall structural organisation of “cold” calling. It documents the constituent activities within the opening, the “business” of the call, and the closing. It identifies and describes two types of “cold” calls. “Freezing” calls are initiated by salespeople who are contacting a prospect for the very first time. “Lukewarm” calls feature salespeople who claim to have been in contact with the prospect’s organisation in the past. The second chapter excavates the initial turns of “lukewarm” calls in which salespeople ask to speak to another person within the company, with whom they indicate to be acquainted. The analysis revealed that this “third-party acquaintanceship” was crucial for establishing the legitimacy of the switchboard request and for improving the chances of getting it granted. The third chapter focused on appointment-making sequences in both “freezing” and “lukewarm” calls, showing that they comprise two components: a preamble and a meeting request sequence. I also highlight how salespeople exploit sequential and turn-taking mechanisms to secure meetings with prospects without giving the latter the opportunity to refuse. The final chapter examines two practices for enacting resistance in “cold” calls – blocks and stalls – and documents the range of methods salespeople employ for dealing with each type of resistance. Sales blocks expose the salesperson’s commercial agenda, attempt to

stop the prospecting activity, and move towards call pre-closure. In response, salespeople can challenge, counter, or circumvent blocks as well as redo their initiating actions. Stalls slow down the progress of the sales process by delaying the next phase of the sale or by proposing less commitment-implicative alternatives. Salespeople deal with stalls by either justifying their initial proposal or by spontaneously introducing new action plans, both being more conducive to the progress of the sale.

The thesis contributes to a growing body of interactional research on commercial encounters by shedding empirical light on a previously unexamined setting, business-to-business “cold” calls. It also moves forward discursive psychology’s project of respecifying psychological phenomena by documenting the communicative practices associated with persuasion and resistance. Finally, it expands the extant conversation analytic toolkit by examining new practices (such as appointment-making) and by providing new insights into key conversation analytic topics (such as requests, pre-sequences, and accounts for calling). Overall, the findings presented in this thesis challenge existing conceptions of prospecting through “cold” calling that are prevalent in the sales literature. The thesis puts forward a strong argument for opening the “black box” of “cold” calls to better understand these interactions and to identify good practices as the basis for communication training. Research presented in this thesis has already been used in the development of CARM (Conversation Analytic Role-play Method) training for salespeople, who reported having doubled their appointment rates. Based on the findings in this thesis, I plan to develop further training not only for salespeople but also for prospective customers, thus improving the overall outcome of “cold” call encounters.

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If I'm ever in that position and you ask me, "Who?" I'll do my best to say, "You" too. But in order to get there, you may have to break down the walls of whatever it is that's holding you back first. Ignore the doubt—it's not your friend—and just keep going, keep going, keep going." (Graham¹, 2016, p. 163).

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¹ Lauran Graham played Lorelai Gilmore in the TV series *Gilmore Girls*

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
TABLE OF CONTENTS	7
LIST OF TABLES	11
LIST OF FIGURES	11
ABBREVIATIONS	12
INTRODUCTION	13
CHAPTER 1 LITERATURE REVIEW	18
1.0 INTRODUCTION	18
1.1 WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT PERSONAL SELLING	20
1.2 WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE INTERACTIONAL ORGANISATION OF COMMERCIAL ENCOUNTERS	23
1.2.1 CONVERSATIONAL MICROSTRUCTURES IN COMMERCIAL ENCOUNTERS	24
1.2.1.1 <i>Requests, pitches, invitations, and accounts</i>	24
1.2.1.2 <i>Sequence and sequential organisation</i>	29
1.2.2 COMMERCIAL ENCOUNTERS AS COLLABORATIVE, EMBODIED, MATERIAL ACHIEVEMENTS	32
1.2.2.1 <i>Commercial encounters as collaborative achievements</i>	33
1.2.2.2 <i>Commercial encounters as embodied achievements</i>	34
1.2.2.3 <i>Commercial encounters as material achievements</i>	38
1.2.3 RESPECIFICATION OF TRADITIONAL SALES TOPICS	40
1.2.3.1 <i>Sales resistance</i>	40
1.2.3.2 <i>Relationship selling</i>	42
1.2.3.2.1 <i>Small talk and building rapport</i>	48
1.2.3.2.2 <i>Personalisation</i>	50
1.3 SELLING AND BUYING: OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESEARCH	50
CHAPTER 2	52
2. METHODOLOGY	52
2.0. INTRODUCTION	52
2.1. DATA COLLECTION	52
2.1.1. INTRODUCING THE DATA SOURCES	52
2.1.1.1. <i>The data source selection</i>	55
2.1.2. GENERATING DATA.....	56

2.1.2.1.	<i>Recording</i>	56
2.1.2.2.	<i>Transcribing</i>	57
2.1.2.3.	<i>Research ethics</i>	59
2.1.2.4.	<i>Assembling collections</i>	60
2.2.	DATA ANALYSIS	61
2.2.1.	CONVERSATION ANALYSIS	62
2.2.1.1.	<i>Conversation analysis – the study of social action in interaction</i>	63
2.2.1.2.	<i>Institutional conversation analysis</i>	64
2.2.1.3.	<i>Doing conversation analysis</i>	65
2.2.1.4.	<i>Conversation analysis and psychology</i>	66
2.2.2.	DISCURSIVE PSYCHOLOGY	67
2.2.2.1.	<i>Discursive psychology – the study of discursively accomplished psychological phenomena</i>	68
2.2.2.2.	<i>Doing discursive psychology</i>	70
2.2.2.3.	<i>Comparing and contrasting CA and DP</i>	71
2.3.	SUMMARY	75
CHAPTER 3 THE OVERALL STRUCTURAL ORGANISATION OF BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS		
“COLD” CALLS		76
3.0	INTRODUCTION	76
3.1	ANALYSIS	77
3.1.1	OPENING THE CALL	78
3.1.1.1	<i>Speaking to the “relevant” person</i>	79
3.1.2	THE BUSINESS OF THE CALL	83
3.1.2.1	<i>Accounting for calling</i>	84
3.1.2.2	<i>Qualifying prospects</i>	90
3.1.2.3	<i>Arranging a sales appointment</i>	99
3.1.3	CLOSING THE CALL	105
3.2.	DISCUSSION	108
CHAPTER 4 THIRD-PARTY ACQUAINTANCESHIP IN “LUKEWARM” CALL OPENINGS 111		
4.0	INTRODUCTION	111
4.1	ANALYSIS	112
4.1.1	PERFORMING THIRD-PARTY ACQUAINTANCESHIP	112
4.1.2	GETTING INTO TROUBLE WHILE PERFORMING THIRD-PARTY ACQUAINTANCESHIP: CALLER SELF-IDENTIFICATION	124
4.1.3	GETTING INTO TROUBLE WHILE PERFORMING THIRD-PARTY ACQUAINTANCESHIP: REFERENCES TO THE “RELEVANT” PERSON	127
4.1.4	THIRD-PARTY ACQUAINTANCESHIP AND THE LEGITIMACY OF “CLOSED” SWITCHBOARD REQUESTS ..	134

4.1.5	PRESUMPTIVE VS. CAUTIOUS CALL OPENINGS	137
4.0	DISCUSSION	139
CHAPTER 5 GETTING APPOINTMENTS IN BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS “COLD” CALLS		142
5.0	INTRODUCTION	142
5.1	ANALYSIS	143
5.1.1	SECURING A MEETING – THE CANONICAL FORM	143
5.1.2	GETTING APPOINTMENTS IN “FREEZING” CALLS.....	145
5.1.3	GETTING APPOINTMENTS IN “LUKEWARM” CALLS	151
5.1.3.1	<i>Getting an appointment without asking for one</i>	<i>157</i>
5.2	DISCUSSION	162
CHAPTER 6 DEALING WITH RESISTANCE IN BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS “COLD” CALLS.....		165
6.0	INTRODUCTION	165
6.1	ANALYSIS	166
6.1.1	SALES BLOCKS	166
6.1.1.1	<i>Challenging the integrity of the block</i>	<i>169</i>
6.1.1.2	<i>Circumventing the block.....</i>	<i>172</i>
6.1.1.3	<i>Countering the block</i>	<i>176</i>
6.1.1.4	<i>Redoing the initiating action</i>	<i>177</i>
6.1.2	STALLS	180
6.1.2.1	<i>Justifying an alternative course of action.....</i>	<i>182</i>
6.1.2.2	<i>Introducing an impromptu alternative</i>	<i>185</i>
6.2	DISCUSSION	188
CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION		190
7.0	INTRODUCTION	190
7.1	DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS WITHIN EACH ANALYTIC CHAPTER	192
7.1.1	CHAPTER 3: THE OVERALL STRUCTURAL ORGANISATION OF BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS “COLD” CALLS	192
7.1.2	CHAPTER 4: THIRD-PARTY ACQUAINTANCESHIP IN “LUKEWARM” CALL OPENINGS	194
7.1.3	CHAPTER 5: GETTING APPOINTMENTS IN BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS “COLD” CALLS	195
7.1.4	CHAPTER 6: DEALING WITH RESISTANCE IN PROSPECTING “COLD” CALLS	196
7.2	LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	197
7.3	IMPROVING “COLD” CALLING THROUGH COMMUNICATION TRAINING.....	199
8.	REFERENCES.....	201
9	APPENDICES	236

9.1 APPENDIX A CARM TRAINING BROCHURE	239
9.2 APPENDIX B JEFFERSON TRANSCRIPTION SYSTEM	241
9.3 APPENDIX C ETHICAL CLEARANCE LIST	242
9.4 APPENDIX D PROPOSED “COLD” CALLING TRAINING OUTLINE.....	249

List of tables

Table 1: Calls made by each salesperson to either private or public organisations	54
Table 2: Distribution of “freezing” and “lukewarm” calls made by each company	54
Table 3: “Closed” switchboard requests in call openings	139

List of figures

Figure 1: The sales funnel (adapted from Jolson & Wotruba, 1992).....	23
Figure 2: The three sections of a “cold” call.....	78
Figure 3: The location of actions promoting identity alignment in the beginning of a “cold” call	83
Figure 4: The business of the call in “freezing” calls	98
Figure 5: The business of the call in “lukewarm” calls	104
Figure 6: The sequential organisation of circumventing a block.....	173

Abbreviations

AP	adjacency pair
C	caller
CT	call-taker
CA	conversation analysis
CARM	Conversation Analytic Role-play Method
DP	discursive psychology
EM	ethnomethodology
FPP	first pair part
MCA	membership categorisation analysis
P	prospect
MCD	membership categorisation device
R	receptionist
S	salesperson
SCT	sequence closing third
SPP	second pair part
TCU	turn constructional unit
TPA	third-party acquaintanceship
TRP	transition relevance place

Introduction

1 P: So you're trying to sell me something then.
 2 (0.4)
 3 S: ↑No=↑no ↑no:.=I just wanted to drop
 4 some details off so you can keep it on file.

Worldwide, call centres are a booming industry. Each year, an increasing number of people find employment “working the phones” in marketing, customer service, or sales-oriented roles. The working conditions in call centres have earned them the fame of “white collar factories” (Taylor & Bain, 1999, p. 115). Call centre operators are tasked with performing repetitive activities and have little control over their own work (Zapf, Isic, Bechtoldt, & Blau, 2003). They get insufficient or inadequate training to manage difficult conversations with interlocutors that might get angry or upset over the phone (Rothe, 2011). They are encouraged to smile while conversing or “do small talk” regardless of whether that feels apposite or not. Meanwhile, their opportunities to deal with real issues that arise during the calls are restricted by having to abide by scripts and strict rules of interaction (Szymanski, Plurkowski, Swenton-Wall, & Englert, 2012). With calls being recorded and floor managers potentially listening in, their work is under constant scrutiny (Woodcock, 2017).

This gloomy picture is nuanced by comparative and qualitative studies that reveal differences in working conditions between in-bound and out-bound call centres, across industries, and between in-house and independent call centres (Bone, 2006; Glucksmann, 2004; Hultgren, 2011; Woodcock, 2017; Zapf et al., 2003). Ethnomethodologically inspired ethnographies have challenged extant conceptions of call centre work as simplistic and automatic (Szymanski et al., 2012; Whalen, Whalen, & Henderson, 2002). Clearly, there is immense variability in the organisation of call centre work. We need more research into the situated interactional structures that make up each unique call centre setting, to provide the basis for adequate training for operators.

This thesis has taken up the task of expanding our knowledge of the interactional organisation of call centre work by focusing on business-to-business “cold” calls between salespeople and prospective clients (prospects). “Cold” calls are unsolicited telephone calls, initiated by salespeople who are contacting prospects in order to get them interested in their service offers. Prospects are employees who are handling the calls on behalf of the

organisations they work for. “Cold” calling is one of several prospecting tools through which companies try to identify potential clients. Selling never occurs during the telephone call, because the business-to-business sales process entails several steps which can span over long periods of time (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005). A successful call moves the sale forward, by getting prospects to agree to a face-to-face meeting or, at least, by acquiring more information about their companies.

Within the business and marketing/sales literatures, there have been long-standing calls for research that considers the interactive organisation of selling and buying (Cash & Crissy, 1967; Evans, 1967). However, even though sales calls are routinely recorded, they rarely feature as data in academic studies. While there are a few studies of business-to-consumer telemarketing encounters (De Stefani, 2013; Freed, 2010; Mazeland, 2004), this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge, the first analysis of business-to-business “cold” calls. To companies, these encounters are an important tool for generating new sources of revenue. For salespeople, these interactions are linked to their job-related performance goals, and, ultimately, to their remuneration and job security. By contrast, for most prospects, unsolicited sales calls are a nuisance; hence, they are trying to curtail the conversations which are often disrupting their work. Nonetheless, *in vivo* “cold” calls are the main site where salespeople convince their interlocutors to share information, supply their contact details, or accept a face-to-face meeting – the first steps towards signing them on as clients. By examining business-to-business “cold” calls, this thesis provides insight into previously undocumented high-stakes commercial interactions, with major consequences for all involved parties.

The thesis is organised as follows. Chapter 1 reviews existing research on selling and buying in commercial encounters. It starts with a brief review of the main models of personal selling that outlines the stages of the sales process and the roles of salespeople within them. Building on a critical evaluation of these models and on other shortcomings of “traditional” conceptualisations of selling and buying, the rest of the chapter focuses on interactional research of commercial encounters, and I review their contribution to the respecification of commercial phenomena. I show that and how interactional studies enhance our understanding of selling and buying in three ways. First, they extend the scale of commercial activities through the examination of conversational microstructures such as actions, activities, and their sequential organisation. Second, they expand the scope of commercial encounters by taking into consideration their collaborative, embodied, and material features. Third, they attempt a topic respecification by re-examining “traditional” commercial phenomena such as “building rapport” and “relationship selling”, thus demonstrating the value added by the

interactional approach. The chapter ends by outlining the identified opportunities for interactional research on commercial encounters.

Chapter 2 describes and explains the methods I used for collecting and analysing the empirical evidence that underpins the research presented in this thesis. The data encompass 150 recordings of business-to-business “cold” calls between salespeople and prospective clients. The calls feature nine callers from three British companies that sell, service, and lease multifunctional printers and telecommunication systems. The prospects represent either private or public organisations. The telephone conversations were recorded, transcribed, stored, and presented in accordance with ethical guidelines for social science research. The calls were approached in an unmotivated way in search for patterns and regularities that led to the formation of collections. In examining the organisation of “cold” calls, I used conversation analysis (CA) and discursive psychology (DP), informed by ethnomethodology (EM). These methods are highly compatible through their shared focus on the situated production of social actions through embodied talk-in-interaction. Both CA and DP investigations rely on similar procedures for handling and scrutinising the data, using collections, single case analyses, and deviant cases. The chapter ends by considering the points of overlap as well as potential tensions between CA and DP.

Chapter 3, the first analytic chapter, provides an overview of the activities that typically comprise a business-to-business “cold” call. The chapter shows how these activities are accomplished collaboratively, and that they draw on participants’ situated identities (Zimmerman, 1998), which are reflexively constituted, invoked, and negotiated in and through their participation in these joint undertakings. “Cold” call openings are the conversational locus where participants negotiate who they are for each other for the purpose of the ensuing conversation. In “cold” calls, this entails not only “specialised” institutional self-identification (Wakin & Zimmerman, 1999) of caller and call-taker, but also switchboard requests issued by the salesperson who is looking to speak to a specific person within the company. The main section of a “cold” call harbours the “business” of the call (Pallotti & Varcasia, 2008). It is launched through a double account for calling. First, salespeople produce a “because of” account, explaining to their interlocutors why they have contacted their company at this particular moment in time. Building on this, they then produce an “in order to” account for calling which reveals the ostensible purpose or aim of the call. The closing of the conversation is initiated by the salesperson through pre-closing devices such as partially repeating prior conversational materials or making future arrangements (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). While in most call closings we see interactants aligned in terminating the

conversation, salespeople do experience the occasional hang-up, where the prospect initiates the call's pre-closing and terminates the conversation despite the interlocutor's resistance. This chapter also provides an empirical basis for differentiating between two types of "cold" calls: first-time, "freezing" calls, in which salespeople are calling an organisation for the first time, and returning "lukewarm" calls, in which salespeople are claiming to have already spoken to the prospect or a colleague sometime in the past. This is an important distinction with consequences for how the conversation is organised, with respect to the "business" of the call. "Freezing" calls are the first point of contact with the prospect, thus being designed to facilitate information-gathering and to lay the groundwork for future conversations. By contrast, "lukewarm" calls are more ambitious in that they seek to secure a face-to-face meeting with the prospect. "Freezing" and "lukewarm" calls also differ with respect to the design of the salesperson's switchboard request, which constitutes the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 4 examines switchboard requests in "lukewarm" call openings. In formulating these requests, salespeople claim to be acquainted with the prospect; that is, the person they are asking to speak to. These acquaintanceship displays are directed at the current call-taker, the gate-keeping receptionist. By claiming to be acquainted with the prospect, callers enhance the legitimacy of their requests. The chapter documents the practices through which salespeople show that they are familiar with the person they are seeking to contact. The analysis revealed that acquaintanceship is displayed not only through the choice of name references, but also through the design of the switchboard request and the caller's self-identification. The chapter also addresses the controversial issue of deceitful claims of acquaintanceship. The public availability of practices for "doing" being acquainted allows salespeople to exploit them by pretending they know the prospects. I show how "pretence" and "exposure" of false claims are situated accomplishments to which both participants contribute. The chapter ends with a discussion of alternative formats for switchboard requesting, thus extending prior work by Hollander and Maynard (2016) on switchboard requests in survey interviews.

The third analytic chapter investigates appointment-making in "freezing" and "lukewarm" calls. I describe a two-part structure comprised of a preamble and a meeting request sequence. The preamble differs from other pre-sequences (Schegloff, 2007b) identified so far in the literature. First, unlike a pre-announcement or a pre-invitation, it is not type-specific; therefore, it does not foretell the action it prefaces. Second, unlike a pre-request, which checks whether the preconditions for granting the ensuing request are fulfilled

(Fox, 2014), the preamble supplies auspicious grounds for the request's granting. The chapter also shows how salespeople exploit turn-taking and sequence organisation mechanisms to secure the appointment without asking for it. Specifically, they design their preamble to imply that the prospect is already on board with the meeting, they skip the request, and instead initiate the scheduling of the meeting. This manoeuvre precludes the prospect from refusing the meeting and results in the appointment being made.

Chapter 6, the final analytic chapter, addresses the key issue of prospecting resistance and documents the methods salespeople employ for dealing with it. I identified two types of resistance prevalent in "cold" calls: blocks and stalls. A block is a prospect's dispreferred response to a salesperson's initiating action such as a question or request. The block closes down the salesperson's current course of action, while also exposing its sales agenda and initiating call pre-closure. In response, salespeople can challenge, counters, and circumvent the block as well as re-do their initiating action. By stalling, a prospect puts forward a sales trajectory that is either slower or less committed. Salespeople deal with stalls by providing additional justifications for a more speedy course of action or by impromptu introducing an alternative trajectory, more conducive to the sale.

Chapter 7 summarizes and evaluates the research presented in the thesis as it contributes to existing bodies of work, specifically institutional and interventionist applied conversation analysis (Antaki, 2011), discursive psychology, and business/sales studies. I also highlight the possible limitations of the thesis, and, on this basis, suggest directions for future research. Finally, I outline the potential of this research for informing communication training for sales professionals.

Chapter 1

Literature review

1.0 Introduction

Commercial encounters are ubiquitous in everyday life. Engaging in a commercial interaction is as common as popping into the local convenience store on the way home from work, calling the travel agent to book a vacation, or ordering a new toaster from Amazon. This first chapter provides an overview of existing research on the organisation of commercial encounters as a background against which to situate the empirical analyses presented in the subsequent chapters.

The extant body of research on selling and buying in commercial encounters is heterogeneous. It extends across multiple disciplines: marketing, behavioural economics, consumer psychology, sociology of markets, and sociology of consumption. The studies I have identified employ a wide variety of research methods and techniques: from case studies, ethnography, quantitative surveys, in-depth interviews, focus groups, discourse analyses, and conversation analysis, to critical incident analysis experiments and brain imaging. Based on the employed research methods and taking their objectives into consideration, studies can be classified, independent of their disciplinary orientation, in two categories. Prevalent in the literature, “Why” studies explain commercial activities and related concepts, like “customer satisfaction” or “salesperson effectiveness”, in causal terms that range from intra-individual variables to social/societal structures. Their ultimate purpose is to construct explanatory frameworks which permit researchers and practitioners to forecast the consequences of manipulating various characteristics of selling and buying activities. By contrast, “How” studies set out to describe the internal organisation of commercial encounters and to delineate the constituent elements of these activities (for example, Lee, 2009; Llewellyn & Burrow, 2008; Pinch & Clark, 1986). Their purpose is to occasion a better understanding of how selling and buying are accomplished, which, in turn, permits the identification of successful and unsuccessful practices. While this chapter reviews both “Why” and “How” studies, it engages with the latter in more detail as “How” research constitutes the primary framework for the subsequent analytic chapters.

Outside academia, but relevant for this thesis, selling figures prominently in self-help, and pop psychology books as well as handbooks and articles written for sales professionals. These texts discuss selling in practical terms and comprise what I am calling the “How To” literature as they provide strategies and tips for improving sales performance and, ultimately, increasing individuals’ and companies’ revenues (Clark & Pinch, 2010). A common thread among these texts is the appeal to readers’ common-sense knowledge in the service of constructing plausible sales scenarios. In offering recommendations for how to act in these hypothetical situations, they use business and psychological vocabularies, thus claiming their advice is grounded in scientific research and/or sales experience and expertise, even though, usually, the invoked sources are outdated or not identifiable in the text (Rothe, 2011). An examination of the rhetorical assemblage of these sales textbooks and articles would constitute a fascinating research project in its own right. For the purpose of this literature review, which mainly focuses on scientific papers, I draw only occasionally from the “How To” genre as sources of knowledge or information. Instead, throughout the thesis, I treat the “How To” literature as a product which can be inspected for how it instantiates various theoretical accounts of selling and buying.

After reviewing this large and assorted body of research, I focus, in this chapter, on studies that examine the live interaction between customers and commercial agents as part of broader selling and buying activities, for two main reasons. First, adhering to an interactional research tradition (Goffman, 1983; Sacks, 1984), I am interested in the step-by-step organisation of commercial encounters as it is managed by participants, *in situ*. This perspective does not lead to the exclusion of topics like market organisation, selling strategies and technologies, or individual psychological characteristics and processes. But in accordance with EM/CA principles, instead of drawing on them as explanatory concepts, I am interested in how they figure as interactional products and resources in the situated accomplishment of selling and buying.

Second, as will become apparent by the end of the chapter, the orderliness of selling and buying interactions is a clear knowledge gap in need of addressing. While there is a growing interest in commercial interactions in the EM/CA research community, studies which explicitly discuss and theorise their interactional structures remain scarce. Furthermore, the paucity of interactionally-focused studies in domains such as marketing or business is surprising, as researchers have been arguing for over forty years for the need to examine what actually happens inside the sales encounter (for example, Evans, 1967; Mills, 1990; Solomon, Surprenant, Czepiel, & Gutman, 1985; Weitz, 1981).

Chapter 1 is organised as follows: it starts with a brief overview of the personal selling cycle and the evolution of salesperson roles therein. Then, building on the identified shortcomings in these classic models, the rest of the chapter is dedicated to the review of interactional studies of selling and buying, which, I argue, expand our knowledge of and insight into these activities. Section 1.2.1 presents research that has extended the scale of selling and buying to encompass conversational microstructures such as requests for service and sequential components of sales encounters. Section 1.2.2 reviews EM/CA literature which widens the scope of selling and buying by taking the collaborative, embodied, and material aspects of interactions into consideration. Finally, section 1.2.3 discusses interactional studies that have directly addressed “classic” sales topics such as service personalisation or building rapport, thus showing the value of examining these phenomena in naturally occurring commercial encounters. In the chapter’s conclusion, I list and discuss the opportunities for conducting interactional research on selling and buying.

1.1 What we know about personal selling

This section starts with an overview of personal selling, a cluster of marketing and selling activities that involve direct contact between salesperson and customer (Manning, Ahearne, & Reece, 2011), at least during the final stage of the sales cycle (Donaldson, 1998). Personal selling often encompasses several interactions (face-to-face, via telephone, or via email) – referred to as customer touch points (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005) – and leads to a long-term pre-sale relationship between the involved parties due to the length of the selling process (Douglas, 2013). This feature differentiates it from direct selling, which relies on a single or a limited number of interactions between buyer and seller, whereby the latter is in charge of promoting, distributing, and selling products to customers contacted in their homes or workplaces (Sudbury, 1991).

Without doubt, salespeople play a key part in personal selling. They fulfil a variety of roles, fitted to the market environment in which they operate. According to Wotruba (1991) salespeople can act as providers, persuaders, prospectors, problem-solvers, or procreators, depending on the market’s stage of development. Little or no competition means salespeople are only product providers, fulfilling the requests of incoming customers. As the market becomes more crowded, salespeople start to compete for customers. Acting as “persuaders” they try to convert each approached individual into a buyer, often using “hard sell” techniques (*cf.* Bone, 2006; Pinch & Clark, 1986). Pursuing customers is quite expensive so,

in order to be efficient, companies need to be more selective in targeting potential buyers. Thus, at the next stage, salespeople first prospect the market looking for individuals who are most likely to buy the company's products. Once the prospects have been identified and "qualified" – evaluated as likely to use, need, and be able to buy the products (Du Toit, 2011) – they are approached by salespeople with a product offer. While at this stage customers' needs are unilaterally inferred by sellers, at the next stage, salespeople, often working in teams, act as problem-solvers and collaborate with customers helping them to identify and define their needs. Finally, with increased collaboration between buyers and sellers, salespeople become "procreators" who use customers' inputs to create new products tailored to their needs. By advancing to a new stage, sales roles become more complex and incorporate the activities, responsibilities, and goals associated with roles enacted in prior stages.

This "bird's eye" model of personal selling provides a useful, albeit simplistic, overview of sales roles and constitutes a convenient launching pad for a more detailed examination of personal selling activities. Its main merit consists in explaining the multiplication of tasks and activities associated with a salesperson's job (Moncrief, 1986). In turn, the model is limited in its description of the more complex sales jobs, as it does not discuss roles associated with the performance of highly specialised services required by the provision of complex products (*cf.* Bowen, 2016). The model also fails to consider customers' active roles in commercial encounters (Bolton & Houlihan, 2005), for instance their contribution to the co-construction of organisational norms governing service delivery (Kevoe-Feldman, 2012). Last, taking a longitudinal perspective, this model offers little insight into the internal organisation of sales activities. This is why I continue with a discussion of the sales cycle as a formalisation of the various steps of a sale.

The sales cycle is probably one of the first and most popular models of selling (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005), used in sales training, sales manuals, and in practice by managers to organise sales staff activities. Even though the number of steps and their labels may differ from version to version, as different models describe selling processes in different market environments, in principle, the sales cycle has the following sequence (Futrell, 2011; Moncrief & Marshall, 2005): (1) prospecting, (2) pre-approach, (3) approach, (4) presentation, (5) overcoming objections or barriers, (6) close, and (7) follow-up. Moncrief and Marshall (2005) propose an evolved selling process model to reflect new developments in sales activities such as: the incorporation of technology (email, PowerPoint presentations), changes in sales force organisation (team selling, outsourcing of prospecting activities),

adoption of new sales strategies and philosophies (adaptive selling, relationship selling). Although the authors reinforce the idea of a process-like organisation of selling, they note that, in practice, there is substantial sequential flexibility and overlap between the seven steps.

This evolved model, even though it includes a larger variety of selling practices and strategies, still errs on the side of broadness and imprecision when it comes to describing the organisation of actual commercial activities. For instance, based on an investigation of several Scottish Small and Medium Enterprises, Douglas (2013) observes that some of the seven steps have partially merged or that they overlap to a larger extent than what Moncrief and Marshall (2005) had suggested. Similarly, Sudbury (1991) argues for distinguishing between selling processes initiated by salespeople and those initiated by customers. He documents empirically how this minor difference, in the beginning of the process, is substantially reflected in other key aspects of the sale such as the role of the salesperson, the strategies they use, the degree of customer involvement and interest in finalising the transaction, and even the percentage of post-transaction cancellations. Last, from an interactional standpoint, the sales cycle's shortcomings as a model derive from its simplistic understanding of selling activities. This leads to the oversight of the collaboration between salespeople and customers in the construction of the sale as a progressive activity (Lee, 2011b; Mazeland, 2004). Moreover, this model fails to capture more sophisticated aspects of sales/service interactions such as service providers' multiple involvements (Toerien & Kitzinger, 2007) or the interplay between progressivity and intersubjectivity in fulfilling customers' requests (Kuroshima, 2010).

Empirical research on prospecting – the activity of identifying potential clients – is surprisingly sparse, given its ubiquity as a tool for generating new revenue. Business scholars have addressed this topic in conceptual terms, modelling the activity as a funnel or pipeline (see Figure 1). Prospecting starts with a pool of possible clients or “suspects” (Jolson & Wotruba, 1992). Salespeople are tasked with identifying who among the “suspects” would be more likely to buy their products. During this qualifying phase they can get in touch with contacts, for instance through *teleprospecting* (Lichtenthal, Sikri, & Folk, 1989) – “cold” calling – in order to find out whether the latter need, want, and are able to buy their products. Prospects who have been qualified as likely clients are then pursued for a face-to-face sales presentation. At each stage of the process, the pool of potential clients is reduced, allowing salespeople to focus their efforts on the individuals that are most likely to become clients.

Figure 1: The sales funnel (adapted from Jolson & Wotruba, 1992)



These theoretical accounts paint prospecting in broad brush strokes, thus important questions, about *what* constitutes prospecting and *how* it is accomplished, remain unanswered. Research has also focused on identifying effective strategies for qualifying prospects (Brown & Brucker, 1987; D’Haen & Van den Poel, 2013; Jolson, 1986, 1988; Monat, 2011), but regrettably, none of these studies have examined sales professionals’ work in real time.

In the following section, I show how the detailed scrutiny of commercial interactions, in EM/CA research, provides a different conceptualisation of selling and buying, as contingently realised, collaborative activities.

1.2 What we know about the interactional organisation of commercial encounters

The EM/CA approach to service and sales encounters can be conceived as an attempt at respecifying selling and buying (Llewellyn & Burrow, 2008); that is, taking a closer look at the constitutive elements of these activities, as they are deployed *in situ* (Garfinkel, 1988).

The studies I review below undertake one or more of the following types of respecification:

(1) *Scale respecification* – studies focus on conversational microstructures of sales and service encounters;

(2) *Scope respecification* – studies take into consideration previously neglected aspects of selling and buying (such as actual interactions between participants, their bodies, and their material environment) and show that and how these activities are multimodal accomplishments;

(3) *Topic respecification* – studies address topics traditionally associated with selling and buying, and propose interactionally-based accounts of these topics, often at odds with their prior conceptualisations.

In what follows, I will use this classification to present EM/CA studies on selling and buying in commercial encounters.

1.2.1 Conversational microstructures in commercial encounters

This section reviews studies that have examined some of the finest details of sales interactions, such as the actions through which commercial transactions are accomplished (section 1.2.1.1.), the organisation of these actions in sequences, and their location and functions within commercial encounters (section 1.2.1.2).

1.2.1.1 Requests, pitches, invitations, and accounts

Asking for and providing products and services are pervasive components of commercial interactions, as they constitute the main vehicles through which buying and selling are accomplished (Lee, 2011a; Merritt, 1976). EM/CA studies have documented different commercially-oriented actions in a variety of face-to-face and telephone encounters. The turns and sequences through which these actions are accomplished take different forms as they are designed to accommodate different interactional contingencies.

In one of the earliest interactional studies of retail encounters, Merritt (1976) describes different sequential configurations of question (Q) – answer (A) adjacency pairs used to accomplish buying goods: (1) Q₁-A₁, Q₂-A₂, (2) Q₁-A₁/Q₂-A₂, (3) Q₁ Q₂-A₂ A₁. Within these configurations she distinguishes² pre-sequences preceding requests (first two patterns) and pre-second insert expansions (third pattern). The main shortcoming of this study consists in overlooking embodied action, which, in light of other studies (such as Fox, 2014), is extremely relevant for understanding service delivery. For instance, Merritt (1976, p. 339) discusses a deviant case in which A₁ (the server's response to the customer's first question) is absent: Q₁: Do you have coffee to go? / Q₂: Cream and sugar? (starts to pour coffee) / A₂: Cream only. In analysing this sequence, she argues Q₂ implies an affirmative response to Q₁, neglecting to consider the server's embodied response.

² Without using the subsequently developed CA terminology

By contrast, Fox (2014) presents a compelling analysis of buying that takes into consideration servers' embodied responses as part of granting customers' requests. Fox's (2014) paper also documents customers' use of two request formats: "Do you have X" and "Can I have X" and provides evidence for them being used in retail sales as requests proper and not, as Levinson (1983) had argued, as pre-requests. Her findings evince a preference for progressivity, in accord with other CA studies of sales encounters (such as Kuroshima, 2010).

This topic of requests in sales encounters has been further explored by Fox and Heinemann (2016). They conducted an extensive review of request formats used by customers in a US shoe repair shop. The paper compares different grammatical formats (declarative and interrogative syntax as well as different configurations of verbs and associated complements) for requesting services. The authors link request formats to customers' entitlement to ask for specific services. For instance, a simple request for heels is produced using a "need + noun phrase" declarative, indexing high entitlement and no contingencies (Curl & Drew, 2008). By contrast, requesting a complicated service, such as stitches on a pair of cowboy boots, is done via an other-oriented can interrogative. This format checks the ability of the server to grant the request, thus displaying an orientation to the possibility that this request may not be fulfillable. Building on their research, Fox and Heinemann (2017) have more recently explored the granular differences in request forms, such as verb tense and complements, by examining variations in two other request formats "can you x" and "I wonder x". Their work presents solid evidence for the relevance of these fine-grained differences for understanding participants' orientation to different contingencies for securing service. Supplementing the work on requests already undertaken in ordinary interactions (Rossi, 2015; Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006; Wootton, 1981; Zinken & Ogiermann, 2011), these two papers advance our knowledge on the complex issue of formulating requests in service encounters.

Another approach to requests in commercial settings takes into consideration the constraints on ensuing responses exercised by different request formats. In a study on commercial transactions in an art gallery, Llewellyn (2015) compares two request formats – alternative interrogatives and yes/no interrogatives – used by the staff members asking visitors to buy a slightly more expensive "gift aid" admission ticket. He notices that yes/no interrogatives are more effective in getting visitors to purchase the more expensive ticket. To explain this finding, Llewellyn draws on the preference for type-conforming responses set in motion by yes/no interrogatives (Raymond, 2010). This question format sets up rigid constraints for the subsequent response, thus rendering type non-conforming responses (such

as an explicit request for the cheaper ticket) more conspicuous. Conversely, type conforming refusals (done with a ‘no’ in turn initial position) position the customer as refusing to donate. Both alternatives for selecting the cheaper ticket render the customer as an uncharitable person. By contrast, this is not the case with alternative interrogatives which provide for the equivalence of the two types of tickets.

Similarly, Vinkhuyzen and Szymanski (2005) examine the sequential and interactional implications of request formats employed by customers of a copy shop where shop assistants had been instructed to get customers to use self-service machines. Most often, clients request service either via a self-oriented declarative formulation which indexes their need for service (“I need X) or via an other-oriented interrogative which indexes the service provider’s ability to perform the solicited task (“Can you X”). Declarative requests make it possible for shop assistants to advise customers to use the self-service (do it yourself - DIY) machines. By contrast, when customers employ interrogatives, the shop assistants’ response options are dramatically restricted, due to the preference for type-conformity. A type-conforming response either commits shop assistants to performing the solicited service or delivers a blatant rejection of the service request. Additionally, a referral to DIY would come out as a disaffiliative action, due to its type nonconformity. To conclude, Llewellyn (2015) and Vinkhuyzen and Szymanski (2005) show that different request formats set in motion different sequential constraints and describe how these alternatives can effectively shape the outcomes of commercial encounters.

Vinkhuyzen and Szymanski’s (2005) paper also touches on the issue of non-granting customers’ requests. The previously mentioned sequential implications of request formats (declaratives versus interrogatives) may put additional pressure on shop assistants already dealing with the clash between obligations to grant service requests and the institutional mandate to encourage customers to use self-service machines. In these encounters, shop assistants often perform additional work to justify not fulfilling service requests, but still risk having customers leave the shop dissatisfied. To prevent this kind of incident, commercial agents may develop different methods for dealing with potentially non-grantable requests. Two such methods have been identified by Lee (2011a) in the examination of airplane tickets telephone sales. Through “implicit substitution”, commercial agents – faced with the impossibility of granting a request – offer alternatives, without explicitly acknowledging the unavailability of the requested service. Through “embedded restriction”, agents pre-empt the full specification of customers’ request by presenting available options from which they should choose. Thus, it appears that the fulfilment of service requests may constitute a

pervasive concern for commercial agents, beyond preference constraints, as an inherent feature of “doing” commercial work (Brown, 2004). As such, the alleged dispreferred status of requests is further called into question (*cf.* Kendrick & Drew, 2014).

In fact, the matter of the preference of offers over requests in institutional as well as ordinary interactions is not fully settled. Initial conjectures that requests are dispreferred social actions (Levinson, 1983; Schegloff, 2007b) have been seriously called into question by Kendrick and Drew (2014), Fox (2014), and Walker (unpublished). Furthermore, in institutional settings the provision of offers in response to pre-requests might not be possible due to insufficient specifications of the object of the request (Lee, 2009; Nolen & Maynard, 2013). Nonetheless, in examining requests for tissue donations in calls to relatives of recently deceased persons, Weathersbee and Maynard (2010) notice that callers avoid direct solicitations of such donations. Instead, they use “reason for the call” and announcements of the possibility to donate as vehicles for obtaining offers from call-takers. It is noteworthy that, much like in cold and prospecting calls, in this setting, it is the agents who initiate the contact and who are, consequently, seen as pursuing an institutional agenda (Drew & Heritage, 1992). Similarly, in calls for survey participation, another non-commercial setting (Maynard, Freese, & Schaeffer, 2010; Maynard & Hollander, 2014; Nolen & Maynard, 2013) callers’ initial turns are treated as pre-sequences announcing an upcoming request. However, in just one out of 108 cases the call-taker’s reply is an offer. Taking this, as well as the evidence for the pervasive orientation towards granting service requests into consideration (Lee, 2011a; Vinkhuyzen & Szymanski, 2005), it appears that there might be an asymmetry between requesting rights associated with the identities of client/customer and server/agent. The examination of prospecting calls, undertaken in this thesis, might be well positioned to shed further light onto this matter.

Looking beyond the boundaries of single turns, in commercial encounters, some actions may require several adjacency pair for their accomplishment. For instance, Lee (2009) documents “extended requests” for airplane tickets, an action initiated by the customer, but collaboratively developed by both customer and agent, over the course of several turns, during which the travel itinerary is specified. The sequence starts with the customer’s production of a service request, such as “I’d like to make a reservation for a flight ticket please” (p. 1252). In this form, the request cannot yet be satisfied by the agent, as the details of the solicited service (such as destination and departure date, time, and location) have not yet been agreed upon. Thus, over the ensuing sequences, the request is unpacked by the customer in collaboration with the agent who may impose availability restrictions. As an

upshot of using this format, contingencies associated with the compatibility between solicited and available services can be managed more effectively, maximising the grant-ability of the requests.

“Pitching” is another multi-turn commercial action documented by conversation analysts (Clark & Pinch, 2014; Pinch & Clark, 1986, 1987). Pitchers rely on extensive oral promotion of their products to elicit purchases. Also, instead of displaying the price of a product, they usually disclose it at the end of their pitch. In documenting the sales routines that market and fly³ pitchers deploy in front of large audiences, Pinch and Clark (1986) observe that pitches have a recurrent structure. They are mainly composed of lists, descriptions, and evaluations of products followed by a dramatically delivered price announcement. The latter marks the “sales relevance place (SRP)” (p. 171); that is, the point in the sequence when purchasing the advertised products becomes relevant. Prior to the SRP, the presentations of the products construct them as “bargains” by building up their worth and contrasting it with the asking price.

Besides requests and pitches, which are pervasive components of most sales encounters, occasionally we may also come across other actions or activities that contribute to the realisation of buying and selling. EM/CA research has, so far, documented invitations and accounts. Looking at invitations in bank worker initiated calls to current clients, De Stefani (2018) identified two different formats used by the former to invite the latter to visit them. Invitations proffered as the reason for calling were constructed using a declarative clause, while invitations which followed the reporting of an upcoming event relevant for the client (such as their birthday) used an interrogative format. The study also showed how the invitation’s format was consequential for the sequential trajectory of the conversation. Rejections tended to occur early after declarative invitations and late after interrogative ones. Conversely, the latter were accepted quickly while, for the former, acceptance tended to be delayed.

Accounting is the last set of conversational practices I discuss in this section. Accounts feature in commercial interactions not only in dispreferred actions as remedial practices (Anderson, 1994; Raevaara, 2011; Varcasia, 2013), but also in small talk (Raevaara, 2011) and negotiation (Firth, 1995a) as resources for constructing a basis for shared definitions of the actions-in-progress and for achieving alignment and agreement. Most often,

³ Mobile sellers without a fixed selling post (Pinch & Clark, 1986)

service providers employ accounts to explain not granting customers' requests, by invoking a range of circumstances which prevent their fulfilment. Examining design features of accounts accompanying declinations of service requests, Raevaara (2011) suggests that accounts can have different interactional effects. She notices that service providers can either frame the object of the request as ordinary, thus assuming responsibility for its unavailability, or as unusual, thus shifting the responsibility towards the customer. The explanatory function of accounting is also mobilised, during "small talk", by customers accounting for their purchases. Here, accounts serve as a resource for controlling the framework that servers would use to interpret customers' purchasing actions (Raevaara, 2011). Similarly, tracking accounts in commercial business-to-business interactions, Firth (1995a) shows how the selectivity of accounts constitutes a resource for building common ground among negotiating parties and for pursuing agreement in price negotiations. Thus, in commercial encounters, besides requests, accounts constitute a key resource for pre-empting and overcoming interactional difficulties which could preclude the accomplishment of a commercial transaction.

1.2.1.2 Sequence and sequential organisation

Besides singular actions performed during sales and service encounters, conversation analytic studies have also documented various sequence and sequential features of commercial interactions that had been previously neglected by other research traditions. In this section, I discuss research on openings of telephone-based commercial encounters, on the overall structural organisation of service encounters, and on participants' orientation to conversational projects and activities accomplished via multiple turns and sequences.

Telephone call openings in commercial interactions have been documented, mainly from a cross-cultural perspective, by Sun (2004), Reiter (2006), and Palloti and Varcasia (2008) who have focused on inter- and intra-cultural variations of linguistic practices employed in openings. Overall, they find that openings in telephone-based commercial interactions share, to some extent, the structure of telephone openings of both other institutional calls – such as helplines (Danby, Baker, & Emmison, 2005) and emergency calls (Wakin & Zimmerman, 1999) – and ordinary conversations (Schegloff, 1986). Examining service calls to a variety of commercial and non-commercial institutions (among others: bookstores, travel agencies, and student dorms) from four European countries, Palloti and Varcasia propose a five-step, flexible structure of call openings composed of: (1) summons-

answer, (2) identification-recognition, (3) greetings, (4) how-are-yous, and (5) getting down to business. In contrast, Reiter's study of calls to a Montevidean carer service company documents a more condensed opening format in which how-are-yous are missing and the rest of the components are deployed through interlocked turns (Schegloff, 1986). All three studies find substantial variation among and within compared cultures, time frames, and settings which they explain as cultural idiosyncrasies. From an EM/CA perspective, the appeal to exogenous socio-linguistic variables can be questioned because the studies fail to show how ethnic or national identities are made relevant in the examined interactions. By contrast, a conversation analytic approach could have attempted to explain identified differences by relating them to locally situated enactments of culture and ethnicity (Beach & Lindström, 1992). When assumptions about cross-cultural linguistic variations are bracketed, such as in Mondada and Sorjonen's (2016) study of multiple requests in French and Finnish convenience stores, they find that the material and technological layout of the stores shape request sequences, and not language-specific grammatical resources. Finally, a recurrent shortcoming of socio-linguistic studies that examine commercial interactions consists in the limited insight they provide into the organisation of the institutions from which their data originate.

By contrast, in documenting the overall structural organisation of calls to an electronics repair facility, Kevoe-Feldman (2015c) discusses her findings in relationship with the institutional setting which occasioned them and links them to participants' institutionally-relevant projects. She observes that customers who complain about the time it takes for their items to be repaired have two sequential opportunities available to do so: either in first position, while inquiring about the status of the repair, or in third position, after receiving the requested information from the service provider. Kevoe-Feldman (2015c) shows that the selection between these two sequential positions bears sequential and interactional consequences. While complaints in first position are disattended by service providers, who focus only on the information request, when complaints are produced in third position, they cannot be unaccountably ignored. The prominence that the complaints get in third position is not happenstance. It is the result of the architecture of the "status inquiry" sequence, which essentially consists of three parts: (1) status solicitation, (2) response, (3) acceptance/rejection (Kevoe-Feldman & Robinson, 2012). Kevoe-Feldman and Robinson (2012) argue that the third component is made relevant by the type of action implemented by customers' first turn. They suggest that a service provider's response to a request for a repair status update cannot complete the "status inquiry" sequence as it does not have a meaning in the absence of the

customer's stance towards it. This finding sheds light onto the collaborative achievement of service provision (discussed in the next section). Furthermore, we see that sales goals and philosophies (such as "customer orientation") are being enacted through talk; an observation which, in turn, warrants the examination of selling and buying at this level of granularity.

Finally, conversation analysts have also shown how participants in a commercial interaction sometimes display an active orientation to multi-part, ostensibly goal-oriented activities that are being carried out. In one of the few studies of prospecting calls, Mazeland (2004) describes how prospects treat callers' solicitations for evaluating the promoted products as preparatory moves for ensuing commercial transactions. In this sequential context, prospects' positive assessments carry the implication that they would be interested in engaging in a forthcoming sale, even though sellers do not make explicit such consequences. Similarly, in a study of airplane ticket sales, Lee (2011b) finds that customers often orient to the higher-level activities carried out through interlocutors' turns. As such, in answering agents' information requests, customers provide non-solicited details, which, nonetheless, contribute to the progression of the sale. Mazeland's (2004) and Lee's (2011b) papers make two important contributions. First, they demonstrate that the study of talk-based commercial interactions *can* document complex activities. They show how their realisation trades on the location of single turns or sequences within larger sequential structures as well as on common sense knowledge of the organisation of commercial interactions. Second, they show how, in commercial encounters, "agenda" and "activity orientation" are contingent accomplishments. Thus, they provide a strong basis for questioning the assumption – implicit in other approaches – that selling and buying are inherently and essentially goal-oriented activities.

To summarise, in this section, I have reviewed EM/CA research on conversational structures in selling and buying. Overall, these studies provide compelling evidence that the analysis of actual interactions between buyers and sellers does provide robust, relevant, and reliable insights into the organisation of commercial encounters. A potential shortcoming shared by some of the reviewed papers consists in their narrow focus on linguistic features of the analysed practices in detriment of their interactional relevance for selling and buying. For instance, studies that set out to document intra- and inter-cultural variations in commercial interactions discuss their findings mainly in relation to cultural patterns, thus failing to address the particularities of commercial encounters. By contrast, the studies I present in the next section are particularly geared towards providing a comprehensive understanding of commercial interactions as collaborative, embodied, and material achievements.

1.2.2 Commercial encounters as collaborative, embodied, material achievements

Selling and buying have been theorised from psychological, sociological, and economic perspectives. Within these research traditions, the situated accomplishment of buying and selling has been overlooked as a research topic. Most conceptualisations of selling and buying, especially those underlying “How To” sales manuals, take for granted the goal-orientation of selling and the needs-driven nature of buying. These representations of commercial activities rely on very early psychological reflections put forward by experimental psychologists (such as Hollingworth, 1913; Kitson, 1921; Strong, 1922, 1924, 1925) more than 90 years ago. Representations of buying take a processual form (need identification, search, evaluation, purchase, use) (Donaldson, 1998) and presume consumers behave rationally maximising the value they derive from purchases (Gobbo, 2014). Inter-individual variability of consumption is explained through the invocation of individual differences based on social categories (gender, age, class, and many more) ascribed by researchers. Similarly, selling is depicted as a unidimensional process aimed at attaining commercial transactions (see the sales cycle model, presented in section 1.1). Thus, many theoretical accounts of selling and buying rely on outdated individualistic conceptualisations of human motivation and rationality.

Starting in the 1960s, the sales literature slowly began to treat commercial interactions as research sites relevant for understanding buying and selling (Evans, 1967). However, sales research still relied on observation and self-reports for generating empirical evidence, instead of recordings of naturally occurring commercial encounters. Without appropriate methods for documenting selling and buying as they naturally occur, sales researchers mainly drew on second-order descriptions of commercial interactions, which did not lend themselves to a close scrutiny of their situated constituents. In turn, sales researchers employed concepts such as “selling behaviours” (Plank & Reid, 1994; Weitz, Sujan, & Sujan, 1986) or “selling relationships” (Evans, 1967; Weitz & Bradford, 1999) which glossed over commercial interactions. These concepts were linked to other researcher-invented constructs like “salesperson effectiveness” and “customer satisfaction”.

More recently, critical approaches to economic activity have started pointing out the shortcomings of these conceptualisations. For instance, Bolton, Sharon, and Houlihan (2005) point out the mis-representation of customers’ roles in commercial encounters. Also, Gobbo (2014) points out that studies in behavioural economics and consumer psychology rely too

heavily on presumptions of consumer rationality. Similarly, Darr (2007) challenges individualistic assumptions underlying current theoretical depictions of commercial interactions by showing how, in business-to-business sales, long-term commercial relationships rely on the weaving of mutual obligations between buyer and seller. Last, Knorr Cetina and Bruegger (2002) show that large scale economic activities (for example financial trading) rely on microstructures which operate at an interactional level, even in remote, computer-mediated encounters. Due to their reliance on interactional data, EM/CA studies are particularly well-suited to contribute to this line of work. The studies I review below provide evidence for arguing both against selling and buying as one-dimensional activities underpinned by psychological processes and individual behaviours and as the result of large scale market structures. Instead, they put forward an understanding of commercial activities as collaborative, embodied, and material accomplishments, thus extending their scope beyond its traditional boundaries.

1.2.2.1 Commercial encounters as collaborative achievements

First, EM/CA research documents how participants to the interaction collaborate in the situated performance of constituent components of selling and buying. I have already touched upon this in the previous section in the discussion of Lee's (2009) study on extended requesting, showing how customers and agents collaborate in the production of request sequences. Lee (2011a) also demonstrated that agents intervened in these requests to maximise grant-ability by restricting the range of options customers could choose from and by substituting available services for unavailable ones. Conversely, customers also play a key role in attaining service provision. In a study of calls to an electronics repair shop, Kevoe-Feldman (2015a) highlights customers' initiatives for closing the gap between service provider's and customer's understandings of service provision through formulations of expected service. Still in the same setting, Kevoe-Feldman (2012) has shown how the two-part structure of responses to status inquiries (location status and repair completion time) is collaboratively constructed by customer and service provider. Importantly, when the latter's response is incomplete, customers treat the missing element of the status report as an accountable omission and pursues its addition. Similar service provider failure has also been documented in non-commercial interactions, in calls between patients and GP receptionists (Sikveland, Stokoe, & Symonds, 2016; Stokoe, Sikveland, & Symonds, 2016). In this setting, patients had to carry the burden of pursuing services which should have been offered by

receptionists. In their study, Sikveland et al. (2016) argue that these failures are linked to patients' dissatisfaction, thus demonstrating how CA can be fruitfully used in the investigation of interactional phenomena linked to service users' satisfaction.

A key argument for the collaborative nature of selling and buying comes from considering commercial negotiations which feature pervasively in long-term commercial relationships. In personal selling, in order to arrive at a mutually ratified commercial agreement, without which the transaction cannot take place, buyer and seller have to work together to construct an acceptable version of the terms of the transaction (Firth, 1995c). Conversational research on negotiation has investigated how discursive resources feature in this activity of "social decision making" (Firth, 1995b, p. 9). For instance, Firth (1995a) documents how parties to a negotiation make their outlook available to their interlocutors through the use of accounts proffering transaction-relevant "facts". He then goes on to show that these factual accounts are a locus for intersubjective understanding as they can be probed, challenged, accepted, or corroborated by the other party, thus playing a crucial role in the progress of the negotiation towards an agreement. Similarly, Mazeland, Huisman, and Schasfoort (1995) examine the deployment and use of categories in negotiating service offers in a travel agency. They show how travel agents exploit the flexibility and vagueness of descriptions employed by customers in their service requests. In particular, they focus on the malleability of referential domains associated with membership and geographical/location categories and show how agents try to come up with acceptable offers by "scaling up" and "transferring attributes" of customers' descriptive categories. Both Firth's (1995a) and Mazeland et al.'s studies (1995) provide compelling evidence for conceiving selling and buying as inherently collaborative activities, whereby participants depend on each other for progressing towards a transaction, whose terms emerge in and through the parties' collaboration. Additionally, these studies help to disambiguate between participants' cooperation, as an intrinsic feature of commercial activities, and their pursuit of sometimes antagonistic or mutually exclusive outcomes, which is often erroneously placed at the heart of commercial encounters.

1.2.2.2 Commercial encounters as embodied achievements

Another significant contribution of EM/CA studies of commercial activities consists in the documentation of participants' bodily movements enlisted in the accomplishment of selling and buying. These studies focus on embodied actions, such as manipulating objects, moving

towards the counter, or gazing in a specific direction. They demonstrate that these actions are constituent elements of buying and selling as they can substitute, complement, regulate, or replace verbal actions. Meanwhile, prior “Why” research on sales and service encounters has, by and large, ignored, minimised, or misunderstood how embodied conduct features in commercial encounters. For instance, as recent as the year 2000, Sundaram and Webster (2000) noted that “service employees’ nonverbal behaviour remains virtually unexplored despite its importance with respect to the outcome of service encounters”. The authors argued for more research into the role of “nonverbal communication” on the basis that it constitutes, alongside “verbal communication”, a channel through which participants’ affective characteristics are being expressed. Thus, “nonverbal communication” is believed to play a key role in customers’ evaluations of commercial encounters. This argument exposes two erroneous assumptions underlying contemporary research on “nonverbal communication” in sales and service encounters. First, it falsely assumes an ontological separation between “verbal” and “nonverbal” communication (Mondada, 2016). Second, as most of cognitive psychology, it treats communication as a vehicle for self-expression and not as an interactional product and resource (Potter & te Molder, 2005). Moreover, contemporary “Why” studies that examine the role of “nonverbal communication” in commercial encounters search for causal links to desirable commercial outcomes (see, for example, Limbu, Jayachandran, Babin, & Peterson, 2016; Orth, Bouzdine-Chameeva, & Brand, 2013). By contrast, the EM/CA studies reviewed below aim to discover, document, and explain the multiple ways in which embodied conduct is mobilised in commercial encounters.

Both requesting objects and granting these requests can be achieved partly or solely through bodily movements. For instance, when buying ordinary items at convenience stores, customers can walk up to the counter and place the items-to-be bought on it or hand them to the cashiers (Haakana & Sorjonen, 2011; Mondada & Sorjonen, 2016), without uttering a verbal request for service. The cashiers can also produce an embodied response, for instance they can grab the handed-over items or they can start operating the till (Richardson & Stokoe, 2014). These responses display their recognition of the customers’ actions while also moving the commercial transaction forward. Similarly, customers’ verbal requests for objects can be met with embodied responses such as searches for those objects through gaze or body reorientation (Fox, 2014), as displays of incipient compliance with service requests.

Furthermore, the accomplishment of commercial transactions or service delivery requires the mobilisation of and interplay between verbal and embodied resources. Service providers can be involved in several service delivery activities directed at multiple customers,

by using different channels of communication to accomplish simultaneous actions (Raymond & Lerner, 2014). For instance, they can initiate a new service offer verbally while manually being engaged in completing a different service provision (Fox & Heinemann, 2016). When professionals are required to manage multiple involvements during service delivery, they mobilise gaze, and gestures (De Stefani & Horlacher, 2018) alongside vocal resources (Toerien & Kitzinger, 2007) in order to carry out several activities simultaneously. The fact that professionals' embodied conduct is paramount to service delivery is highlighted by alternatives to traditional service models such as self-service, which come across as unusual and accountable (Vinkhuyzen & Szymanski, 2005). In an ethnographic account of such a non-traditional setting, a do-it-yourself bike repair shop, Arnold (2012) described how staff provided guidance and instructions to customers who were supposed to carry out the repairs. Thus, the bike shop's participatory ideology was enacted in and through this distinctive division of labour.

On the customer's side, conversation analytic studies have documented the synchronisation of verbal and embodied conduct in service-eliciting actions. Examining convenience stores, Sorjonen and Raevaara (2014) noticed a relationship between the design of customers' service requests and their physical position with respect to the counter. Customers who were already in front of the counter used short request forms, such as noun phrases. By contrast, customers who had to walk towards the counter employed longer grammatical formats, such as clauses, which enabled them to finish their utterances just as they arrived at the counter. Verbal and manual components of requests are aligned not only temporally but also epistemically. Fox and Heinemann (2015), who examined interactions in a shoe repair shop, documented the relationship between verbal requests for repairs and accompanying manipulations of damaged objects. They showed that customers enacting an "unknowing" epistemic stance, for instance by simply indicating the item's fault or problem, also manipulated the damaged object minimally. Meanwhile, customers who displayed a strong epistemic stance produced lengthy requests, which often involved illustrations of damage or possible solutions through heavy manipulation of the faulty item.

Embodied conduct may, at times, be crucial in the accomplishment of commercial activities. For instance, documenting the "street work" (p. 562) carried out by a magazine vendor, Llewellyn and Burrow (2008) describe how he initiates sales by intercepting potential customers and approaching them on the street. Proximity, body orientation, and gaze are in this case the resources he draws on to occasion a sale, even before a verbal offer is uttered. Conversely, targeted individuals manage their engagement in the sale by withholding

gaze redirection towards the vendor, by making visual contact with the vendor, or by scrutinising the magazine. Taken as a display of interest, the latter move is followed by the vendor's provision of information about the magazine's content, thus engaging the customer in a commercial interaction and rendering a refusal to buy more accountable (Llewellyn & Burrow, 2007). Service providers occupying a fixed "serving post" (Merritt, 1978, p. 6) also rely on embodied resources in the management of their interactions with clients/customers. For instance, in "doing" waiting for customers to make a buying decision, salespeople use their posture, hands, and gaze to signal availability and reciprocity (Svinhufvud, 2018). Also, by gazing at passers-by they can identify whether these individuals are potential clients based on the anticipated walking trajectory (Mortensen & Hazel, 2014). Once identified, by establishing eye-contact service providers can ratify the other person's status as a potential client and provide grounds for initiating contact. By contrast, withholding gaze, for instance by looking away from the client, for instance at one's computer or desk, service providers discourage individuals from initiating the service encounter (Brown, 2004). Finally, synchronisation between speech, embodied conduct, and artefact manipulation also facilitates interaction by enabling intersubjective coordination between participants. For instance, Lindström, Norrby, Wide, and Nilsson (2017) showed how customers at a theatre box office avert their gaze from vendors to signal unavailability for interaction, while vendors redirect their gaze to their screen after a request to show incipient compliance.

Individuals' embodied conduct can also serve as a resource for doing "being" a customer and for displaying to vendors whether they are open to being approached or "just browsing" through the store. Clark and Pinch (2009) noticed that, in retail settings, shoppers' involvement with the displayed merchandise and their gaze exchanges prefigured a subsequent verbal interaction leading to a purchase. Thus, their study dispels the myth that a salesperson's first words are crucial for influencing buying decisions. This myth, they argue, is based on the misunderstanding that the sales encounter encompasses only the participants' verbal exchange. Instead, they suggest that embodied conduct preceding a verbal interaction, such as queueing (Brown, 2004), or bodily configurations that facilitate or impede the interaction with the merchandise (Keisanen & Rauniomaa, 2012; Llewellyn & Burrow, 2008), can be indicative of buying intentions. Furthermore, subtle differences between movement patterns within the commercial space can distinguish buyers from "browsers" (Clark & Pinch, 2009) and even one-time customers from "regulars" (Laurier, 2012).

In summary, commercial exchanges and service delivery are accomplished in and through embodied conduct. Furthermore, settings such as open-air markets, kiosks, coffee

shops, or street corners are recognisably constituted and organised as sites of commercial encounters through participants' embodied conduct. Among the embodied actions carried out as part of commercial activities, manipulating objects occupies a prominent role – this is the focus of the next section.

1.2.2.3 Commercial encounters as material achievements

Until recently, the material environment of commercial encounters had been one of the unnoticed, unquestioned, and taken-for-granted background features of selling and buying. However, anthropological and sociological ethnographies have slowly infiltrated domains such as marketing and consumer behaviour which traditionally rely on disembodied and decontextualized data. The success, both within and outside academia, of anthropologists such as Paco Underhill (1999, 2004, 2011) – the inventor of the “science of shopping” – has set in motion a new wave of studies that take into account the material environment of shopping (for example, Larson, Bradlow, & Fader, 2005; Peck & Childers, 2003; Peck & Wiggins, 2006). His seminal research has demonstrated the scientific and practical value of examining, in detail, how customers interact with their material surroundings. Underhill's methodology involves recording real-life shopping behaviour for the close scrutiny of “the retail environment [...] every rack, shelf, counter and table display of merchandise, every sign, banner, brochure [...] not simply studying the store, but what, exactly human beings do in it, where they go and don't go, and by what path they go there; what they see and fail to see, or read and decline to read (Underhill, 1999, p. 12). His work focuses on individual shopping behaviours and their psychological and socio-demographic correlates, paying attention to the interplay between objects' designs, and their practical functionalities. By contrast, EM/CA studies, which I review below, pay attention to the roles materiality plays in the social organisation of commercial encounters.

EM/CA's main contribution to the study of the material world of commercial interactions has been demonstrating that and how materiality (not only merchandise, but also furniture, and technology populating the service space) constitutes a resource for the local organisation of commercial encounters. The semiotic richness of objects renders them not only practically, but also interactionally relevant. For instance, in supermarkets, couples shopping together use objects to channel attention and establish joined focus (De Stefani, 2013, 2014). Furthermore, customers display multiple orientations to the objects sitting on supermarket shelves, due to their multi-categorical nature. Shoppers can orient to not only to

the ‘purchasability’ of items, but also to their practical usage (as commodities). Moving to a different setting, open markets, we see products playing a key part in the sales process (Darr & Pinch, 2013). Market pitchers activating in this setting sometimes hand not-yet-purchased goods to prospective customers during their sales pitches. The manipulation of the products make a purchase more likely, due to the social norm that handling an object implies having an interest in it with the intention of buying. Darr and Pinch (2013) point out that social obligation to buy and materiality are closely interwoven and, thus, exploitable by commercial agents.

The material layout of the commercial setting also figures as a resource for the structuration of interaction. Take, for instance, shopping counters in convenience stores. They serve the practical purpose of providing a surface on which customers and vendors place merchandise-in-transaction. Interestingly, Brown (2004) found that placing an object on the counter signals that the transaction is still incomplete, while handing the object over the counter is closing-implicative. Furthermore, counters symbolically demarcate the frontstage region (Goffman, 1956), a space fully accessible to customers, from the backstage, an area that is visually inspectable for customers, but only accessible to staff members (Brown, 2004; Darr & Pinch, 2013). Technology, such as computerised tills sitting on the counter, have a central role facilitating and ordering the commercial interaction, to the extent that they can momentarily figure as a third party in the interaction between customer and server (Richardson, 2014; Richardson & Stokoe, 2014). Looking at interactions between clients and bartenders in pubs, Richardson and Stokoe (2014) found that the client’s food ordering sequence was interrupted early, through repair, by the bartender prompted by the till’s requirement to take a table number before proceeding with the order. The authors note that the till’s display, visible only to the bartender, creates an asymmetry of knowledge about how the sequence has to unfold in order. Building on this, Lindström *et al.* (2017) show how mobile computer screens can be used to level prior knowledge asymmetry. Vendors at theatre box offices turn screen towards customers when they ask them to choose among sitting options in the theatre. Conversely, turning the screen away from the customer signals the ending of the seat negotiation sequence.

To sum up, this section has reviewed EM/CA research that explores the collaborative, embodied, and material dimensions of commercial encounters. These studies provide an interactional alternative to traditional conceptualisations of buying and selling as underpinned by individual psychological processes, while also challenging preconceptions such as the dichotomy between “verbal” and “nonverbal” behaviour. Continuing in this vein, the next

section presents EM/CA research that directly addresses classic topics associated with selling and buying.

1.2.3 Respecification of traditional sales topics

In this final review section, I present interactional studies that have engaged with mainstream sales topics such as “small talk”, and sales resistance. Ethnomethodology and discursive psychology have a long history of “respecifying” sociological and psychological topics demonstrating the importance of examining the fine details of situated social interaction. The importance of these studies is twofold. First, they provide clear evidence that interactional studies of commercial encounters are able to enter a dialogue with and contribute to established domains such as economic sociology and consumer psychology. Second they highlight some of the shortcomings of established approaches into selling and buying, mainly arisen from their theoretical assumptions and their reliance on non-naturalistic empirical evidence.

This section is structured in two parts, each addressing a core theme from the sales literature: sales resistance, and relationship selling, the latter including rapport, and service personalisation.

1.2.3.1 Sales resistance

Research on resistance in sales settings is surprisingly sparse given the ubiquity of customers’ objections in salesperson-initiated encounters. Furthermore, with the exception of one paper by Mazeland (2004), resistance in prospecting encounters is non-existent, probably as a result of the fact that “prospecting” and “dealing with objections” have been treated as two distinct phases in virtually all discussions of the sales cycle (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005).

In the “Why” literature, customer resistance has rarely been addressed empirically even though it is amply discussed in sales handbooks – the “How to” literature. Most texts focus on how salespeople can overcome these obstacles and not on understanding resistance as a phenomenon in its own right. By contrast, conversation analytic studies provide more detailed and precise descriptions of how resistance is actually accomplished.

Traditionally, sales resistance has been mainly discussed in terms of customers’ objections hindering the sale. Most often, sales handbooks (for example, Futrell, 2011; Manning et al., 2011) as well as academic papers (Prus, 1989; Schurr, Stone, & Beller, 1985)

classify objections based on the aspect singled out as problematic: price, product, company, existing loyalties, lack of need, scepticism, money, and time. Furthermore, objections are explained in terms of underlying “reasons” which salespeople are supposed to “uncover” in order to be able to address and overcome (Du Toit, 2011).

Another classification of sales resistance originates in two articles by Hunt and Bashaw (1999b, 1999a), who distinguish between “objections” and “counterarguments” on the basis of their differing cognitive underpinnings. Objections are rational responses to new information delivered by the salesperson. Counterarguments are responses occasioned by a clash between customers’ prior attitudes and new information. This classification is contested by Clark and Pinch (2001) who, based on the examination of real-life sales encounters, show that the distinction between objections and counterarguments fails to accrue empirical support. By contrast, sequential studies of resistance in service encounters have identified several new forms of resistance, beyond what the non-interactive literature had previously documented (Clark, Drew, & Pinch, 1994; Clark & Pinch, 2001; Mulkay, Clark, & Pinch, 1993). More specifically, resistance embodied by implicit non-acceptance is often overlooked by researchers not using interactional data as it is achieved through non-action or through minimal or less than sufficient contributions to the ongoing activity (Clark & Pinch, 2001). Besides non-acceptance, the position of the turns which implement resistance is also consequential for the ongoing sales interaction. In a study of Dutch sales calls, Mazeland (2004) points out that objections can be formulated not only in response to service offers, but also in response to assessment elicitations treated by prospective customers as preliminaries to ensuing commercial transactions.

While the “How to” literature is interested in “what lies behind” sales resistance, EM/CA studies focus on how resistance is accomplished in interaction and on its relevance for the ongoing activities participants are engaged in. In sales encounters, displaying resistance to initial offers opens up the price negotiation process and leads to better deals for customers (Clark et al., 1994).

Non-interactive studies of sales encounters focus on strategies salespeople should use for dealing with resistance. Campbell and Davis (2006) discuss rapport building in the context of managing objections within a speech act and politeness theory framework. Wagle (1985) suggests that humour might be a useful resource in handling customer objections as it can be used to reduce potential anxiety and hostility. A similar argument is made by Hunt and Bashaw (1999a) who propose the use of humour as a resource for distracting resistant customers, but do not support their suggestions with empirical arguments.

While in the marketing literature there are virtually no studies examining resistance and responses in naturally occurring sales encounters, other disciplines, such as sociology of markets and sociology of consumption, foster empirically grounded research on sales resistance. Based on ethnographic work, Bone (2006) provides examples of tactics salespeople use to anticipate, prevent and, overcome resistance. For instance, in prospecting calls, salespeople minimise the obligation to buy that prospects' might associate with a quote or a house visit. During "closings" – the last stage of the sale – prospects' concerns, delays, and objections are overcome by using price drops, discounts, gifts, promises of additional benefits, and even tactics which elicit sympathy, such as sad personal stories.

In customer-initiated calls, Clark et al. (1994) document a variety of methods salespeople use to handle customers' implicit and explicit non-acceptance. Implicit non-acceptance is usually ignored or addressed covertly through inducements targeted at the potential trouble source. By contrast, explicit non-acceptance – objections and rejections – are recognised and addressed by salespeople. Practices identified by the authors include formulating some aspect of the service as "news" and restating or bolstering the benefits of the offered services.

To sum up, interactional research provides an empirically grounded picture of how resistance unfolds interactionally. While ethnographic accounts, such as Bone's (2006) study provide a comprehensive overview of resistance, they cannot offer sufficient details of how sequential trajectories embodying sales resistance and pursuit are collaboratively constructed by prospects and salespeople.

1.2.3.2 Relationship selling

Sales and service relationships are now the norm rather than the exception in terms of business-to-consumer commercial exchanges. Nowadays, with loyalty cards and monthly subscriptions to a wide range of services that used to be casual (for example, cinema tickets, donations, food delivery), it is almost impossible to think back to the days when companies were concentrating their marketing efforts on one-off sales. Service relationships are no longer restricted to hanging out at the same café (Laurier, 2012) or getting a haircut at the same barber shop; they are a widespread method for delivering service, adopted, in various forms, by more and more businesses (Guttek, Groth, & Cherry, 2002).

Mirroring this development, marketing as a field of inquiry has gone through a paradigm shift (Grönroos, 1994). The conceptualisation of marketing has changed to include

fostering long-term commercial relationships as a key marketing objective (Buttle, 1996; Grönroos, 1990). Since its emergence in the early 1980s, relational marketing has focused on documenting the “relational turn”, whereby companies have broadened and diversified their marketing efforts from mainly pursuing new buyers to also cultivating relationships with existing customers to encourage repeated purchases (see Arli, Bauer, & Palmatier, 2017 for an extensive review of relational selling). Accordingly, the “sales cycle” model has been updated to include a post-purchasing “follow-up” stage (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005). As this chapter will show, theorising that commercial relationships begin at the end of the “sales cycle” is a mistake. Relationships are relevant from the very first second of the first encounter between a salesperson and a prospective customer (Mazeland, 2004).

Relational marketing’s research object is the host of marketing activities and processes that can be mobilised by an organisation in pursuit of long-term relationships with its customers (Bitner, 1995). Moreover, this strand of research reinforces, rationalises, and justifies the pursuit of commercial relationships by claiming that both sellers and buyers reap numerous benefits from fostering long-term commercial relationships instead of engaging in one-off commercial exchanges (Claycomb & Martin, 2001). The main focus of relational marketing research has been on describing and testing strategies for building and maintaining relationships with existing customers in business-to-consumer sales (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987). This macro-level trans-situational perspective of commercial relationships is, to a large extent, incompatible with the micro-level situated EM/CA approach taken in this chapter.

The “moment of truth” (Bitner, 1995, p. 248) – the interaction between a service provider and a customer – has been recognised as a key element of this intricate network of marketing activities geared at promoting positive customer relationships, although relational marketing activities extends beyond that. For instance, customer relationship-building strategies like personalisation, continuous communication, or trust-building, although delivered in encounters, encompass preparatory and subsequent stages (Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, 1990). Even though key features of the encounters are deemed consequential for the development of subsequent relationships, encounters are not examined as manifestations of these relationships. This approach fails to consider encounters as the loci where relationships are made visible and accountable.

Relational marketing takes an organisation-centred perspective whereby relationships are considered instrumental for achieving commercial goals. Complementary, even though on a smaller scale, research within social psychology pioneered by Gutek (1995, 1999) has

focused on customers' experience as a feature of service delivery. Gutek differentiates between service relationships, service pseudo-relationships, and service encounters as three distinct modes of service delivery. In a service relationship, the customer and the service provider interact repeatedly over a long period of time and become familiar with each other. They develop mutual expectations based on their knowledge of the other person. In service pseudo-relationships, customers are serviced by different employees within the same company. They do not develop a personal relationship with the service provider; however, they are familiar with the company and may be treated as returning customers. Finally, in service encounters, individuals engage in one-off commercial interactions, without knowing the service provider or the company. The three modes of service delivery appear to be consequential for how customers experience the interaction and for their subsequent behaviour. In service relationships, as opposed to pseudo-relationships and encounters, customers are more likely to report that they (1) receive personalised service, (2) trust the service providers, (3) would refer them to others, and (4) complain directly to the service provider when they are dissatisfied (Gutek, Cherry, Bhappu, Schneider, & Woolf, 2000). This strand of research seems to have a variety of practical applications and implications. However, like many social psychological contributions, it relies on concepts that are artificially constructed and reified in and through the research activity (Billig, 1994; Smith, 1974). In particular, the three categories which comprise the taxonomy of service delivery are constructed through questionnaires which constrain participants' responses to "Yes/No" (Gutek et al., 2000), thus eliminating any and all complexities that do not fit with the clear-cut trichotomy.

Relational marketing has fostered productive research into the strategies for building and maintaining customer relationships. However, its conceptualisation of relationships as trans-situational phenomena that influence buying behaviour has not encouraged research into how relationships feature in commercial encounters. By zooming in on how relationships are displayed in commercial interactions, we could gain a better understanding of their practical manifestations and their immediate, local consequences.

EM/CA studies describe, in detail, how relationships are achieved in and through talk-in-interaction; that is, how they are made visible, relevant, and accountable in sales encounters. This allows researchers to flesh out the seen but unnoticed – and thus not reported in questionnaires – ways in which relationships and relational identities become resources for other conversational projects, with commercial relevance.

Interaction analysts do not treat relationships and associated categorial identities as pre-existing structures that determine how people interact with each other, but as participants' practical accomplishments. For instance, Maynard and Zimmerman (1984, p. 302) "regard 'relationship' as something that is subject to ongoing, step-by-step management within talk between persons, rather than as a state of affairs that underlies their talk". In other words, we do not "have" relationships, we "do" relationships (Mandelbaum, 2003).

EM/CA research has demonstrated that and how relationships and associated identities are practically and collaboratively achieved by interactants, in and through talk (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Pomerantz & Mandelbaum, 2005). For instance, examining troubles tellings, Jefferson and Lee (1981) identify two different ways in which recipients of such tellings can respond, as trouble-recipients or as advice givers. They show that in environments where participants perform intimacy and friendship, receiving the trouble with affiliation and sympathy is appropriate, while in service encounters between strangers, giving advice is the proper response. In other words, there are appropriate ways in which participants as members of relational categories interact with each other. These methods, while employed in the service of other interactional projects, make available for interactants and analysts participants' orientation to their relational identities.

The situated negotiation of identities is also a feature of sales encounters. As Schenkein (1978, pp. 57–58) argues: "Whatever else they might or might not share, such encounters are made up of talk between strangers who know one another only as local versions of some abstract identity like 'salesman' or 'client'. For these encounters, strangers not only conduct their business under the auspices of their official identity relations, but they also negotiate into the unfolding of their encounter eminently personal identities from their separate biographies". Schenkein (1978) shows that and how, while participants in direct selling encounters start off the interaction within the "official" sales framework, they can temporarily switch to other relational identities. Specifically, he documents a four-part sequence initiated by the salesperson through an identity-rich puzzle. This prompts repair from the client thus inviting his interlocutor to elaborate. In the course of this elaboration, the salesperson slips a subtle reference to the consumption of recreational drugs which, if picked up by the client, would cast participants as co-members of the category "recreational drugs users". As the latter rejects the invitation to step into this new framework, the sequence is closed off and the "official" business of the encounter is resumed.

Interactional research on commercial relationships has focused, mainly, on two themes, which I will explore below: (1) small talk and building rapport, (2) and personalisation.

1.2.3.2.1 Small talk and building rapport

Doing small talk and building rapport represent key skills that salespeople are encouraged to develop. However, the vague guidelines and hypothetical examples found in sales manuals do not equip salespeople with proper knowledge and techniques for building rapport.

Sales training and manuals draw on early social psychological research on rapport that often ignores talk (Campbell & Davis, 2006), focusing on the realisation of rapport through nonverbal or “expressive behaviour” (Bernieri, Gillis, Davis, & Grahe, 1996, p. 114) such as smile, gaze, nodding or synchronous gestures (Grahe & Bernieri, 1999; Nancarrow & Penn, 1998). Importantly, traditional conceptualisations of rapport entertain a “dual level” understanding of this concept, as they dissociate what rapport is from how it is achieved. Rapport is frequently defined in terms of interactants’ perceptions and experiences of the interaction. For instance, in service encounters, Gremler and Gwinner (2000, p. 92) define rapport as “a customer’s perception of having an enjoyable interaction with a service provider employee, characterized by a personal connection between the two interactants”. This widely accepted definition privileges one party’s (the customer’s) perception of the interaction, ignoring the agent’s view. Moreover, in studies that use this definition (Arnold, Hall, & Baker, 2016; Gremler & Gwinner, 2000) the “connection” between participants is operationalised as the customer’s perception of the interaction, at variance, with the relational nature of the concept. Another problem arises from judging rapport as either present or absent in an interaction, instead of understanding it as a dynamic and temporally unfolding interactional accomplishment (Campbell, Davis, & Skinner, 2006; Fogarty, Augoustinos, & Kettler, 2013).

Social psychological studies of rapport examine simulated interactions, recreated artificially in experimental settings, and rely on participants’ self-reports, rather than naturally occurring data. Using these methods, researchers end up failing to capture the interactional functions of rapport in real-life commercial encounters, for instance dealing with customer objections (Campbell & Davis, 2006) or encouraging participation in telephone surveys (Garbarski, Schaeffer, & Dykema, 2016). By using self-reports, researchers collect descriptions of what people *say* counts as rapport building and not to how they “do” rapport (Fogarty et al., 2013). As it turns out there is only a partial overlap between what salespeople

say they do and what they actually do to build rapport in business-to-business sales meetings, (Kaski, Niemi, & Pullins, 2016, 2018).

There is a growing body of research on rapport in naturally occurring commercial interactions, using recordings of actual sales and service encounters as data. Conducted within pragmatic, discursive, or conversation analytic frameworks these interactional studies share an interest in how rapport is “done”; that is, how commercial agents and customers build rapport, using linguistic, embodied, and sometimes even material resources (Fogarty et al., 2013). Although all interactional studies take a descriptive approach to rapport building as a conversational activity, they differ with respect to the starting point of their inquiries, lending themselves to a categorisation in top-bottom (socio-linguistic, pragmatic) and bottom-top (conversation analytic) studies.

Top-bottom studies equate rapport with alignment, politeness, and friendliness (Placencia, 2004) carried out through phatic communication or “relational talk”⁴ (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015, p. 9). These studies identify conversational activities and resources used to build rapport such as greetings, weather talk, eliciting and sharing of personal stories, compliment exchanges, joking, puns, displays of support, attitude sharing, and ingroup identifiers (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015; Placencia, 2004; Ryoo, 2005). They mainly explain the use of these devices in terms of prior familiarity between interactants (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015; McCarthy, 2000; Placencia, 2004) or through participants’ orientations towards achieving friendliness. They also show how small talk fulfils practical tasks such as bridging two separate episodes of transactional talk (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015) or filling in silences within service encounters, for instance when commercial agents perform manual tasks (McCarthy, 2000). Moreover, they explore how small talk and greetings shift participants’ alignment and associated identities. For instance, while sharing personal anecdotes or discussing the weather, participants abandon their asymmetrical agent-customer relationship, thus building solidarity, and enacting affiliation, friendliness, and even intimacy (Ylänne-McEwen, 2004). However, as small talk has become a strategy agents use to build relationships with customers (Freed, 2010; Ylänne-McEwen, 2004) it becomes apparent that participants’ prior familiarity or their desire to be friendly do not cover the range of explanations for how rapport comes about. In fact, as many sales scripts prescribe enacting familiarity with the

⁴ For an extended discussion of the concepts “transactional talk” and “relational talk” see Coupland and Ylänne-McEwen (2000) Placencia (2004) and Félix-Brasdefer (2015).

customer, by using first names, how-are-yous, or by doing small talk, these conversational activities might be nowadays associated with an agent's institutional identity and will not be seen by the customer as a step away from the pursuit of commercial goals. Moreover, in discussing how-are-you inquiries, Coupland et al. (1992) remark that their conventionalised lends itself to dissimulated use. As such, the authenticity of an agent's friendliness might be questioned or even resisted, thus creating obstacles not only for achieving rapport, but also for the progression of the encounter. Finally, the distinction between transactional and relational talk is sometimes difficult to make on the basis of pre-established typologies of action (Coupland et al., 1992). Studies that examine multiactivity (De Stefani & Horlacher, 2018) and categorial work (Stokoe, Sikveland, & Huma, 2017) can further call this dichotomy into question by showing that and how it is not sustained empirically.

By contrast, conversation analytic studies of rapport focus on the micro-management of rapport as it is initiated, taken up, or resisted by interactants. Bottom-top studies start with an interest in conversational practices involved in the accomplishment of rapport such as assessment sequences, question-answer sequences, and accounts. Clark, Drew, and Pinch (2003) describe one set of practices involving assessments in business-to-business sales encounters. Their fine grained analysis shows how salespeople work to occasion displays of affiliation from customers. First, when the prospect proffers an assessment, they reciprocate it. This, in turn, occasions a further agreement from the prospect. Following that, the salesperson initiates a new topically linked assessment that invites a response from the prospect. Finally, the latter produces the second more substantial agreement. Thus, prospects find themselves twice in agreement with the salesperson, over the course of one sequence of talk. Even though it is situated at the micro level of analysis Clark et al.'s (2003) study does not lose sight of key issues associated with rapport such as its predictive value. They argue that engaging in extended assessment sequences creates morally laden assumptions and even obligations that prospects will continue to affiliate with salespeople and, in the end, agree with the deals they are proposing.

1.2.3.2.2 Personalisation

Like rapport, personalisation is a key aspect of both commercial and public service provision. In commercial settings, reported perceptions of personalised service mediate customer satisfaction and have been linked to customer experience and evaluation of service (Mittal & Lassar, 1996), thus presumably being consequential for company revenue. Even though service researchers agree that personalisation is important, they disagree about how it should

be understood and conceptualised. For instance, Mittal and Lassar (1996) define it as the interpersonal aspect of any service provision, based on the interaction between service provider and customer. By contrast, Zahay and Griffin (2003) restrict the understanding of personalisation to include only the provision of individualised services that customers need or have requested. Neither definition of personalisation is grounded in empirical observations of actual practice, nor does it easily translate into observable and measurable conduct.

These shortcomings are addressed by interactional research on personalisation which takes a bottom-top approach, starting with the examination of actual service encounters. A key aspect of personalisation made visible through the examination of real-life interactions is the customer's role. Kevoe-Feldman (2015b) shows how customers phoning an electronics repair service elicit personalised service through a range of practices such as response cries, sharing personal grievance, and if that fails, explicitly requests for services that fall outside the service provider's remit. She goes on to argue that this sub-category of personalised service may be crucial for customer satisfaction. To better understand the role of personalisation in commercial encounters, we need to look at instances when commercial agents orient to it.

An important contribution to the empirically grounded conceptualisation of personalisation has been the research by Toerien, Sainsbury, Drew, and Irvine (2013). Drawing on public service interactions – Work-Focused Interviews between advisors and benefits claimants – they identify two dimensions of personalisation. “Substantial” personalisation consists in offering claimants a variety of flexible job options, while “procedural” personalisation is achieved through conversational practices that encourage the claimants' input, build on it, and allow them to take the final decision. The authors conceptualise personalised service as a bi-dimensional continuum encompassing flexibility and a personal approach in service provision.

Last, let us also look at personalisation within the wider framework of relationship selling. Personalised service delivery has been linked to customer satisfaction which, in turn, can be related to customer loyalty (Torrice & Frank, 2017). While the implied relationship seems to be that personalised service leads to returning customers, the reverse should not be neglected. Returning customers, or “regulars” often receive personalised service (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015; Placencia, 2004). In repeated customer-service provider interaction, the latter may start to remember the former, recount details from past encounters, and offer personalised service based on previously expressed preferences (Laurier, 2012; Llewellyn & Burrow, 2007). Service interactions with regulars are also personalised through displays of

familiarity such as the use of terms of endearment, updates about biographical details, personal inquiries into participants' personal lives, and humours exchanges (Kong, 2003; Placencia, 2004).

To sum up, this section has reviewed research on sales resistance, relationship selling, rapport and personalisation. These studies demonstrate that EM/CA can not only expand the scale and scope of research on commercial interactions, but it can also contribute to existing bodies of work by providing detailed empirical accounts of their natural manifestations.

1.3 Selling and buying: opportunities for research

In this chapter, I provided an overview of research on selling and buying in commercial encounters. I started with a presentation of two models of personal selling generated by marketing and sales research, after which I focused on prospecting activities. The broadness of these models as well as the lack of empirical research to underpin their conceptualisations of commercial activities illustrate why a more detailed examination of commercial encounters as they naturally occur is profitable. Thus, in the remainder of the chapter, I reviewed studies that take such an approach by focusing on conversational microstructures of commercial encounters (section 1.2.1.), by showing that and how selling and buying are collaborative, embodied, and material accomplishments (section 1.2.2), and by challenging established assumptions about and theoretical accounts of popular sales concepts such as “personalisation” or “rapport” (section 1.2.3.).

The main conclusion derived from the conducted literature review is that, due to its ubiquity, diversity, and ceaseless transformations, the domain of commercial interactions constitutes a profitable site for EM/CA research. First, commercial interactions, whether conducted face-to-face or via one of multiple media (telephone, email, social media, instant messaging) are basic and recurrent components of our everyday life. Second, while some interactional structures that make up commercial encounters seem to be setting specific, there are also “portable” practices and resources which are available to individuals in multiple settings. The differentiation between commercial activities and the extent to which the labels “buying” and “selling” can be used to refer to different activities conducted in different settings is still an open question. Third, commercial encounters are an extremely dynamic domain, incessantly under transformation and heavily influenced by technological and societal changes. Since I started working on this PhD thesis, in 2014, there has been a surge in interactional research on commercial encounters, which I was glad to observe.

Consequently, instead of highlighting literature gaps, in this last section I highlight auspicious research opportunities. First, there is still a paucity of studies of commercial interactions based on naturally occurring data. Mainstream sales research still relies on second hand accounts of commercial encounters. Therefore, more research that engages with extant theories and conceptualisations of selling and buying is needed in order to start a dialogue between disciplines and to enable EM/CA to make important contributions to the sales literature. EM/CA research is uniquely qualified to capture the interactional structures of commercial activities and, thus, transcend, the long-lasting divide between sellers' and buyers' perspectives.

Second, reviewing research on prospecting (section 1.1) as the first stage of the sales process, I found scant empirical studies on this topic. EM/CA would be well suited to address this topic, particularly teleprospecting, as outgoing calls are already recorded by companies for quality assurance purposes. Moreover, there are only a few interactional studies of commercial transactions conducted over the phone (such as Clark et al., 1994; Kevoe-Feldman, 2012, 2015c, 2015a, 2015b; Kevoe-Feldman & Robinson, 2012; Lee, 2011a, 2009, 2011b; Mazeland, 2004; Rothe, 2011). By privileging talk-in-interaction as the locus and resource for social order, EM/CA should be the method of choice for examining telephone-based commercial interactions.

Third, EM/CA research is well geared to underpin communication training for sales and service delivery. While most commercial encounters unfold smoothly, there are still occasions when commercial agents face challenging tasks such as having to reject service requests (Lee, 2011a; Vinkhuyzen & Szymanski, 2005) or to overcome prospects' resistance (Clark & Pinch, 2014) and objections (Clark et al., 1994). By scrutinising situated encounters EM/CA is not only able to uncover good practices already employed by sales/service professionals but can also explain how and why these practices work. Once delineated, they can be turned into strategies (Hepburn, 2006) that improve service delivery and customer experience.

In this thesis, I have taken up the research opportunities outlined above by investigating business-to-business "cold" calls. As argued, so far, "cold" calls have been overlooked by empirical studies. Meanwhile, sales training for "cold" callers is based on anecdotal evidence and outdated communication theories (Rothe, 2011). For the systematic examination of "cold" calling, undertaken in this thesis, I have chosen to rely on conversation analysis and discursive psychology, which are introduced in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

Methodology

2.0. Introduction

This chapter details the practices employed in collecting, handling, and analysing the data which empirically grounds the analytic undertakings in this thesis. The first section describes the process of data collection. After introducing the data sources, I recount how the data were recorded and transcribed and how I went about building the collections which underpin the thesis's analytic chapters. In the second section, I present conversation analysis (CA) and discursive psychology (DP) – the methods used in the analysis of the data. Throughout the chapter, I also highlight some of the existing tensions arisen from currently available methodological alternatives and justify the choices I made at each stage in the data collection and analysis.

2.1. Data collection

This first section outlines the steps undertaken to assemble the data on which the thesis is empirically based. First, I introduce the study's data sources – audio recordings of business-to-business calls between salespeople and prospective clients. Then, I discuss the procedures for generating the data and the measures taken to abide by the ethical guidelines for doing EM/CA research.

2.1.1. Introducing the data sources

The thesis examined two datasets, featuring nine different salespeople, from three different companies:

- The 'Tech' corpus comprising 87 outgoing business-to-business calls between salespeople and prospective clients.
- The 'Eplus' corpus comprising 63 outgoing business-to-business calls between salespeople and prospective clients.

Additionally, the final analytic chapter on Resistance also uses two recordings from a third corpus of incoming calls to the home improvement company, Fine Bar Windows⁵, which specialises in conservatories and double-glazed windows and doors.

The 150 calls in the main two datasets are all initiated by salespeople contacting prospective clients (“prospects”). In business parlance, they are often referred to as “cold” calls, or “telesales”. They fall within a set of activities glossed over as outbound telemarketing, whereby service providers contact (potential) clients, as opposed to inbound telemarketing, when (potential) clients phone organisations (Hultgren & Cameron, 2010).

The Tech dataset features recordings from two different companies, Electec Print, and Ladybird, while the Eplus dataset comprises calls from just one company, called Eplus. Electec Print is a British company that manufactures, sells, leases, and services the multifunctional printers “Electec”. The sales calls advertise mainly the company’s leasing services. Prospective clients are invited to consider leasing the machines from the company for a set number of years (three or five, usually). During that time, Electec Print also would provide maintenance services for the leased printers. When the contract expires the client is free to either renew it or change to a different service provider. The second company featured in the data, Ladybird, also offers multifunctional printers. However, instead of being a manufacturer, they only distribute the Electec machines.

The third organisation, Eplus, is a British office technology company that provides multifunctional printers and telecommunication systems. Like Ladybird, Eplus sells, leases, and services printers. However, they mainly specialise in business phone systems that integrate telephone services with computer technology, offering mainly Yeltel (pseudonym) telephone systems. Like multifunctional printers, these systems are leased by clients for a pre-determined period, after which they can choose to renew the contract or switch to a different provider.

The Tech dataset features calls from Electec Print and Ladybird salespeople. 43 out of the 87 calls in the Tech dataset were made by two salespeople from Electec Print. “Britney” and “Becky” (pseudonyms) called private companies and public organisations such as primary schools. The rest of the calls in the Tech corpus come from Ladybird. All calls are made to private business by one salesperson pseudonymised as “Kathryn”. Finally, the Eplus

⁵ In order to preserve participants’ anonymity, the names of the companies used in this thesis are all pseudonyms (see also section 2.1.2.4 on Research ethics)

dataset consists of 63 calls made by six salespeople. All calls are directed at private businesses (see Table 1).

Table 1: Calls made by each salesperson to either private or public organisations

Salesperson (pseudonym)	Company	Calls to private companies	Calls to primary schools
Britney	Electec Print	-	22
Becky	Electec Print	21	-
Rachel	Ladybird	44	-
Paul	Eplus	4	-
Carla	Eplus	3	-
Tom	Eplus	5	-
Guy	Eplus	35	-
Steve	Eplus	5	-
Patrick	Eplus	11	-
Total		128	22

We often think of “cold” calls as the very first interaction between a salesperson and a prospective caller. This is only partly true for business-to-business sales, because salespeople usually contact the same company several times before successfully arranging a meeting (Cardozo, Shipp, & Roering, 1987; Edvardsson et al., 2008). Therefore, it is important to differentiate between first time “freezing” and returning “lukewarm” calls (see Table 2), even though both types of encounters are encompassed in the “prospecting” phase of the sales cycle (see Chapter 1, section 1.1). This distinction turns out to be consequential not only for the sequential organisation of the interaction, but also for the resources participants draw on to make sense of each other’s actions, as I will show in the next analytic chapter.

Table 2: Distribution of “freezing” and “lukewarm” calls made by each company

Company	“Freezing” calls	“Lukewarm” calls
Electec Print	25	18
Ladybird	13	31

Eplus	3	60
Total	41	109

Differentiating between “freezing” and “lukewarm” calls was based on participants’ orientation to the calls as either a first or a subsequent encounter. However, as sales handbooks and salespeople often admit, salespersons may falsely present themselves as a “return caller” to get past the “gatekeeper”; that is, the receptionist who picks up the phone and either could forward the call to the “relevant” person within the company or terminate the conversation. The issue of how salespeople present themselves as acquaintances of the “relevant” person and how gatekeepers collaborate or contest this relational identity displays will be taken up in Chapter 4.

2.1.1.1. The data source selection

In social sciences, the traditional path of selecting a research setting starts out with a topic – usually formulated as a social problem or a “big issue” (Sacks, 1984, p. 22) – a set of hypotheses or questions, and a research method. All these lead to a decision about what rules are employed in the circumscription of the data generation site. To this idealised depiction, one needs to add the contingencies of doing social science research, most frequently issues related to accessibility and availability of resources. CA/DP does not conform to this idealised model. It starts out with an examination of the data, not with a topic or a hypothesis (Schegloff, 1996). Sometimes, the researcher might have a couple of loosely formulated questions with which she approaches the empirical evidence already available. For CA/DP there are no “small issues”. Reversing the order allows the CA/DP researcher to look at the data without the constraints of pervasive prior concerns and to scrutinise it on its own terms. As such, it opens up the possibility of observing phenomena which could not have been anticipated and which otherwise might have been blurred by focused hypotheses and pre-established topics. Instead of employing theories to inform the analytic endeavour, CA/DP is “using observation as the basis of theorising” (Sacks, 1984, p. 25).

In CA/DP, selecting a research topic starts with gaining access to a recordable setting or to a series of already available recordings and getting interested in what is available for scrutiny, in that setting (Wiggins, 2017). The data for this PhD project became available half way through my second post-graduate year, as a result of collaboration between CARM (Conversation Analytic Role-play Method), the research-based enterprise founded by my

supervisor, Elizabeth Stokoe, and a global technology brand, pseudonymised as “Electec”. The latter provided the data as a basis for sales trainings⁶ (Stokoe, 2014; Stokoe & Sikveland, 2015) delivered by the CARM team (see even brochure in Appendix A).

Interaction analysts, like Sacks (1984) and Goffman (1983), encourage social scientists not to approach the investigated setting with an agenda or a pre-existing social problem. Indeed, for this thesis, the selection of the scrutinised setting was not informed by a pre-existing objective. Nonetheless, after the data were acquired, the analysis undertaken in this thesis, including the choice of topics to address, was informed by theoretical and practical considerations. First, the literature review (presented in the previous chapter) revealed that “cold” calls have not been systematically examined, rendering this endeavour a novel and worthwhile pursuit. Furthermore, I identified a range of topics to be addressed through the examination of “cold” calls (see Chapter 1, section 1.3). Second, sales manuals and lay accounts of “cold” calls suggest that these encounters are a key component of the sales cycle, their outcome being tremendously consequential for the progression of the sale (Futrell, 2011; Manning et al., 2011). Finally, sales calls are routinely recorded and reviewed by sales managers, suggesting that, according to practitioners’ expertise, they are a valuable source of insight about salesperson-prospect interaction (Bone, 2006; Woodcock, 2017).

2.1.2. Generating data

In CA/DP, generating data is a multi-stage, iterative process, as episodes of naturally occurring interactions are recorded, transcribed, and collated into collections. In this section I describe each of these steps.

2.1.2.1. Recording

As anybody who has called a customer service line knows, call centres habitually record their telephone calls. Similarly, in outbound call centres, calls between salespeople and prospective clients are recorded for training and quality assurance purposes (Woodcock, 2017).

⁶ Sikveland, R.O., Huma, B., & Stokoe, E. (2017). CARM training for early sales encounters. Windsor, June.
 Stokoe, E., Sikveland, R.O., & Huma, B. (2017). CARM training for early sales encounters. Dublin, May.
 Stokoe, E., Sikveland, R.O., & Huma, B. (2016). CARM and the science of “cold” calling. West Midlands, June
 Stokoe, E., Sikveland, R.O., & Huma, B. (2016). CARM and the science of “cold” calling. Loughborough, March.

The 150 calls in the two datasets were recorded between December 2015 and January 2016. Salespeople, especially in business-to-consumer sales, can make tens of call each day, of various lengths, most unsuccessful. It is important to note that the calls that ended up in the two corpora were not pre-selected by the sales manager or the CARM researchers. The two datasets encompass all the calls that the salespeople made, in a selected time span.

Recordings of actual, live interactions are an essential medium for collecting interactional data. First, recordings afford repeated examination of the captured episodes (Sacks, 1984). Additionally, compared to field notes or other modes of data representation, they encapsulate more of the fine details of social interaction as it happens. Crucially, they preserve the key features of telephone conversations: their sequentiality and temporality (Mondada, 2013). Additionally, they also make available relevant aspects of speech delivery such as pitch, volume, or intonation. Thus, it could be argued that they capture and render examinable the majority of shared resources participants have available for interacting in telephone calls. Last, they allow repeated inspection and reanalysis of the recorded conversations permitting an empirically-grounded peer review of the interpretation of any stretch of talk (Pomerantz & Fehr, 2011).

2.1.2.2. Transcribing

In an initial stage, all calls were transcribed verbatim by a professional company. This was funded by CARM as the transcripts were used by CARM researchers in the development of training programmes for the company that provided the data. Subsequently, for this study, I have refined the transcripts of all the extracts I am analysing by using the CA transcribing system developed by Gail Jefferson (2004). For this, I opted for Audacity⁷, a free program, which plays sound files. It provides several useful functions for transcribing and anonymising: (1) adjustment of playback speed, (2) measurement of selected intervals, (3) adjustment of pitch, and (4) sound scramble.

Verbatim transcripts possess two main merits. First, they enabled me to conduct a timely perusal of the data, allowing initial analytic observations to be put forward early, without having to wait for the development of full CA transcripts whose production necessitates a longer time. Second, as opposed to the latter, verbatim transcripts can be

⁷ Audacity is available here: <http://audacityteam.org/download/>

searched easily for key words, a feature which proved to be useful at the beginning of new projects.

The Jefferson system (see Appendix B) is standard practice in CA/DP studies relying on audio recordings of talk-in-interaction. Extensions of the initial set of symbols (Hepburn, 2004) and adaptations to video recordings (Goodwin, 2003; Mondada, 2013) or computer-mediated communication (Meredith, 2016; Meredith & Stokoe, 2013) are also available for studies working with these types of data. The role of CA transcripts is to render, as accurate and precise as possible, the relevant characteristics of speech production and other vocal elements for the practical purposes of the analytic endeavour:

- Temporal and sequential relationships between and within turn constructional units (TCUs) such as pauses, gaps, overlapping talk, and latching
- Features of speech delivery such as volume, pitch, tempo, intonation contour, and different aspects of voice quality (for example smiley voice)
- other vocal elements such as aspiration, laughter, and crying (Hepburn & Bolden, 2017, 2013).

Additionally, the Jefferson system has a set of conventions for integrating transcriber comments such as glosses of nonverbal actions or environmental sounds. Also, the transcriber can point out when some part of the transcription is less certain or is completely missing.

The composition and completeness of this list is the target of one line of criticism of the Jefferson system. Opponents invoke that other transcribing systems have developed tools for capturing other or more characteristics of speech delivery (Smith, Hollway, & Mishler, 2005). However, Jefferson's system is uniquely attuned to the rendition, in writing, of the relevant aspects of talk as social action in interaction and has therefore been adequately and satisfactorily employed by CA/DP researchers until now (Hepburn & Bolden, 2017).

Following on from this, a more elaborate challenge of the CA transcription can propose that the system might be incompletely equipped for the task it has been set to do. This means that there could be other aspects of speech delivery, not yet included in the toolkit, which might be relevant for analysing social interaction. To some extent, this suspicion is true. In fact, the additions and extensions to Jefferson's system mentioned above confirm this inkling.

However, it also shows that CA has the necessary methodological resources to deal with this issue. As transcribing is driven by a concern to make as much of the interactional features of language-in-use available for repeated inspection by any interested party, if relevant details have not yet been supplied, they often surface later within the course of the analysis.

A second controversy with regard to CA transcripts denounces their apparently ambiguous status as either evidence or incipient analytic product (Ayass, 2015). However, this constitutes a problem only if we operate with artificial categories such as “data” and “findings” or “data generation” and “data analysis”. In reality, in every research project, the data acquisition stage is informed by a range of theoretical and practical considerations guiding researchers’ decisions. CA transcripts, like all other forms of empirical evidence such as ethnographic notes or responses to questionnaires, are one of the representations of the investigated phenomena. In CA, transcripts are mainly researchers’ resources for building, justifying, and defending analytic claims.

Hepburn and Bolden collate and address four other critical issues raised by language scholars appraising the status and use of the Jefferson system in social interaction research: (1) its implicit theoretical assumptions, (2) its rhetorical power, (3) its limited relevance for the study of some types of communicative practices, and (4) how it obscures fundamental epistemic doubt. In reply to these critiques, Hepburn and Bolden (2017) point out the effort that CA researchers put into making their theoretical assumptions and stance explicit. Making transcripts that capture the fine details of the phenomena we are studying available for scrutiny is a key part of that endeavour.

2.1.2.3. Research ethics

The ethical integrity of the study rests on two interconnected components: obtaining ethical clearance and constantly ensuring that ethical guidelines are followed. The study was approved by Loughborough University’s Ethics Approval (Human Participants) Sub-Committee (see Appendix C). The research conducted in this thesis is informed by The British Psychological Society’s (BPS) *Code of Ethics and Conduct* (The British Psychological Society, 2018). Additionally, the study complies with the data providers’ internal ethical guidelines regarding recording outgoing sales calls for training and research purposes.

Data security was ensured by storing the original files on four separate password protected devices. Only anonymised copies of individual extracts and recordings were used for research purposes. Furthermore, in transcribing and presenting the data, I ensured that callers and call-takers are not identifiable by anonymising their personal details. In the transcripts employed in this thesis I have concealed participants’ identities through the use of pseudonyms for personal details (first and last names), and contact details (address, phone

number, and email address). When using recordings of the calls in data sessions and conferences, these details have been also anonymised in the audio file. Additionally, I have also slightly altered the pitch of the speakers' voices to ensure they are not recognisable.

2.1.2.4. Assembling collections

While transcribing the data sits in the limbo between data generation and analysis, assembling collections constitutes a firm step in the latter direction. Like transcribing, putting together collections constitutes an iterative process which, especially in its later stages, relies on analytic insights.

In choosing what to focus on in assembling the collections for each chapter, I started by looking for patterns in the ways actions and activities are organised. While many social scientific endeavours start by searching for regularities related to participants' characteristics such as gender, age, race, or personality, in CA/DP research, these categories are considered irrelevant until they are oriented to by participants' in and through their talk. Instead, CA/DP is interested in the language-based practices, which make up social action in interaction. These are conceived as "formal structures, [...] which are repetitive, uniform, typical, cohort-independent, and are oriented to as having these four properties" (Heap, 1990, p. 46) and, thus context-free (Sidnell, 2013). However, when assembling collections, it is important to take into consideration that the local instantiations of formal structures bear the mark of the contingencies participants orient to when employing them (Schegloff, 2010). As such, each instance of an examined practice is likely to contribute to the clarification of its key features. In CA/DP, non-concordances can sometimes be even more fruitful than concordances, because they highlight those aspects of the practice which were insufficiently accounted for.

Because the transcripts had been produced by an outside organisation, I first needed to become familiar with the content of the calls. For this purpose, I started listening to the recordings while simultaneously reading the transcripts. At that point, I was not "looking for" specific interactional phenomena. I was just observing the setting and its particularities. I was trying to see if there were any regularities in and similarities between the calls. After listening to the first few calls, I started noticing different actions occurring in specific locations in the conversation, for instance: (1) salespeople introducing themselves and their company, (2) giving a reason for calling, and (2) asking to be transferred to a different call-taker.

Additionally, I also became interested in other types of sequential phenomena such as the organisation of appointment-making and the management of sales resistance.

For each topic, I created a separate document in which I clipped the relevant extracts and added comments about their context. In assembling these initial collections, I operated inclusively – in accord with conversation analytic guidelines (Sidnell, 2013) – selecting all instances which seemed relevant at an initial glance. Finally, once the analysis and arguments in each chapter become clearer, I refined each collection and excluded instances that were not relevant.

Having introduced the datasets and explained the procedures through which they were generated, I next turn to the presentation of conversation analysis and discursive psychology, the methods that informed the research undertaken in this thesis

2.2. Data analysis

The analytic practices employed in this thesis are conversation analysis and discursive psychology. Both research traditions investigate social interaction accomplished through embodied talk and text. Their shared ethnomethodological origins render them not only compatible, but also mutually relevant and, at times, indistinguishable. I will address the flexible boundary between them in section 2.2.2.3, in order to clarify their distinct analytic foci and to support my choice of drawing upon both CA and DP in the examination of commercial sales encounters.

Broadly understood, the CA/DP approach to social interaction consists in examining the practices and resources individuals methodically mobilise in and for the situated management of courses of action and conjoint activities. CA/DP assumes that individuals rely preponderantly on language-based, vocal, and embodied practices. They are employed for both producing comprehensible actions and for claiming an understanding of what other people are doing. Successive actions and activities constitute the “building blocks” of social settings and institutions, which are “talked into being” (Heritage, 1984b, p. 237) in and through situated interactions. CA/DP delineates and scrutinises several sets of structures making up the “interaction order”, a domain Erving Goffman (1983) encouraged social scientists to study. From a CA/DP perspective – which is only partially compatible with Goffman’s conceptualisation of the interaction order – this is understood as the orderliness of everyday life enacted mainly through embodied talk. According to Goffman (1983) social realities are relentlessly negotiated and assembled into one continuously revised working

definition of the situation. This, in turn, confines participants' actions and their possibilities of constructing subsequent episodes within the agreed-upon frames of what-is-going-on. As such, CA/DP sets out to describe the interactional production of social activities as the result of individuals' methodical employment of language-based and embodied practices.

The main benefit of CA/DP consists in its focus on social interaction as it happens – as opposed to reports thereof – and on its intrinsic organisation and orderliness (Sacks, 1984). This offers a fruitful opportunity for social scientists to explore a whole new area of social life with unique phenomena to be studied. Other sociological and psychological research methods impose restrictions on what constitute examinable objects by locating the apparatus which generates order at different levels of abstraction from intra-psychical to supra-societal. The relocations require the insertion of operationalisation phases which attempt to bridge the hiatus between conceptualised explanations of social life and their supposedly corresponding empirical manifestations. However, they ignore the multiple layers of unscrutinised theoretical presuppositions which inform the analytic processes. Compared to other research methods, CA/DP minimises the “interpretative gap” (Edwards, 2012, p. 428) between investigated phenomena and analysts' accounts thereof. Researchers seek to generate empirical evidence in naturalistic settings and not through experiments or surveys. Furthermore, their analytic observations are restricted to what participants address as relevant and treat as consequential (Schegloff, 1997). Consequently, CA/DP constitutes an empirically grounded approach for studying social (psychological) phenomena in the sequential contexts in which they occur and as they are dealt with by individuals.

CA and DP share their core analytic principles, mainly due to their connection with ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967). However, as they originated and evolved in different disciplinary contexts, they also differ in analytic focus and research objectives. Let us look at conversation analysis first.

2.2.1. Conversation analysis

The presentation of conversation analysis is structured in four parts. First, I introduce the unique position CA takes towards social action. Second, I briefly mention the key features of institutional CA, the domain within which this thesis is located. Third, I enumerate the principal resources conversation analysts employ in their empirical investigations. Last, I discuss the relationship between CA and psychology.

2.2.1.1. Conversation analysis – the study of social action in interaction

Conversation analysis has emerged in the 1960s through the work of the sociologist Harvey Sacks, who, in turn, was influenced by Harold Garfinkel (1967) – the initiator of ethnomethodology (EM) – and Erving Goffman (1956) – the originator of dramaturgical sociology. CA mainly consists of the empirical examination of naturally occurring embodied talk. However, talk, language-in-use, conversations, or discourses are not its ultimate object of study. Instead, CA documents the “social organisation of everyday conduct” (Pomerantz & Fehr, 2011, p. 165) which happens to enlist talk as its prime resource. CA strives to understand how individuals interact in everyday settings. Its aim is to describe “the methods persons use in doing social life” (Sacks, 1984, p. 21) and the structures which underlie the orderliness of ordinary conduct and which make “intelligible social interaction” possible (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990, p. 283). Succinctly, CA is the study of social action in interaction.

CA did not initiate the sociological study of social action, but it discovered and proposed a unique perspective for its examination. It was Max Weber who first declared social action to be sociology’s object of inquiry in the 1921 book *Economy and Society*. He defined it as a person’s meaningful outer or inner conduct, which is oriented towards the past, present, or future conduct of others (Weber, 1980). This definition highlights two features of social action relevant for CA: (1) its meaningfulness and (2) its interactional context of manifestation. Subsequently, Max Weber (1980) went on to develop the first part of the definition, but left the second unexplored and under-theorised. He proposed ways in which the meaning of a social action can be established, which emphasise individual, subjective experience, thus setting up the basis of individualism/subjectivism/interpretativism as a sociological orientation.

Although it studies social action, CA does not subscribe to the individualist tradition. Instead, it favours a situated, interactionist approach, drawing on EM’s insight about the local production of social order. This is achieved by recasting the meaning of social action as the sense it has been “ascribed” (Levinson, 2013, p. 126) by individuals in interaction. This is achieved, *in situ*, by individuals, who collaboratively reconcile: (1) the sense which derives from the conversational resources used to design the action by its performer, (2) the sense which the recipients claim to have worked out, and (3) the sense confirmed by the first performer to have been a good-enough-for-all-practical-purposes interpretation of her initial action. Thus, by recovering the interactional context of social action, neglected by

individualism, CA is able to overcome the shortcomings associated with a subjectivist position which fails to account for intersubjective understanding.

2.2.1.2. Institutional conversation analysis

Institutional conversation analysis is an area of inquiry encompassing studies which look into the workings of institutions in and through various aspects of talk-in-interaction. Initial instances are exemplified by Sacks's (1992a) examination of phone calls to the police, to a suicide helpline, or interaction in a group therapy session. The distinction between basic and institutional CA is provided for analytically by differences between speech-exchange systems first discussed by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) in terms of practices for the organisation of turn-taking. While mundane conversations are subject to locally managed allocation practices, in institutional settings turn order, type, and sometimes even content, can be pre-established, allotted by a mediator, or distributed via a combination of both procedures (Atkinson, 1982; Heritage, 2004).

Institutional talk-in-interaction has been described as entailing restricted rights and obligations for specific categories of participants (ten Have, 2001), for instance in the 'permutability' of speaker change (McHoul, 1978, p. 187). This results in asymmetric relationships between locally relevant identities, such as caller/call-taker, in terms of their contribution to the interaction. These identities are defined as accompanied by differences in terms of interests and goals, which can be pursued through available resources, also subject to unbalanced distribution (Heritage, 2004).

Additionally, institutional settings may be associated with specific "inferential frameworks" (Drew & Heritage, 1992, p. 22) that configure the trajectory of courses of action and activities. In different interactional environments, similar initiating actions will get different responses. For instance, Jefferson and Lee (1981) describe how a speaker's production of a "trouble" will be followed up by either advice or an empathic trouble-receipting response. They go on to show how these divergent actions occur in different interactional environments – troubles-telling and service encounter – that rely on and reinforce participants relational identities as either friends or client – service provider. Finally, they show that interactional difficulties arise when troubles-telling initiators receive advice, thus orienting to the misalignment of relational identities.

The relevance of the institution for the production of talk can be difficult to demonstrate analytically, especially because we use similar conversational resources for both

institutional and non-institutional talk-in-interaction. Also, individuals can swiftly switch between speech-exchange systems, while inhabiting what can be glossed over as the same geographical institutional environment (Heritage, 2004). Thus, in order to legitimate claims invoking the institutional character of interactions, analysts need to establish how their particularities are the result of participants' active orientations (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Heritage, 2004). This is achieved by showing how aspects of institutional settings such as identities, goals, obligations, or privileges are relevant for the ongoing talk, while at the same time demonstrating the consequences they bear upon the interaction (Schegloff, 1991).

2.2.1.3. Doing conversation analysis

This section describes how a CA-informed examination of interactional data is conducted. CA does not employ a chronologically-strict series of steps⁸; instead, it provides a toolkit of procedures and resources for making sense of transcripts of talk-in-interaction and for reconstructing social episodes as they were lived by participants.

CA researchers can choose among two main types of analytic strategies: (1) the single case analysis and (2) the collection-based study (Schegloff, 1987). The former consists in the extensive examination of a single interactional episode, while the latter employs a set of examples of the same phenomenon for which a unitary formal account is provided. However, in the process of uncovering an intelligible pattern applicable to all cases in the collection, the researcher first inspects each case individually (Sidnell, 2013). This means that the examination of the particularities of single extracts represents the backbone of CA studies.

Initial noticings constitute the basis for building collections and sparking off the analytic process. They can take many forms and can single out a variety of linguistic, sequential, or interactional characteristics of the examined stretch of talk such as (1) prosody, (2) morpho-syntax, (3) position within a sequence, and (4) sequential location (Sidnell, 2013). These characteristics have been summarised by Schegloff (1995, 1996, 2010) as the composition and position of a unit of talk. It should be noted that these are not primarily analysts', but participants' resources. Both the construction of recognisable actions by speakers and their interpretation by recipients draw upon these two features in order to produce mutually intelligibility and enable interaction.

⁸ However, Pomerantz and Fehr (2011) provide a five-steps analytic sequence meant to guide incipient CA attempts.

Additionally, Schegloff (1996) specifies three key empirical arguments CA studies of actions can and should employ. First, by drawing upon the above-mentioned resources, we need to establish what action is accomplished by a person in a stretch of talk. Second, we need to demonstrate that other participants orient to it as having been the action we identified. Third, we need to provide an explanation linking the design and the meaning of the examined action.

Researchers doing CA also have available a series of specific analytic strategies, resources, and procedures for building analytic accounts. In the remainder of this section I will briefly mention two of them: (1) next turn proof procedure and (2) deviant case analysis.

The next turn proof procedure relies on the sequentiality of conversation. It postulates that the meaning of a turn and the actions it implements can be established based on the subsequent responsive turn, which necessarily exhibits an understanding of it (Sidnell, 2013). Nevertheless, this interpretation should not be confused with the turn's "intended", "correct", or "true" meaning. The next turn proof procedure makes evident the interactionally negotiated sense, as the result of participants' methods for producing intelligible actions in the course of contributing to the production of concerted activities (Edwards, 2004).

The deviant case analysis rests upon the normative organisation of talk-in-interaction. This means that although an initiating action makes relevant a set of specific responses, this relationship is not mechanic or pre-established. Even when a case does not fit the previously observed regularity, speakers can, nonetheless, orient to this "relevant absence" (Schegloff, 2007b, p. 20) in various ways. This orientation constitutes additional evidence in support of the observed regularity (Schegloff, 1996; Sidnell, 2013).

2.2.1.4. Conversation analysis and psychology

Conversation analysis has been fruitfully applied to the study of psychological phenomena. The multiple facets of the relationship between psychology and CA, as both a domain of inquiry and a research method, have been clearly outlined by Potter and Edwards (2013). In what follows, I will reproduce two of their observations which are relevant for the current study, as it employs both CA and DP to examine a range of social psychological phenomena such as persuasion, resistance, and social relationships. I purposefully leave out the discussion around the relationship between CA and cognitive psychology (CP), as I address this issue when I outline the differences between CA and DP, in the last part of this chapter.

First, as a methodology, CA opens up for examination the vast domain of everyday social life as it happens. This means that it provides researchers with the necessary framework and tools for examining and understanding psychological phenomena in their natural context of manifestation, as they are endogenously produced and organised by individuals in and as part of their daily lives. Consequently, as a data analytic method, CA can be employed in the examination of psychological phenomena as sequential and interactional achievements. Topics such as knowledge, understanding, attitudes, or categorisation have been fruitfully explored and reconceptualised by conversation analysts (Heritage, 2002a, 2007; Mondada, 2011; Pomerantz, 1984a; Sacks, 1989a; Stokoe, 2012b). These studies start out by documenting the naturally occurring manifestations of psychological phenomena and end up showing how they crop up in everyday life, what roles they play, and how they are managed by individuals in the course of situated interactions.

Second, as CA and (social) psychology both study the mechanisms which underlie and enable ordered social interaction, in some ways, “CA may be considered to be *already* Psychology” (Potter & Edwards, 2013, p. 702 emphasis in original). The analytic space where they meet is occupied by DP, which examines psychological phenomena as they are enacted in and through talk-in-interaction.

In conclusion, despite their distinct origins and separate development, CA and psychology are not only compatible, but also share common analytic projects within which they fruitfully collaborate to unearth new facets of social life. Next, I will turn to the presentation of DP.

2.2.2. Discursive psychology

The origins of discursive psychology can be traced back to the independent contributions of Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell (1987), Derek Edwards and Neil Mercer (1987), and Michael Billig (1987). Although working primarily as psychologists, their work was influenced by the sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK), EM, CA, ordinary language philosophy, ethnography of communication, social constructionism, and rhetoric. Nonetheless, at the time it emerged, in the late 1980s, DP was substantially an original and unique programme which proposed reworking the object of psychology and its methods of study.

This section is structured in three parts. I start out with an overview of DP, pointing out its diversity, as well as its key characteristics. Then, I briefly discuss different types of

contributions which emerge out of doing DP. Last, I compare and contrast DP and CA, while highlighting some of the existing tensions that stem from their respective orientations towards cognitivism.

2.2.2.1. Discursive psychology – the study of discursively accomplished psychological phenomena

Discursive psychology is the employment of methods for analysing discourse and interaction, such as conversation analysis, discourse analysis (DA), and rhetorical analysis in the exploration of psychological topics. Like DA, but to a lesser extent, DP encompasses several heterogeneous, but compatible approaches, which quite often cross paths, but which are mostly carried out in parallel (Potter, 2013; Tileagă & Stokoe, 2015). Three main orientations can be distinguished:

- A body of research which studies the interpretative repertoires employed in the construction of versions of reality and events related to social psychological topics (for instance stereotypes or gender). It is mainly carried out through the critical discourse analysis of qualitative interview accounts (see Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003; Wetherell & Edley, 1999);
- A body of research which reveals and explores the rhetorical and dilemmatic nature of discourse employed in the situated performance of social psychological phenomena (like (non)racism or attitudes). It is mainly carried out through discursive and rhetorical analyses of various verbal and textual materials (Billig, 1987, 1989, 2001; Billig et al., 1988; Gibson, 2013);
- A body of research which documents the discursive practices and resources employed in the accomplishment of social psychological phenomena (such as categorisation, attitudes, or emotion) in and as part of individuals' everyday life. It is mainly carried out through sequential and interactional analyses (using CA methods) of naturally occurring talk or text-based interactions (Antaki & Wetherell, 1999; Edwards, 1999; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Hepburn & Potter, 2012; Stokoe, 2012b; Wiggins, 2013). In this thesis, all mentions of DP, unless otherwise specified, refer to this third approach.

DP relies on several insights about the working of discourse, understood as talk and text produced in and for interaction, “as parts of social practices” (Potter & Hepburn, 2008, p. 276). In what follows, I will discuss four of the most prominent characteristics of DP derived from its understanding of discourse and explore their implications for the conceptualisation of

psychological phenomena: (1) the focus on social action, (2) the situated production of discourse, (3) discourse as a construction and accomplishment, and (4) the constructing function of discourse (Kent & Potter, 2014; Potter, 2013; Potter, Wetherell, Gill, & Edwards, 1990).

First, the main feature of DP is its pervasive orientation to and focus on language-in-use. Talk ceases to be regarded as a more or less clear “window on the mind” (Edwards & Potter, 1993, p. 23). Instead, it is considered the prime resource people use to display emotions and knowledge or lack thereof, position themselves with regard to objects and events, attribute responsibility, deny accusations, claim understanding, complain, persuade, argue, or start, maintain, and end relationships. As such, psychological processes and functions are relocated from individual minds to interactionally managed, collaborative talk. For instance:

- Attitude displays function as ways of justifying actions (Wiggins & Potter, 2003),
- Self and other categorisations are used to construct self-serving versions of past events (Edwards, 1991; Stokoe, 2009)
- What and how much individuals do or do not remember constitute resources in the management of their accountability (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Locke & Edwards, 2003).

Second, when interpreting discourse, DP takes into consideration the circumstances in which talk and text are produced. Potter (2003) identifies three such contexts: sequential, institutional, and rhetorical. First, discourse is situated sequentially, attending to what precedes it and framing what is following. To exemplify, Hepburn and Potter (2011c) and Kent (2012) have shown that and how threats are employed in situations where other compliance-seeking actions have failed. Also, these studies have documented how threats set up a restricted number of responses as subsequent actions. Second, discourse is situated institutionally, as it is shaped by the speech-exchange system which operates in particular settings. For instance, Hepburn and Potter (2011c) examine threats in domestic settings in and as parts of family relationships. As such, their observations about the organisation of threats are, to a large extent, shaped by the context in which they occur. They implicate the employment of discursive resources and practices available to participants in those specific circumstances, for instance, as parents and children, members of a family, or inhabitants of the same household. Last, discourse is situated rhetorically, as it is produced to propose a certain version of events while undermining others. Again, drawing on the examination of

threats, they are used to condemn certain behaviours and promote others (Hepburn & Potter, 2011c; Kent, 2012).

Third, DP recognises that discourse is constructed, mainly out of a variety of linguistic, sequential, and cultural resources such as words, turns, sequences, idioms, or categories to name only a few. Consequently, the composition of interactionally produced psychological phenomena can be tracked and documented through the examination of the resources individuals use in their accomplishment. This opens up an immensely fruitful analytic enterprise with surprising results. For instance, based on the investigation of incoming calls to community mediation services, Stokoe (2013a) has pointed out how minimal differences in the descriptions of these services can systematically transform callers into clients or, conversely, turn them away from mediation.

Last, DP emphasises the constructive nature of discourse which is the primal resource through which versions of reality are proposed, supported, undermined, and modified. To exemplify, analysing community mediation calls, Stokoe (2013a, 2014) shows that and how the description of community mediation can focus either on its ideology or on its processes; on what it “cannot” or on what it “can” do. All these options have immediate consequences as callers can reject or welcome mediation as the result of how it is depicted.

2.2.2.2. Doing discursive psychology

As a method of analysis, DP, as it is employed in this thesis, mainly draws on CA resources and practices, as well as on the plethora of previous DP studies and their empirical insights. Consequently, I will not reiterate the procedures already presented in section 2.2.1.3. They also overlap, to a large extent, with accounts that describe and exemplify the steps of a DP inquiry (Antaki, Billig, Edwards, & Potter, 2003; Kent & Potter, 2014; Potter, 2004; Wiggins, 2017; Wiggins & Potter, 2007). In what follows, I will briefly discuss, drawing on Edwards and Potter (2005) and Edwards (2005), the types of contributions and resulting categories of empirical studies that DP can produce.

First, DP aims to respecify well-known psychological topics and, at the same time, criticise existing psychological orientations within which these topics have been studied. The respecification derives from the re-conceptualisation of psychological phenomena as discursive practices. Implicitly, this leads to an incompatibility with and ultimately a critique of other psychological research traditions, mainly cognitive psychology. For instance, while cognitive psychology has conceptualised cognitive scripts as representations of events,

Edwards (1994, 1995) has argued for the study of script formulations. He has shown how script formulations depict events as repeated, routine, and normal, thus being employed by participants in accounts for their actions.

Second, DP studies document the vernacular use of psychological thesaurus. This opens up a rich and yet to-be-documented array of discursive practices which individuals use in everyday life. For example, Edwards (1999) looked at how words, expressions, and metaphors associated with emotions are employed to construct actions as spontaneous or deliberate, stable or momentary, provoked or self-controlled.

Last, discursive psychologists also examine the discursive accomplishment and management of psychological themes and their implications, in the absence of psychological terms. Within this strand of research, Wiggins and Potter (2003) have shown that speakers select among subjective versus objective and item versus category evaluations of objects to justify past, present, and future actions. Furthermore, Billig (1989) has noticed that the formulation of strong political views can be used to counter already expressed opposing views.

2.2.2.3. Comparing and contrasting CA and DP

In this last section, I juxtapose CA and DP and discuss their kinship as well as their distinctiveness. Before commencing this undertaking, I will first remark that, like any other domain of inquiry, both CA and DP are heterogeneous, continuously changing fields, constituted through studies which (1) have been influenced by different disciplinary orientations, (2) set diverse analytic foci and research objectives, (3) address many different audiences, and (4) appear in diverse institutional contexts. While recognising this heterogeneity, the following comparison aims to comment on the most prominent characteristics, shared by the majority of CA and DP studies.

Chronologically, CA's influence on the development of DP has been acknowledged as early as 1987, as Potter and Wetherell drew on it in the respecification of accounts and categorisation as psychological topics. However, at this early stage, CA was treated as one possible analytic resource among others, as DP was focused on the exploration of the composition and functions of interpretative repertoires through the examination of verbal and written discourses. As DP slowly moved towards the study of naturally occurring interactions, CA started taking up a more prominent position. DP relied more and more on CA findings and methodology for examining empirical evidence. At present, to a certain

extent DP constitutes the employment of CA to the examination of psychological topics (Potter & Edwards, 2013).

CA and DP share several common features, many arising from their common ethnomethodological origins (Wooffitt, 2005). First, if they are regarded as types of discourse analyses, they are situated at “the smallest-scale level” (Parker, 2013, p. 224), as they take on the fine-grained investigation of the moment-by-moment production of social life⁹. Second, they start out with the systematic examination of talk-in-interaction, which is considered the prime arena of participants-managed, situated social order. Third, they are inductive approaches, as they rely, in the first analytic stages, on the exploration of available empirical evidence, guided by loosely-formulated research questions. Last, both conversation analysts and discursive psychologists adopt a participant’s perspective, as they analyse social actions from the interactant’s point of view (Potter & te Molder, 2005).

Besides their similarities, CA and DP’s relationship also depends on their mutual relevance. For DP, the endogenous organisation of social interaction constitutes a prerequisite for studying psychological topics as discursive practices. In turn, in mapping out the “orders of organisation” (Schegloff, 2007b, p. xiv) which regulate talk-in-interaction, CA relies on discursively performed psychological objects and processes such as identities, categories, intersubjectivity, and accountability as inherent, indispensable, and perpetual features of social interaction. Consequently, the two strands of research inform each other’s analytic enterprises, as conversation analysts and discursive psychologists can recruit CA and DP findings to serve as building blocks in their empirical investigations.

Nevertheless, CA and DP also possess distinctive features which derive from the particular disciplinary and institutional contexts in which they emerged. CA has been developed in close relationship with EM. Also, it evolved in dialogue with sociology, as the closest field of study with which it shares its research object – social action – albeit with distinctive ontologies. Also, at a later stage, it started recruiting concepts and findings from linguistics and pragmatics. In turn, DP was developed in a multidisciplinary context, with psychology as its prime disciplinary environment. Retrospectively, it can be observed that, CA and DP never occupied the same positions within their home disciplines. From the beginning, DP takes a critical stance towards cognitivism, the main theoretical tradition in

⁹ However, some strands of research within DP, which have a critical agenda, are more macro-oriented (Stubbe et al., 2003; Wooffitt, 2005)

contemporary psychology. Equivalently, EM, and not CA, has positioned itself critically towards structural-functional sociology (Potter & te Molder, 2005). Meanwhile, CA, although not compatible with any theoretical orientations within sociology, has not assumed an outward critical stance, nor has it been regarded as a primarily critical enterprise. Venturing an explanation, this could be attributed to the development of a specialised set of concepts as part of its research methodology. Moreover, this vocabulary situates the analytic resources employed in CA empirical research in the realm of discourse and language, an area only moderately populated by sociologists at the time when CA emerged. In conclusion, while DP counts among its research objectives the respecification of psychological themes previously conceptualised from a cognitive standpoint, CA is less critically engaged with other sociological paradigms.

On a somewhat related note, another area of divergence between CA and DP is located in their position towards cognitivism as an ontological option for doing, understanding, and analysing social interaction. This continues to be a controversial topic in need of clarifications and directions for the future (Deppermann, 2012; Lynch, 2015; Potter & Edwards, 2013), despite being amply discussed (see Potter & te Molder, 2005) and addressed in a 2006 special issue of *Discourse Studies*¹⁰.

As arguments have been advanced from quite diverse disciplinary frameworks, working out common denominators for these debates would constitute the object of a standalone paper. In what follows, I will track the different arguments and map out the array of positions exhibited by CA and DP with regard to cognitivism. In the end, I hope to outline some productive questions to fuel the quest for an integrated, intelligible synthesis.

1. CA, inspired by EM, starts out as a non-cognitivist enterprise. Sacks (1992a) and Garfinkel (2006) encourage social scientists to disregard the issue of mental, biological, and chemical processes which might be located in the brain and which putatively underlie social interaction. Consequently, most CA studies adopt a non-cognitivist stance (Potter & Edwards, 2013).
2. By contrast, DP starts out as an anti-cognitivist programme (Edwards, 1997; Potter & Edwards, 2013). It recruits relevant CA studies which demonstrate the situated organisation of talk as a resource in this endeavour. For instance, Pomerantz's (1984a)

¹⁰ The issue is entitled *Discourse, interaction and cognition* and was edited by Teun A. van Dijk. The table of content is available here: <http://dis.sagepub.com/content/8/1.toc>.

findings about the organisation of assessments are employed in the critique of attitude theory (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

2.1. DP sets out to respecify psychological topics, including cognition, as discursive practices (Edwards & Potter, 1992). This includes a variety of manifestations and effects of different cognitive phenomena. The unity derives not from their ontology, as mental objects, but from their pragmatic orientation and from accountability (Potter & Edwards, 2003).

2.1.1. A particular DP strand, available through the contributions of Billig (1987, 2009), puts forward the proposition that psychological processes are organised through discursive practices.

2.2. Some accounts of CA and DP restrictively assign research objectives. DP is said to document ways of talking about psychological topics (including the use of psychological predicates) as well as claims and disclaims of mental processes. Meanwhile, CA is said to study displays and embodiments of cognitive processes (Deppermann, 2012; Kitzinger, 2006).

3. Some CA studies maintain cognitivist ontologies, as they assume the necessary existence of mental processes as a prerequisite of talk-in-interaction (Potter & Edwards, 2013).
4. Following on, some conversation analysts (Deppermann, 2012; Kitzinger, 2006) argue for opening up a space for collaboration between CA and CP. The place of cognitions in social interaction would be:

4.1. According to Drew (2005) cognitive states can not only function as interactional resources, but they are also sometimes visible in interaction, in a latent form, without being oriented to by participants. Additionally, he goes on to document “cognitive moments” (Drew, 2005, p. 170) where states such as “realization” or “confusion” are visible and “*observably relevant*” (Drew, 2005, p. 170, italics in original) in talk, without being explicitly oriented to by interactants.

4.2. A second, broader argument for the relevance of cognition for interaction is put forward by Deppermann (2012) and Kitzinger (2006). They suggest that cognitive processes such as perception, memory, or understanding are necessarily underlying social interaction by providing its supporting infrastructure.

Based on the so far irreconcilable diversity of positions, arguments, and recommendations, it might be productive to first answer the following questions, before taking the relevance of cognition for interaction into consideration:

1. Segregation: what is the basis for assigning the study of displayed mental states to CA and restricting DP to the examination of claims of and talk around them, since, according to Edwards and Potter (2005, p. 242) “DP examines discourse for how psychological themes are handled and managed, without necessarily being overtly labelled”?
2. Epistemology: what empirical evidence can be drawn on to support the claim that the organisation of social interaction necessarily relies on the existence of mental states as they are conceptualised at the moment in CP? Besides discourse – which was already established to not function as a transparent window onto the working of cognition – is there other type of evidence which would empirically support this direction of inquiry?
3. Ontology: what place can “hidden” mental processes occupy in the “locally produced, naturally accountable phenomena of order” (Garfinkel, 1988, p. 103)? Specifically, what does it mean for cognitive states to be “*observably relevant* to the participants” (Drew, 2005, p. 170, italics in original), without them being explicitly oriented to in any way?

2.3. Summary

This chapter has explained the process of ethical data collection and analysis underpinning the research presented in this thesis, while also reflecting on the methodological choices made at each stage. The thesis employs two datasets, comprising a total of 150 calls made by nine salespeople from three British companies: Electec Print, Ladybird, and Eplus. The calls, which were initially recorded by the companies for training and quality assurance purposes, feature salespeople contacting prospective clients with the aim of either initiating or resuming an incipient sale. In examining the calls, I use conversation analysis and discursive psychology, two compatible methods for studying talk-in-interaction.

The analysis of the organisation of initial business-to-business sales calls starts in the next chapter, which provides an overview of the “racetrack” (Stokoe, 2014, p. 258) of a “cold” call: the main sections of this encounter, their component activities, and the associated identities.

Chapter 3

The overall structural organisation of business-to-business “cold” calls

3.0 Introduction

“Cold” calling is one of the early stages in a longer sales process distributed over several encounters between salespeople and prospects. A salesperson often calls tens of prospective customers on a regular day. So far, there are only a few accounts of sales calls that paint a vivid but still incomplete picture of “cold” calling (Bone, 2006; Rothe, 2011; Woodcock, 2017). Even though “cold” calls are notorious for their scriptedness, as conversation analysts we know that talk is shaped in and for each single interaction (Stokoe, frth.) and recipient designed down to the finest phonetic details such as the pronunciation of words (Wilkinson, 2011). Therefore, it is a worthwhile endeavour to open the “black box” of real-life “cold” calls in order to discover how they are accomplished *in vivo*.

This chapter provides an overview of the organisation of business-to-business “cold” calls. It identifies the constituent activities that make up this type of encounter and highlights how they are contingently and collaboratively achieved by salesperson and prospect. It draws attention to the identity work that is involved in the accomplishment of these activities (Zimmerman, 1998), showing that and how identity alignment plays a central role in the successful completion of “cold” call activities. Also, having this overview of “cold” calls will place the practices presented in the ensuing analytic chapters in the wider context of the encounter.

The chapter contributes to a small but growing body of conversation analytic research on the overall structural organisation of larger conversational units (for example: Carranza, 2017; Dori-Hacohen, 2014; Kevoe-Feldman, 2015c; Robinson, 2003; Zimmerman, 1992). So far, research examining this order of organisation tended to focus on discrete sections of an interaction such as openings (for instance, Pillet-Shore, 2010; Schegloff, 1986; ten Have, 2002), closings (Raymond & Zimmerman, 2016; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; Sikveland & Stokoe, 2017b), or the “reason for calling” (Bolden, 2008; Couper-Kuhlen, 2001a, 2001b; Maynard et al., 2010). Research into the organisation of larger conversational units, such as activities, projects, and encounters, is comparatively scarce (Robinson, 2013). The current

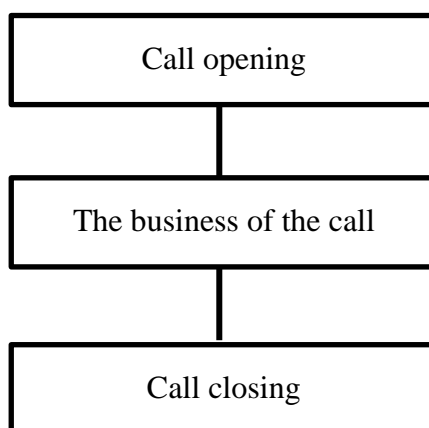
chapter aims to address this gap by tracking and describing the activities and projects that make up “cold” call encounters.

The inductive approach to the identification of communicative activities and structures, informed by conversation analysis, situates this study in contention with prior research on the structure of service/sales encounters and their constituent activities. Specifically, unlike Félix-Brasdefer’s (2015) pragmatic-discursive perspective, the analysis of “cold” calls undertaken in this chapter is not informed by pre-defined categories of activities. Additionally, in contrast to Ventola’s (1983, 1987, 2005) systemic-functional approach to service encounters as a genre, I focus not only on the sequential unfolding of the encounter, but also on the sequences that embody each activity. This allows me to track when and how activities are initiated completed, halted, resumed, or abandoned. Furthermore, by focusing on the different practices through which participants accomplish the same action (Drew, 2003) (for instance: self-identification or accounting for the call) I identify and document a key distinction between “freezing” and “lukewarm” calls. In the former, participants orient to the call as a first-time interaction and treat each other as virtual strangers. In the latter, one or both conversationalists claim to have been in contact before. This distinction is supported empirically through participants’ orientation to the call as either a first encounter or a returning call. Furthermore, I will show that this distinction is consequential for how activities are performed and organised, as well as for the practices through which actions such as switchboard requests and accounts for calling are accomplished.

3.1 Analysis

The ensuing analysis documents the contingently conditioned orders of the activities that comprise “cold” call encounters. The analysis is organised in three sections, corresponding to the sections of a conversation (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973): opening, topical talk – here the business of the call (Pallotti & Varcasia, 2008) – and closing (see Figure 2). Throughout the analysis, I highlight that and how participants orient to the encounter being a “freezing” or a “lukewarm” call.

Figure 2: The three sections of a “cold” call



3.1.1 Opening the call

At the beginning of a “cold” call, caller and call-taker are not equally equipped to deal with the ensuing conversation. While “cold” callers may prepare extensively before contacting a business, for instance by acquiring information about the company (Bone, 2006), call-takers have little or no prior knowledge of the caller and, thus, may be less prepared to deal with the call. It is up to the caller to inform the call-taker who they are and why they have called. A crucial first step in the opening of the call is for speakers to introduce themselves with the activity-relevant identity and to establish a mutually-agreed footing for the call (Whalen & Zimmerman, 1987).

Let us start by looking at the first two turns in a “cold” call. In Extract 3-1, the caller (C) has reached Saint Peter’s School as the call-taker (CT) announces in her first turn (line 1).

Extract 3-1 Tech 2

1 CT: Hello Saint Peter’s School, can I help ↑you?
 2 (0.8)
 3 C: ↑Oh hello. Good afternoon to you,=#it’s ↓Britney from
 4 Electec calling.=Is that Re:dpost’s Sain’ Peter,
 5 (0.3)
 6 C: That’s right,
 7 (0.2)
 8 T: Hello there.

The call-taker opens the conversation with a “specialised” turn (Wakin & Zimmerman, 1999) that informs the caller she has reached Saint Peter’s school. She invites her interlocutor to provide the reason for calling through a generic offer of help “can I help ↑you?” (line 1) that

casts the caller as a patron of the school (Sacks, 1992b; Schegloff, 1979). The caller receipts his interlocutor's turn with an extended greeting and a self-identification consisting of her first name and the company she works for. Even though caller and call-taker are interacting for the first time, the former introduces both pieces of identity-related information as recognitionals (Stivers, Enfield, & Levinson, 2007); that is, she presents herself as if she was already acquainted with the call-taker. This breach in recipient design is a hallmark of "cold" calls, which I have identified in both "freezing" and "lukewarm" calls (see also Chapter 4 for a contrastive analysis of "freezing" and "lukewarm" call openings). Many sales handbooks advise "cold" callers to emulate acquaintanceship in their self-presentations, in order to "break the ice" or to start building rapport with the interlocutor (for example, Boyan, 1989; Du Toit, 2011). However, none of these effects are achieved in practice. The recognitional self-identification is not reciprocated by call-takers; therefore, there is no evidence of rapport (Clark et al., 2003). Also, by using her first name, the caller intimates that their personal identity is going to be relevant for the ensuing interaction (Hopper & Drummond, 1992), an implication that is not upheld by the rest of the call.

The sequence in lines 1-4 enables the callers to establish that they have reached the organisation they are looking for – the first step necessary in aligning participants' identities in preparation for the ensuing conversation. Even though the caller has introduced herself and her company, the self-presentation is not complete. From the call-taker's perspective, the caller has not yet provided an "actionable" identity that would inform her what the call is about and what she should do next. This is why, so far, I have refrained from using the category labels "salesperson" for the caller and "receptionist" or "prospect" for the call-taker. These identities come into play only later in the call opening. From the caller's perspective, while she was able to ascertain that she has reached the sought organisation, she still needs to talk to a specific person within the company.

3.1.1.1 Speaking to the "relevant" person

The next step in the call opening furthers the alignment of participants' situated identities (Zimmerman, 1998), in this case "salesperson" and "receptionist or "prospect". Business calls are answered by receptionists. Therefore, salespeople must ask to be transferred to the "relevant" persons; that is, the employees who deals with the management of printers or telecommunication systems within those organisations. This section provides an overview of the methods salespeople use to single out and refer to the sought persons in switchboard

requests (Maynard & Hollander, 2014) in both “freezing” and “lukewarm” calls. The extracts showcase not only the various designs of switchboard requests, but also the potential problems that these designs engender.

In “freezing” calls, the problem of identifying the “relevant” person becomes, locally, the problem of formulating, for the current receptionist, who the salesperson is seeking to speak to. Not using a prospect’s name results in what I am henceforth calling an “open” switchboard request (as opposed to a “closed” switchboard request where the speaker identifies the person by name). The next two extracts exemplify different methods for designing “open” switchboard requests.

The first method, illustrated by Extract 3-2, consists in describing the job remit of the employee the salesperson is seeking to speak to.

Extract 3-2 Tech 60

1 S: It’s ↑Katr^hyn calling from Ladybird. .h I was wondering
 2 if you could help me. I am looking to speak to the
 3 person who would deal with the print management for the
 4 office.
 5 (1.3)
 6 R: U:h:m, y:ea:h, That would probably: oh we have a few
 7 ↓different people.=It depe:nds u:hm .h What kind of
 8 ↑printing?

In line 1, the salesperson introduces herself and she launches the switchboard request prefaced with a low-entitled pre-pre (Schegloff, 1980) “I was wondering if you could help me” (line 2). The switchboard request identifies the person she is looking for by means of her job remit. To construct this reference the speaker uses the modal formulation “the person **who would deal with** the print management for the office” (lines 2-4) which indexes habitual and repeated activity (Edwards, 2006; Smith, 1978).

Extract 3-2 sheds light on a key aspect of “open” switchboard requests. They make relevant a two-part response. First, the call-taker identifies who the caller is looking for and only then can she go on to grant/reject the request. In line 6, the receptionist receipts the request, and then starts the identification-response. She abandons that mid-TCU and introduces an unexpected difficulty (Heritage, 2018) “**oh** we have a few ↓different people” (lines 6-7). She initiates repair by asking for more details (lines 7-8) which slows down the progress of the conversation.

In Extract 3-2 the switchboard request sequence is located immediately after the caller's self-identification. Thus, the call opening does not reveal much about the purpose or topic of the call. By contrast, in the next case the switchboard requests is constructed in conjunction with the speaker's account for calling. This format aids the call-taker in identifying the company employee whom the salesperson is looking for.

Extract 3-3 Tech 38

1 S: It's ↑Britney from: Electec direct Electec Print
 2 actually the manufacturers, .hh The reason I'm
 3 ↑ca:lling actually we're working with Hamil County
 4 Council,=We've been appointed your preferred supplier
 5 .h in relation to your copier contracts.
 6 .Hhh [()] ↑is=
 7 R: [Oh. I'm]
 8 S: =it j's- is poss[ibl]e to speak with the (0.2)=
 9 R: [()]
 10 S: =relevant person;
 11 R: I'm the admin officer,=I deal with
 12 [the con]tracts and th[ings.=At the] mou:ment=
 13 S: [All right.] [Hello there]
 14 R: =I'm just right in the middle of doing £cash£.

In line 1, the salesperson introduces herself and her company. The reference to the latter is repaired from “Electec direct” to “Electec Print” (line 1) and further specified through the categorisation “the manufacturers” (line 2). She continues with a disclosure of the purpose of the call. However, after the preface “The reason I'm ↑ca:lling” she switches, with the aid of the mid-TCU pivot “actually” (Clift, 2001), to a different course of action. She ends up reporting her company's collaboration with the local council as a basis for their status as “preferred supplier .h in relation to your copier contracts” (line 4). Next, she produces an “open” switchboard request “↑is it j's- is possible to speak with the (0.2) relevant person;” (lines 6, 8, and 10). The person reference, here, relies for its intelligibility on the speaker's prior talk, in particular the company's preferred copier supplier status.

In this call, as it turns out, the call-taker is an administrator, which makes her the right person to talk to about copiers. This is a contingency that this format of the “open” switchboard request is not fully equipped to address. The call-taker's response intimates she is unavailable to speak by reporting her current engagement in another activity (lines 12 and 14).

The two options for designing switchboard requests I showed so far engender different sequential orders of the conversation's opening and progression to the business of the call. In Extract 3-3, the salesperson starts accounting for the call before the switchboard request, while in Extract 3-2, the business of the call is disclosed only after the switchboard request is complete. The former sequential arrangement leads to the salesperson revealing more about the purpose of the call. While this helps the call-taker to identify whom the salesperson should speak to, it also alerts them to the commercial nature of the call. Thus, when salespeople are trying to obscure their commercial agendas, this switchboard request format, which forces them to disclose more details about their call, may not be appropriate.

In “freezing” calls, salespeople use “open” switchboard requests whereby they provide some indication of the characteristics of the persons they are looking to speak to. They enlist the receptionists in the search for the “relevant” persons. The receptionists are, ultimately, the ones who single out whom to salespeople should speak to, making the selection of the “relevant” persons a joint achievement.

By contrast, in “lukewarm” calls, salespeople use “closed” switchboard requests in which they identify the “relevant” person by name, as in Extract 3-4.

Extract 3-4 Eplus 3

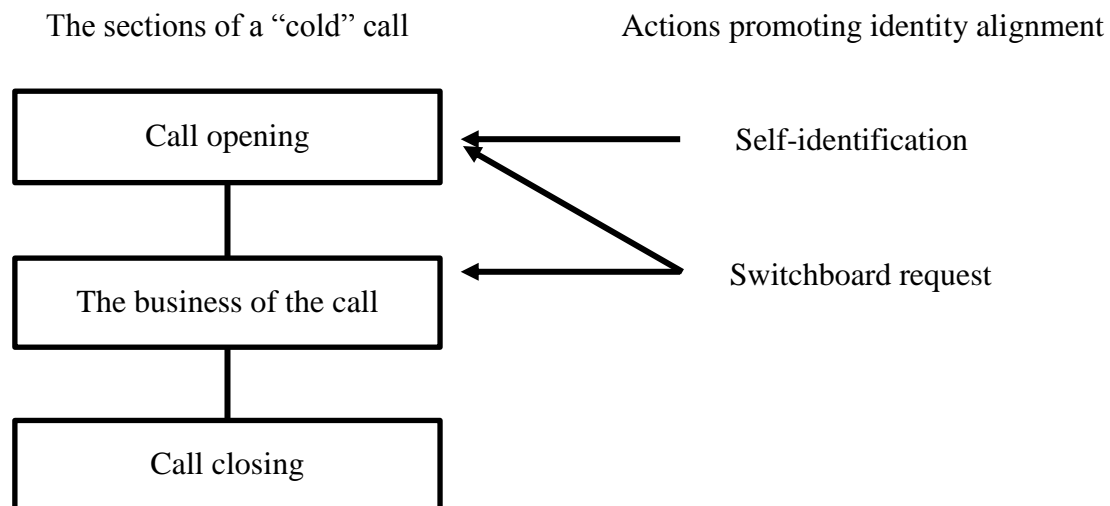
1 S: Oh #good afternoon, =uhm can I speak to Tony Green
 2 please.
 3 (1.3)
 4 R: °↑u:::h°
 5 (1.1)
 6 R: D'you know I don't know where 'e is. pkt Let me try.

In contrast to other extracts examined in this section, here, the salesperson does not introduce himself or explain why he has called. Instead, he asks to speak to a specific person in the company, using his first and last name, Tony Green. As I show in the next chapter, which focuses on opening sequences in “lukewarm” calls, the absent self-identification, high-entitlement request and *first+surname* reference are practices for displaying, to the receptionist, that the caller is acquainted with the person he has asked to speak to. After substantial delay, the call-taker displays incipient compliance to the request by announcing she will try to locate Tony Green (line 6).

To summarise, the central task of “cold” call openings, revolves around participants' identity alignment. On having ascertained that they have reached the right organisation,

salespeople look for the “relevant” person to speak to. Salespeople either design switchboard requests as part of the call opening (Extracts 3-2 and 3-4) or launch the business of the call with the switchboard request as its first item (Extract 3-3) (see Figure 3) .

Figure 3: The location of actions promoting identity alignment in the beginning of a “cold” call



Let us now look at the organisation of the business of the call – the main section of the encounter.

3.1.2 The business of the call

The business of a “cold” call can be understood by reference to the encounter’s instrumental role in initiating and driving a sale forward. The goal of a “cold” call consists in advancing the sale by moving the prospect one step closer to a commercial transaction. Salespeople only get to the business of the call if they have managed to get transferred to the “relevant” person.

The business of the call is launched through the accounting work done by the salesperson who, as the initiator of the call, is supposed to explain why she/he has contacted the prospect. Salespeople making “freezing” or “lukewarm” calls have available different resources for building their accounts, as we will see in section 3.1.2.1.

“Freezing” and “lukewarm” calls also differ with respect to the main business of the call. In the former, salespeople are contacting a prospect for the very first time; thus, they focus on “qualifying the lead”; that is, acquiring relevant details about the company’s technology and establishing an *opportunity* for a future encounter. By contrast, in

“lukewarm” calls, salespeople *claim* they have been in touch with the company before and, thus, seek to arrange a sales meeting with the prospect, playing up the incipient business relationship established in and through prior conversations.

In this section, I will show how the two types of “cold” calls are typically organised to achieve these different goals. To clarify, I am not arguing that callers’ intentions or purposes to achieve a specific result within a particular call constitute the basis on which the encounter is organised. Instead, I explore how both participants collaborate in the successful accomplishment of each activity or, by contrast, how they withhold their support, thus contributing to its failure. Also, it is important to mention that in a couple of “freezing” calls salespeople also try to arrange a meeting with the prospect. Conversely, a small number of “lukewarm” calls do not seek this outcome. Rather than invalidating the subsequent analysis these divergent cases provide further support for the inductive approach taken in this analysis. The categorisation of a call as a “first-time” or “returning” call has been worked out for each individual encounter, based on participants’ orientation to it, thus being a members’ not the analyst’s perspective.

The section is organised as follows. First, I examine the accounting work which launches the business of the call in both “freezing” and “lukewarm” calls. Then, I focus separately on each type of encounter and the activities they are comprised of.

3.1.2.1 Accounting for calling

Accounts for calling are pervasive in ordinary and institutional calls. In the former, the first topic launched in anchor position – the first slot after the opening – is treated by participants as the reason for the call (Sacks, 1992b; Schegloff, 1986). In some institutional settings, the reason for the call is accompanied by other types of accounts for calling. For instance, in calls to suicide helplines, callers’ accounts attend to the legitimacy of seeking help *now*, from *this* organisation, showing that prior efforts to secure assistance from other responsible parties had been unsuccessful (Sacks, 1989b). Similarly, salespeople are accountable for their unsolicited calls.

“Cold” calls feature two types of accounts that I have labelled “because of” and “in order to” accounts (Burke, 1950; Schütz, 1953). The former legitimates the call by laying out the salesperson’s credentials (for instance “preferred supplier), while the latter introduces the aim or purpose of the call. The production and ordering of these accounts ensures the smooth progression from the opening to the business of the call. The activity of accounting is

contingent on participants' identity alignment, and *recipient designed* by the salesperson for the current call-taker.

Let us look at an example from a “freezing” call featuring a “because of” and an “in order to” accounts for calling.

Extract 3-5 Tech 4

- 1 S: .hhh Uhm ↑and the reason I'm calling actually is uhm
 2 .hh ↑WE are actually working along with Hamil County
 3 Council for all the schools, and appointed your
 4 preferred supplie:er now. .hhh (0.2) ↑I just wanted to
 5 speak with your business manager, in relation to your
 6 copier contracts the#:re#, .hhh
 7 [And to ask] ↑when they might expire.=So we might=
 8 R: [↑Oh, okay.]
 9 S: =be contacting you .hh (.) w- well- nearer when you're
 10 reviewing the contract,
 11 (.)
 12 R: ↑Oh, I'm not too sure ↓actually 'cause
 13 u:[: : hm:,] she's not in: now until Mond#a::y,
 14 S: [Is she not,]

In line 1, the salesperson starts announcing her reason for calling, but abandons this TCU without completing it. The construction “the reason I'm calling actually is” indicates the continuation of the TCU would have disclosed the purpose or “in order to” reason for the call. Instead, her new TCU goes into a different direction, providing the “because of” account for calling. She reports her company's collaboration with the local council. Together with the self-categorisation “preferred supplie:er”¹¹ (line 4) it establishes the relevance of the call for the school by implying that the salesperson's company has a legitimate link to the school.

Even though the salesperson's TCU in line 4 is complete, her account for calling is not. She keeps the floor with an inbreath and continues, after a short pause, with the “in order to” reason for calling: “↑I just wanted to speak with your business manager, in relation to your copier contracts the#:re#,” (lines 4-6). The legitimacy of this request derives from the

¹¹ An organisation's preferred supplier is a company which provides products and services to the organisation based on a pre-negotiated agreement. Preferred suppliers often offer reduced rates to their clients. Some agreements require organisations to exclusively buy specific products and services from their preferred suppliers.

prior “because of” account. As the school’s preferred supplier, the salesperson’s company is entitled to request information about their printer contracts.

The receptionist does not respond immediately, prompting the salesperson to extend her turn with additional information about the purpose of the call: finding out when the school’s printer contract expires in order to contact them at an appropriate time. This extension makes relevant both a response to the switchboard request as well as an answer to the implicit inquiry about the contract’s expiry date. In accord with the principle of contiguity (Sacks, 1987), the receptionist’s response deals first with the latter and then with the switchboard request. In both cases she produces dispreferred responses.

As mentioned earlier, some practices for doing “open” switchboard requests in “freezing” calls require salespeople to disclose their reasons for calling to be able to refer to and identify the “relevant” persons to talk to. Consequently, as we saw in Extract 3-5, the switchboard requests are incorporated in the “in order to” accounts for calling. By contrast, in the next “freezing” call, the two types of accounts are produced separately from the switchboard request.

Extract 3-6 Tech 10

1 S: My name is Becky,=I’m calling from <Elect#e:c#¿> .hhh we’re
 2 based in: uhm in Barcley:¿=.hhh
 3 [and] as direct- ↓h:ello there,=(h)As=
 4 R: [Hello,]
 5 S: =a direct manufacturer I’m just- (.) calling round some
 6 .hhh ↑well we’re going to see someone in Hightown
 7 actually,=Next week. .hhhh so I thought well I’ll ↑try some
 8 of the(m)- ↓the other local companies to see if we can pop
 9 some details in¿ .hhhh uh:m and maybe [()]
 10 R: [Regarding what?] Hhh=
 11 S: =On the multi functional devices,=Your copie:rs: and: (y-)
 12 software et cetera¿ .hhh[h uh:m
 13 R: [Oh: I see.

In Extract 3-6, the salesperson attends to the legitimacy, timing, and purpose of the call. After her self-presentation (lines 1-2), she starts a multi-part “because of” account for calling in which she works up an explanation for why she has contacted the call-taker’s organisation. The self-categorisation “As a direct manufacturer” (lines 3 and 5) warrants taking initiative in contacting prospective clients to promote her company’s services. Next, she announces that the company already has a visit scheduled, in the following week, in Hightown, the area

where the current prospect is located. The timing and proximity are drawn upon to justify this call as well as the salesperson's self-invitation to visit the company. Arranging a visit constitutes the purpose of the call: "to see if we can pop some details in" (line 9).

The order of the two types of accounts is not random. In "cold" calls, "in order to" accounts *follow* and *build on* "because of" accounts. In this extract, we see the order being oriented to by the speaker in two ways. First, she abandons an unfinished TCU "As a direct manufacturer I'm just- (.) calling round some" (lines 3 and 5-6) that would have exposed the purpose of the call. Instead, she continues announcing her upcoming visit to Hightown, which explains why she is calling at this particular moment in time. Second, her "in order to" account, introduced with the resultative discourse marker "so I thought" (Schiffrin, 1987), is framed as a consequence of the scheduled visit mentioned in the "because of" account. Importantly, this seems to suggest the proposed visit is not in pursuit of a commercial agenda, but the result of a felicitous arrangement the seller has made prior to and independent of this call. Finally, the "in order to" account launches the business of the call – here arranging for the salesperson to visit the company to "pop some details in" (lines 8-9).

The visit is referred to as a short information delivery. This framing of the meeting, specific for "freezing" calls, has several affordances. First, it does not require that the company expresses a prior interest in the offered products. Second, it minimises the engagement expected from the prospective customers during the salesperson's visit. Third, it plays down the pressure to move forward towards a commercial agreement, following the encounter.

"Lukewarm" calls also feature both types of accounts. The next extract comes after the how-are-you sequence.

Extract 3-7 Eplus 2

- 1 S: .h ↑Walter ↑very very quickly just before sometime I
 2 spoke to Eva, .mht A:ndu:h we discussed about the
 3 telecoms contracts=I used to be in touch with Fernando:
 4 last year? .hh A:ndu:h we discussed about your Yeltel
 5 contracts which are up for renewal by early next year?
 6 (0.3)
 7 S: .Pt[h So] Eva advised me to have a quick chat=
 8 P: [Mkay,]
 9 S: =with you an' schedule a meeting in to discuss about
 10 the: Yeltel: .h (.) contracts.

In line 1, the salesperson starts recounting her prior interactions with the prospect's colleagues which constitutes the "because of" account, culminating with Eva advising her to contact Walter (the current call-taker). Building on this, the salesperson also attributes to Eva the idea of having a meeting, which turns out to be the "in order to" reason for calling.

In returning "lukewarm" calls, reports of past interactions between the salesperson and the prospect or another representative of the company frequently occupy the first slot after the call opening. They play a key role in aligning participants' identities by indexing their past history of communication which influences the trajectory of the call (Shaw & Kitzinger, 2007). Here, the salesperson's report of her prior dealings with the company indexes the membership categorisation device (MCD) "ongoing business relationship". There are several ways in which the relationship is demonstrated by the salesperson: the use of first names, the mention of prior interactions with Eva and Fernando, and the display of knowledge about the company's telecom contracts. The MCD "business relationship" casts participants as "business partners", a standardised relational pair (Sacks, 1972; Stokoe, 2012a). Being business partners proffers, for the participants, an array of mutual obligations, rights, and expectations. Crucially, it frames the ensuing meeting as a business rather than a sales visit "an' schedule a meeting in **to discuss** about the: Yeltel: .h (.) contracts." (lines 10-11). Finally, the formulation of the meeting's purpose – discussing the prospect's telephone contracts – presumes the prospect's awareness of and interest in the salesperson's offer.

Accounts for calling do not feature in all the "cold" calls in the corpus. They are contingent on the alignment of speakers' identities. In "lukewarm" calls in which switchboard requests are not granted, and salespeople are not connected to the "relevant" persons, the trajectory of the conversation is modified. Salespeople either move to terminate the call without disclosing why they have initiated it or they produce an account for calling that is adapted to the current interlocutor and activity. The following two extracts exemplify these divergent "cold" call trajectories engendered by the failure to reach the "relevant" person.

The call in Extract 3-8 is a short one and does not contain an account. The salesperson is asking to speak to Waqar Feldman, but the latter is unavailable to take the call.

Extract 3-8 Eplus 47

- 1 S: .h (.) Trying to catch up with=uh h (.) Waqar.
 2 (0.8)
 3 R: U:[: : h]

4 S: [Mister F]eldman.
 5 (0.7)
 6 R: Feldman=He's currently not here at the moment.=He's
 7 just in a meeting.=#U:hm: Can I leave a message for
 8 him?
 9 S: .hh Uhm ↑I can call him back a bit later;

In this “lukewarm” call, the salesperson refers to the “relevant” person by first name and produces a high entitlement switchboard request “Trying to catch up with=uh h (.) Waqar.” (line 1). Treating the receptionist as a temporary interlocutor, he does not account for the call. When his request is declined, he is offered the opportunity to leave a message. In response, he announces he will call back later, thus implicitly rejecting the offer. The call ends a few seconds later, without the salesperson ever disclosing why he has called.

By contrast, the caller in the next extract accepts the offer of leaving a message. We join the call as the receptionist delivers a dispreferred response to the switchboard request (line 1).

Extract 3-9 Eplus 54

1 R: I'm afraid I can't get through to him.=It looks >as
 2 though< he's probably on lunch:.
 3 (.)
 4 S: Oh, =O:kay?=
 5 R: =>Okay. Wh[at-<
 6 S: [I'll leave it a little bit longer [then.
 7 R: [Can I
 8 (j'st) take a message and I'll- (.) get him to get back
 9 to you.=
 10 S: =.hh I'm- I'm tryin'- w'll it's been a while,=Tryin'
 11 to get back in touch with him.
 12 (0.5)
 13 R: Oka[y].
 14 S: [I spoke to him last year.

Prior to line 1, the salesperson had asked to speak to Randell. In line 1, we find out that his switchboard request cannot be granted by the receptionist who produces an inability account “I can't get through to him” and a tentative explanation “It looks >as though< he's probably on lunch:.” (lines 1-2). The salesperson receipts the response and moves toward a pre-closing (line 6). The receptionist opens up the closing with an offer to take a message (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). In response, the salesperson produces an account for calling adapted for the current call-taker who is not the “intended” call recipient (Levinson, 1988). The gloss of the

reason for calling “Tryin’ to get back in touch with him.” (lines 10-11) hints at a pre-existing relationship between the caller and Randell. The word choice “get back in touch”, to which the speaker arrives after several self-repairs (line 9), obscures the commercial nature of the call because it indexes a friendship-like rather than a commercial relationship.

To summarise, this section showed that and how salespeople account for their calls as a means for transitioning from the call opening into the business of the call. When salespeople fail to reach the “relevant” persons, they do not open the business of the call; therefore, their accounts are altered or missing as they move towards call closure.

Next, let us look at “freezing” calls, in and through which salespeople “qualify” prospects; that is, they gauge if and when they will become customers.

3.1.2.2 Qualifying prospects

“Cold” calling is one of the many techniques for prospecting, which is the term used in business parlance to refer to identifying potential customers (Jolson, 1988). During a “cold” call, a salesperson is supposed to qualify the prospect by establishing whether the contacted company needs, wants, and is able to afford their products or services (Jolson & Wotruba, 1992; Monat, 2011; Moncrief, Shipp, Lamb, & Cravens, 1989). This textbook definition of “qualifying” will be put to the test in this section, where I outline the activities undertaken in “freezing” calls: (1) gathering information, (2) getting the prospect’s contact details, and (3) making provisions for future contact. As it turns out, salespeople do not survey prospects’ needs/wants, but instead work to establish *that and when* prospects will need and will be able to contract their services.

The business of the call, launched through the “in order to” reason for calling, starts with information-gathering. Extract 3-10 shows how the salesperson’s account initiates a multi-sequence inquiry about the prospect’s printer contracts, the current service provider, and the number of printers they currently use.

Extract 3-10 Tech 33

- 1 S: .hh I wonder if I might speak to the business manager
 2 or administrator uhm just to ask her uh=uh if he she
 3 knows .thh uhm actually when your contracts are due to
 4 expire, (.) and when they might be r[eviewed].=
 5 P: [We-
 6 P: =W:e: uh well you’re talking to the right person and
 7 we’ve got another three years left on our

8 Co[ntract.
9 S: [°.h a:h°
10 (0.3)
11 S: Right,=So [you >you've got< (.)a five-year=
12 P: [°(Right.)°
13 P: =Yea[h.
14 S: [contract maybe [haven't you, .hHh
15 P: [Yeah.
16 S: Two years of the way through.=
17 P: =Y:eah.
18 (0.2)
19 S: Three years to go, Okay.=Thank you, uhm So uh- can you
20 tell me who the current supplier is. .hhHh #uh=
21 P: =U:hm No,=↑Not really bu[:t
22 S: [()
23 (0.2)
24 S: .h No it's just that I'm (),= That's
25 absolut[ely] fine,=That's fine. .h And how many=
26 P: [N-]
27 S: =devices do you have [there
28 P: [Just the one.
29 (0.3)
30 S: Just the one, Okay.

Extract 3-10 illustrates information-gathering, the first activity that constitutes the business of a “freezing” call. Let us first consider the suitability of the label “information-gathering”. Questioning sequences come up under different names in different settings, for instance “history taking” in medical visits (Lindström & Karlsson, 2016; Stivers & Heritage, 2001) or “interrogation” in police interviews with suspects (Edwards, 2008; Stokoe, Edwards, & Edwards, 2015). While each of these encounters includes one party getting/gathering facts from another, the neutral term “information” would not do justice to the kind of materials that are being transacted and the work performed by both parties. By contrast, in “cold” calls, salespeople construct the details they are requesting as “information”, by using verbs that are associated with information transaction. For instance, in lines 2-5, the salesperson formulates her action as “**just** asking about the printer contract’s expiry date. Similarly, in the request in lines 20-21, the prospect is asked to “**tell**” the salesperson “who the current supplier is”. This framing downplays potential implications of acquiring the sought details (*cf.* Heritage & Lindström, 2012) and helps to avoid issues related to epistemic entitlement (Stivers, Mondada, & Steensing, 2011).

In this extract, information-gathering is accomplished through three inquiry sequences, each initiated by the salesperson asking about the school’s printers: (1) the

contract expiry date, (2) the current supplier, and (3) the number of printers. It is not happenstance that the salesperson starts with a question about the contract expiry date. Inquiring into this matter is warranted by her previously invoked identity as the school's preferred supplier (data not shown here, but see section 3.1.2.1). This identity grants her the right to ask for information relevant to a potential future business relationship that is projected by this status. Comparatively, on the rare occasion when the salesperson fails to establish a link to the called company, the prospect refuses to disclose the contract expiry date (see Extract 3-17).

Let us look at the sequential organisation of information-gathering in Extract 3-10. The activity is launched through the "in order to" account for calling (see also section 3.1.2.1) which includes an open switchboard request and an inquiry into the printer contract expiry date. In responding, the prospect deals with both the request and the inquiry. She starts replying to the latter and then abandons this course of action in favour of confirming she is the "relevant" person to talk to. She manages this deviation from the normative contiguity of adjacent turns (Sacks, 1987) through the displacement marker "uh well" (line 7). This reordering of the prospect's response supports the previously made observation that the business of the call, launched through the reason for calling, is contingent on participants' identity alignment. The prospect discloses that their printer contract will run for another three years. This formulation warrants the salesperson's inference about the contract's original length "So you >you've got< (.) a five-year contract maybe haven't you," (lines 11 and 14), which the prospect confirms in line 15.

The second inquiry targets the school's current printer supplier "So uh- can you tell me who the current supplier is." (lines 19-20). This action is designed as a "next" item on an ongoing agenda through: (1) the turn-initial "So" (Bolden, 2009), and (2) the indexical phrase "current supplier" (line 21) which relies on prior talk for its intelligibility. The design of the inquiry "So uh- **can you** tell me" (lines 21) indexes the recipient's ability to provide a response, thus displaying the speaker's orientation to contingencies that may preclude the prospect from replying. Indeed, the latter refuses to respond (line 21). The salesperson pursues this refusal, in overlap with the prospect (line 22, inaudible). After a 0.2 seconds gap suggesting her pursuit was not successful, in line 24, the salesperson gradually realigns with the prospect, first by accounting for her prior action and then by accepting the outcome of her inquiry and closing down the sequence.

In the same turn, the salesperson launches a third inquiry about the number of printers currently used by the school "And how many devices do you have there" (lines 25, 27). The

and-preface indicates that this action belongs to the ongoing information-gathering activity (Heritage & Sorjonen, 1994). The prospect's reply "Just the one" (line 28) treats the question as somewhat inapposite. Specifically, through the turn-initial emphatic "just" and definite article prefacing the numeral "**the** one", the speaker emphasises having a single printer. Thus, she subtly implies that the question, even though answerable, is not particularly well-suited for the school's situation. The salesperson receipts the response through a full repeat. She closes the sequence with an "okay" token which marks a transition to the next activity (Beach, 1993).

Examining information-gathering, we notice that its unfolding is principally controlled by the salesperson. Occupying first and third position in each sequence, she commands the progress of the conversation. These positions allow her to extend the activity indefinitely by adding new items through the initiation of a new inquiry sequence each time a prior sequence has been concluded (Sacks, 1992a). Taking the second position in each sequence, the prospect still retains control over the accomplishment of individual sequences of action. For instance, in line 23 she refuses to disclose the name of the school current printers supplier compelling the salesperson to move forward without obtaining this information.

The second activity, getting the prospect's contact details, is illustrated next. Even though the extract starts with the salesperson making provisions for future contact, that activity is temporally halted when, in line 5, the salesperson initiates a long side sequence (Jefferson, 1972), through which she acquires the prospect's name and email address. She resumes making provisions for future encounters after the sequence ends, in the pre-closing section of the call.

Extract 3-11 Tech 42

```

1   S:   ↑Can I just send you an e:mail now and be in touch in
2       in in: >perhaps< in a year's
3       tim[e with an update;]
4   P:   [>Yeah,=no proble]m<.
5   S:   .PThh Thank you.=What w's your ↑name?
6   P:   Joanna Bird.
7       (0.2)
8   S:   .phh Joanna Bi:rd,=You're a standalone school there
9       >aren't you.< [.hh J]oanna Bird. <And your=
10  P:   [Yeah.]
11  S:   =email >Joanna< is it admin;
12  P:   .Pk It's admin at Whample hyphen ↓primary.

```

13 (0.4)
 14 S: Doubleyou aitch isn't it? °>D[oubleyou a]itch<°=
 15 P: [Y e a h .]
 16 S: =.hh Whample hyphen primary, .hh
 17 (.)
 18 P: #Dot [Hamil.]
 19 S: [Dot Ham]il dot es cee aitch dot you
 20 k[ay
 21 P: [That's the one. [(°Yeah.°)]
 22 S: [()] (Well) (.) Quite a
 23 number of schoo:ls
 24 [around there so at least I'm getting to know,]
 25 P: [°(h)Yeah.° hh huh huh hah ha .hhh]

At the beginning of the extract, the participants are engaged in discussing future contact opportunities. The salesperson asks for and is granted permission to remain in touch with the prospect. After receipting the latter's aligning response, she keeps the floor, latching a new TCU through which she asks for the prospect's name (line 5). This action draws its intelligibility and legitimacy from the interactional environment constituted by the participants having agreed to keep in touch. Therefore, the shift to this new activity is not queried or contested by the prospect, who aligns to the action trajectory lined up by the salesperson.

As an activity, "getting the prospect's contact information" can vary in terms of the number and type of details it is made up of. Most often, salespeople ask for prospects' names and email addresses. In this extract, the salesperson also checks the status of the school – whether it is a standalone school as opposed to being part of a federation (lines 8-10).

The progress of the activity is mainly controlled by the salesperson. In line 5, she uses an interrogative "What w's your ↑name", that indexes a K- stance. By contrast, her second question is designed as a strong guess, done through a declarative + tag "You're a standalone school there >aren't you.<" (lines 8-9) This grammatical construction indexes the speaker's prior but perhaps less certain knowledge about the school's status, through the declarative syntax, while relinquishing epistemic authority over the matter to the interlocutor, through the turn-final tag question (Heritage & Raymond, 2005).

The salesperson's last question, designed as a declarative + incipient answer, claims even more knowledge about the prospect's email address as she provides its first component for the interlocutor to confirm "is it admin;" (line 12). In the same sequence, in line 19, she overlaps with the prospect and takes over the production of the address herself (lines 19-20). The prospect confirms it (line 21). Note that the components the salesperson is

knowledgeable about, the username and last elements of the domain name, are those components of an email address that are most likely to be shared by schools within the same county. The salesperson treats herself accountable for her knowledge displays and explains, in lines 22-24, how she ended up knowing those details.

While Extract 3-11, which illustrated “getting the prospect’s contact details”, started off with the participants discussing future encounters, in the next extract, the order of the two activities is reversed. The salesperson is in the midst of taking the prospect’s email address (lines 3-4) when she shifts the trajectory of the conversation towards negotiating when to next contact the prospect. In line 47, she resumes taking the prospect’s email address.

Extract 3-12 Tech 35

1 S: And (.) ↑c’ld I have your email address to .hh uhm
2 (0.4) t- (0.3) >perhaps< we’ll: send something to you
3 now an’ [.hh when you’re next reviewi:ng=
4 P: [Yeah.
5 S: =[things.= (A)ha >[D’you think tha]t’s<=
6 P: [No problem.] [Yes (is tha-)]
7 S: =going to be [in the next] year you think?=
8 P: [°(Yeah)°]
9 P: =N:nno: n- it’d be in about two years I would have
10 thought.
11 (0.4)
12 P: Uh
13 (0.4)
14 S: Nearly two- ([)] two years from no:w,=
15 P: [Yeah ()]
16 S: =.hh it’d be just a few [mon]ths prior to that=
17 P: [Yes]
18 S: =>w’ll it<=
19 (0.2)
20 P: =That’s right.
21 (.)
22 S: U:[h
23 S: [Okay=So where’s that.=That’s uh (0.6) (° °) so
24 the end- (0.3) so the au:tumn of seventeen; Does that
25 so[und]
26 P: [(])
27 (.)
28 S: (If) not before?
29 (0.4)
30 P: Yeah arou:nd then.
31 (0.2)
32 S: Mh[m:.
33 P: [>I’m not sure to be quite honest, [But uh huhh
34 S: [Okay.

35 S: £O_h I know£ it sounds a long way off but we' (v-) (0.2)
 36 >di_{dn}'t want to miss< the opportunity >y'kn'w< to keep
 37 in touch with you to >(effectively you know) just to
 38 see if that's still< the ca_se you know .hHh (0.3) uhm
 39 in about twelve month t_ime if that's okay?
 40 P: It will still be the <case> [°yeah°.
 41 S: [Yeah(h), .h okay.
 42 (.)
 43 S: .hH ↑Can I uhm ma_ke a note of your email to send you
 44 today something [then.
 45 P: [Yes. Admin,

In line 1, the salesperson starts to ask for the prospect's email address "And (.) ↑c'ld I have your email address to .hh uhm (0.4) t- (0.3)", but trails off and abandons this course of action without bringing it to completion. Her new TCU takes a slightly different direction, proposing a set of arrangements for future contact ">per_haps< we'll: send something to you now an' hh when you're next review_i:ng" (lines 2-3). The prospect only responds to the latter action consenting to be contacted by the salesperson. She does not take up the unfinished email address request.

The rest of the interaction unfolds with the participants slightly misaligned with regard to the timing and imminence of the contract's review and expiry dates. This extract is an excellent illustration of the micro-tension and micro-frictions within "cold" calls. In this particular example, the misalignment is curbed by both participants (as I will explain below); otherwise, it could have escalated into more overt displays of disagreement, leading to abrupt call termination (see Extract 3-17 and Chapter 6 on "Resistance"). In what follows, I will outline how this micro-disagreement starts, how it unfolds, and how it is contained by the participants.

The main point of contention arises during the attempt to establish when the printer contracts will be reviewed as a reference point for when the prospect should be contacted next. It is important to highlight the distinction between two moments in time: the onset of the review period and the contract expiry date, with the review starting a few months before a contract expires. For salespeople, it is crucial to get in touch with prospects as early as possible during the review period to get their offers taken into consideration before a decision is reached.

Prior to this interaction, the participants had discussed the contract expiry date on several occasions. While the prospect had announced that the contract will run for two to three more years, the salesperson only acknowledged the closer time frame, two years,

exploiting her interlocutor's imprecision. In this extract, she enquires about the renewal date, putting forward a time frame of one year. The proposal is rejected and corrected by the prospect. Among the resources the latter uses for managing her dispreferred response, note the hedged formulation "in **about** two years" (line 9) which indicates the time frame is put forward as an approximation. The salesperson again exploits the prospect's imprecise formulation. In her turn in line 14, she receipts the prospect's reply with a partial modified repeat "**Nearly** two- () two years from no:w. Her hedge, while also qualifying the time frame, implies "two years" is an upper-limit approximation, suggesting the actual timing of the contract reviewing may be closer to the present.

To understand her next TCU, it is important to remember the distinction between contract reviewing and renewal dates. So far, in this extract, they have been discussing the reviewing date. However, in line 16, when the salesperson continues with "it'd be just a few months prior to that >w'll it<" (lines 16 and 18), it seems that she only *now* switches to talking about the review date. By implication, this suggests that they had been discussing the renewal date until now. The prospect does not explicitly problematise this; however, note the 0.2 seconds gap that precedes her confirming response in line 20. Moreover, a few turns later, she pushes back against the salesperson's attempt to move up the time frame for contract reviewing.

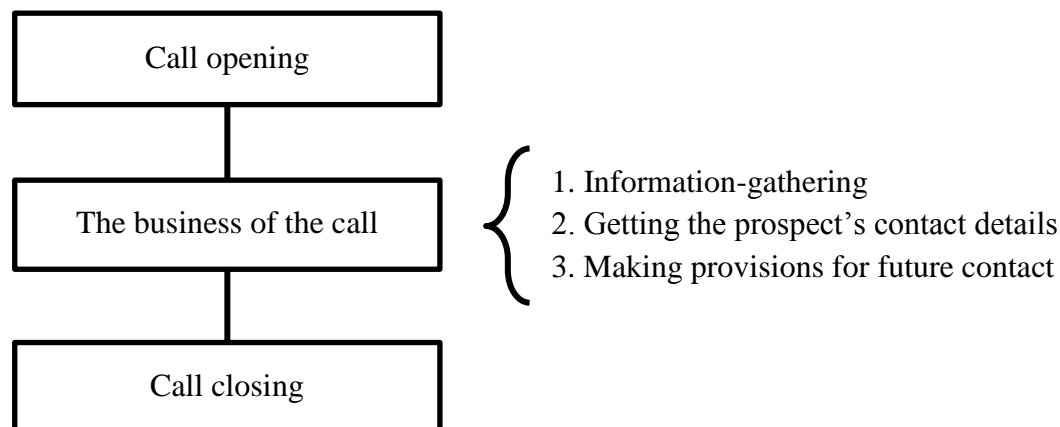
In lines 23-24, building on her interlocutor's prior alignment, the salesperson takes provision making one step further. So far, participants had been using time units such as years and months; here, she changes to calendar time formulations (Button, 1990), which allow more precision and are the appropriate metric for scheduling events and meetings. "That's uh (0.6) (° °) so the end- (0.3) so the au:tumn of seventeen_i". Note again how she adjusts the time frame by abandoning what would have been, presumably, "**the end** of the autumn of seventeen" and replacing it with "so the au:tumn of seventeen" (line 24). A few lines later, on the basis of not receiving a response from the prospect, she pursues it with an increment "(If) not before?" (line 28) which again pushes for a closer date. The prospect produces a hedged acceptance of the salesperson's timeline "Yeah arou:nd then." (line 30). A few seconds later she starts backtracking ">I'm not sure to be quite honest, But uh huhh" (lines 33), but she does not get to finish her second TCU. The salesperson takes the floor to produce a long turn in which she argues for the imminence of the review process and the relevance, for her company, of keeping in touch with the prospect. She ends her turn by seeking the prospect's permission to contact her in a year "just to see if that's still< the case you know .hHh (0.3) uhm in about twelve month time if that's okay" (lines 38-40). The

prospect produces a non-type conforming response (Raymond, 2003) “It will still be the <case> °yeah°” (line 41), which only confirms that the reviewing will take place, but leaves out the contested time frame. This omission is noticed by the salesperson who, in third position, receipts the response “Yeah(h), .h okay.”, without appreciating it (see, for contrast, line 5 in Extract 3-11 or line 18 in Extract 3-13). Her acknowledgement closes down the sequence allowing her to move on to the suspended activity, getting the prospect’s contact details.

Throughout the fragment, the participants contest each other’s proposals about the dates of the contract’s review and renewal. But the misalignment does not escalate into overt disagreement or conflict. They contain it through imprecise formulations, hedges, and reformulations as well as by passing the opportunity to expose and treat each other’s actions as incongruent.

To summarise: this section has illustrated the activities that comprise qualifying leads in “freezing” calls: gathering information, getting the prospect’s contact details, and making provisions for future encounters (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: The business of the call in “freezing” calls



If a “freezing” call is successful, the next stage of the sales process could be an email exchange or another telephone call to the prospect. Such returning “lukewarm” calls, which I describe below, have a different organisation, geared towards arranging face-to-face meetings.

3.1.2.3 Arranging a sales appointment

In “lukewarm” calls, salespeople attempt to arrange visits whereby a sales representative (either the caller or a colleague) would visit the prospect to showcase their service offers. Arranging a meeting is a multi-activity project (Robinson, 2003) consisting of several components: (1) securing a meeting, (2) scheduling the meet, and (3) getting the prospect’s contact details. Each of these activities spans over several sequences accomplishing different actions.

The first step in the arrangement of a sales visit consists in securing a meeting with the prospect. Extract 3-13 starts with the “because of” account for calling.

Extract 3-13 Eplus 8

- 1 S: .Hh Mister Gupta I hope you recall we:: discussed about
2 the telecoms,=uh especially you:r old Alcatel systems.
3 (0.7)
- 4 P: [()]
- 5 S: [A:]ndu::h its maintenance and .h lines and calls and
6 stuff. .h A:nd you aske_d me to send some details about
7 the company and you said that you are going to discuss
8 with one of your collea:gues senior colleagues I
9 ↑believe.
10 (0.6)
- 11 P: Yeah.=
- 12 S: =U:h so:: I’m just wonderi:n’ whereabouts are we in
13 terms of the conversation .h uh fo=or- Can we come and
14 have a chat about u:hm your phone systems andu:h see
15 how we could be of he:l_p to you sometime next month o:r
16 .h end of this month?
17 (0.3)
- 18 P: Y- yeah we can do that. °Yeah°.
- 19 S: =↑Oh. Fantastic, .h So: ↑u:hm mkt (0.5) shall we look at
20 like the: next- the third week of January or ↑so?

Before focusing on the request sequence in which the salesperson secures a meeting with the prospect, let us take a look at the accounting work that precedes and leads to it. The salesperson first produces a “because of” account (lines 1-9) that indexes her prior conversation with the prospect. Importantly, she recounts having arranged for her to send the prospect information about her company that he would then discuss with his colleagues. These arrangements index a recognisable action trajectory which projects that the prospect can and should be able to report the decision made as a result of this discussion. This account frames the call as a “follow-up” whereby the salesperson is contacting the prospect to find

out what decision has been reached. This is intimated in the “in order to” reason for calling (lines 12-13) in which, initially, the salesperson seems to ask for a status update. She abandons this line of action in favour of a meeting request, thus accelerating the progress of the conversation.

The request builds on the entitlement to ask for a meeting that has been worked up through the preceding accounts. It is delivered through a high entitlement format (Curl & Drew, 2008; Lindström, 2005) “Can we come and have a chat about u:hm your phone systems” (lines 13-14). As no reply is forthcoming at the first TRP, the salesperson extends the TCU with “andu:h see how we could be of he:lp to you sometime next month” (lines 14-15) and then again “o:r .h end of this month?” (lines 15-16). Evidence for her orientation to the absent response and her manoeuvre to mask the absences by expanding the TCU comes from the elongated production of “andu:h” and “o:r”, the first words of each TCU extension (Davidson, 1984). By adding further components to her turn, the salesperson (1) minimises the inter-turn gap which could be indicative of a dispreferred response (Anderson, Aston, & Tucker, 1988), (2) provides the prospect with two more opportunities to respond to the request by recompleting the TCU, and (3) produces further inducements for accepting the meeting (Davidson, 1984), such as an offer of help and a flexible time frame.

In his subsequent turn, the prospect accepts the meeting request with an expanded confirmation “Y- yeah we can do that. °Yeah°” (line 18) that displays his commitment to the meeting (Lindström, 2017). Building, on this, the salesperson moves forward by closing the sequence with a high-grade assessment (Antaki, Houtkoop-Steenstra, & Rapley, 2000) and initiates the scheduling of the meeting.

Securing the appointment is a key component of the business of a “lukewarm” call. Getting the prospect on board with the meeting allows the salesperson to move forward with the call. By contrast, a rejection jeopardises the call’s project and can lead to swift termination, unless the salesperson attempts and manages to turn it around. I will examine successful appointment-making sequences in Chapter 5 and methods for dealing with rejection and resistance in Chapter 6.

Let us continue to examine this call as it proceeds to the next activity: the scheduling of the meeting.

Extract 3-14 Eplus 8

- 1 S: =↑Oh. Fantastic, .h So: ↑u:hm mkt (0.5) shall we look at
2 like the: next- the third week of January or ↑so?

3 (0.6)
4 P: °Uh third week of January let me che:ck°, Uh w- what
5 date exactly.
6 (0.4)
7 S: U::hm I am looking a:t the eightee:nth of January (.)
8 which is Monday, >But but< it- i- it's your diary so:,
9 (0.2) whatever suits you. .h
10 (0.7)
11 P: Mm::#m:: (0.5) (<°Waiting to°>) (1.3) U- (0.3)
12 (>it=w'ld-<) (0.3) is it po:ssible to move it ↓forward?
13 (1.1)
14 S: ↑Oka:y=no problem=Is that next week you mean.
15 (0.9)
16 P: No I mean the=uh: (.) b- bit forward than eighteen
17 u[h I mea:n
18 S: [#Uh- o::h okay, uh:m .pcht .h
19 P: Twenty-fifth twenty-sixth twenty-seventh something like
20 that.=
21 S: =↑Oka:y no problem. .h Shall we look at the twenty-
22 sixth which is Tuesda:y?
23 (0.4)
24 P: Yeah(p), Tha- that's that would be okay.
25 (0.4)
26 S: Fantastic. And what ↑time would be (0.8)
27 appropriat(h)e(h) .
28 (0.7)
29 P: U::hm .pk (1.7) It (w-) it would be: oka:y around uh
30 (0.2) twelve o'clock? Twelve o'clock one o'clock?
31 (0.2)
32 S: Twelve pm. .h [↑An:d Mister Gupta: can I also get=
33 P: [°Yeah°
34 S: =your u:h direct email address so I'll send an
35 invitation?

The scheduling of the meeting consists of two base adjacency pair sequences through which the date and the time of the meeting are established. The first sequence (lines 1-26) is expanded multiple times through insert sequences through which participants negotiate a suitable date for the meeting. The second adjacency pair (lines 26-34) pinpoints the time of the meeting.

The scheduling of the meeting is launched in line 1 through the salesperson's proposal “.h So: ↑u:hm mkt (0.5) shall we look at like the: next- the third week of January or ↑so?”. A collaborative framework is invoked through the formulation “shall we look”, that turns the scheduling into a joint endeavour (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014). Note also the flexible time frame formulation, in particular the turn-final “or ↑so?” (Drake, 2013; Stokoe, 2010), that invites further negotiation of the date, rather than immediate acceptance.

While this is a new activity that has emerged as a contingency of the accepted appointment request, it also recycles the proposed time frame for the meeting, put forward by the salesperson in her request “Can we come and have a chat about u:hm your phone systems and u:h see how we could be of he:l

to you **sometime next month o:r .h end of this month?**” (see previous extract, lines 15-16). The turn-initial “So” frames the new course of action as having been foreshadowed by previous talk and thus pending (Bolden, 2009).

The prospect’s reply acknowledges the proposal “°Uh third week of January°” and enacts incipient alignment “°let me che:ck° (Kent, 2012). He then initiates a pre-second insert expansion (Schegloff, 2007b) inquiring about a specific date for the meeting. To this, the salesperson gives a my-side proposal “U::hm I am looking a:t the eighteenth of January (.) which is Monday,” (lines 7-8). Then, she hurriedly adds a caveat “But but< it- i- it’s your diary so:, (0.2) whatever suits you.” (lines 8-9), thus invoking a “customer service” framework. This turns out to be effective in encouraging the prospect’s input. His request for a delay is initially misunderstood by the salesperson, prompting further repair work (lines 16-20), including the salesperson putting forward several preferred dates. The salesperson picks one of the alternatives and redoes the scheduling proposal, this time with the collaboratively worked-out date “Shall we look at the twenty-sixth which is Tuesda:y?” (lines 21-22). The proposal is accepted by the prospect, enabling participants to move forward to establishing the time for the meeting.

In designing her next question about the time for the meeting, the salesperson switches again to a “customer service” framing that prioritises the prospect’s preference and interest “And what ↑time would be (0.8) appropriat(h)e(h).” (lines 26-27). The prospect puts forward a flexible time frame and produces his proposal with an upward intonation, inviting confirmation (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979). The salesperson confirms by selecting the first alternative. She keeps the floor and launches the next, connected activity: getting the prospect’s contact details.

The next step in arranging a sales appointment consists in the salesperson getting the prospect’s contact details. Extract 3-15 is a typical case.

Extract 3-15 Eplus 13

- 1 S: .h Right,=What’s your email please.
 2 (0.3)
 3 P: U:h It is Giles, G-i-l-e-s:.,
 4 (0.9)
 5 S: Y#::[e:a(p) .

6 P: [Dot
7 (0.3)
8 P: Dot White W-h (0.2) i-t-e:,
9 (1.0)
10 S: W-h-i: (.) t-e:.
11 (0.3)
12 P: >Yeah<
13 (0.4)
14 S: Y#:ea(p),
15 (0.2)
16 S: A[t ()
17 P: [At S-D:
18 (0.3)
19 P: At (0.2) S-D-L
20 (0.6)
21 S: S: D: L:,
22 (0.5)
23 P: Dot ac dot uk.
24 (0.6)
25 S: Ac #dot u:k:(h). (.) .h (.) ↑Good=That's a nice easy
26 o:ne. Good=lovely, (.) Yea:h u:::hm .Phh no:w I've g-
27 Is sometimes omitted from the project

Extract 3-15 features a single sequence that accomplishes a single course of action. The change-of-activity token “Right,” (lines 1) marks the transition between activities; that is, shift from scheduling the meeting to getting the prospect’s contact details (Gardner, 2007). The salesperson's initiating action “What’s your email please” (line 1) is responded to in four instalments that deliver the requested information bit-by-bit. The points of at which the email address is broken up are not arbitrary. The prospect parcels out the address in intelligible units (for instance full first and last name) that maximise their comprehensibility. After each unit, the salesperson displays his understanding of it through acknowledgement tokens (line 5) or through repeats (lines 10, 21, and 25).

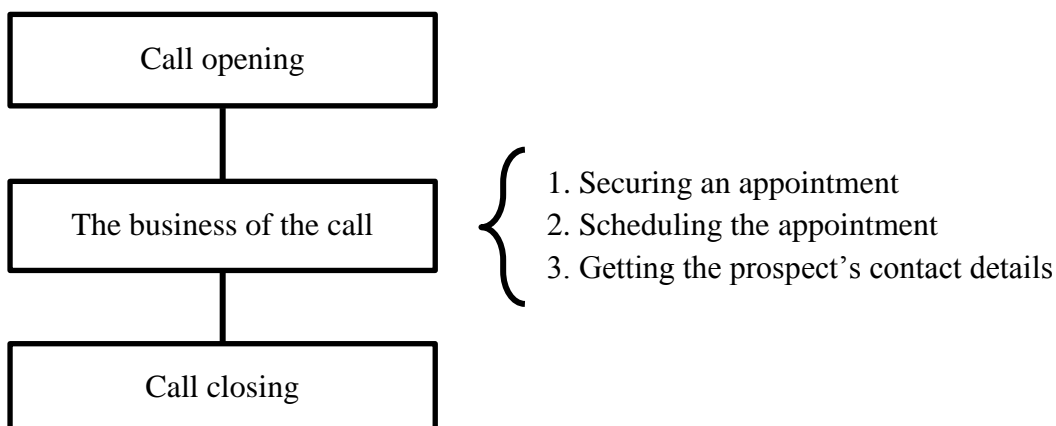
The smooth progressivity of the sequence is broken off on two occasions. First, in line 6, the prospect starts to produce the second unit of his email address too soon, finding himself in overlap with the salesperson’s acknowledgment token. The prospect cuts off his TCU and restarts it in line 8, in the clear. The second interactional glitch is also an overlap. In line 16, the salesperson starts to produce the next bit of the email address. One tenth of a second later, the prospect also starts the production of the next unit. Here, it is the salesperson who concedes the floor, even though he was the one to grab the floor first (Drew, 2009), probably because his intervention functions as a prompt for the prospect to continue. The latter also abandons his turn without bringing the TCU to completion. He restarts it in line 19,

ascertaining that it is produced in the clear to minimise any hearing difficulties. This pervasive orientation to comprehensibility, displayed throughout the sequence in the design and production of participants' actions and turns-at-talk highlights the importance of recording the email address accurately. A single error would compromise the future communication between the parties. Again, as in the scheduling of the meeting, note the alignment and collaboration between salesperson and prospect in successfully completing this activity.

A final observation regarding the sequential placement of this activity in connection to its design. Note that the salesperson does not account for asking for the prospect's email address before requesting it. Nor does he explain, at the end of the sequence, why he has asked for it. Nonetheless, the prospect does not demand a justification and, instead, cooperates with the salesperson to get the email address across as accurately as possible. By contrast, in other sequential environments, when this activity is not part of the "arranging a meeting" project, salespeople have to work up the entitlement to ask for the email address and sometimes must account for requesting it. Conversely, prospects display their misgivings about the consequences of sharing their address and, in some cases, even refuse to disclose it.

To summarise, this section has outlined the activities that comprise the business of a "lukewarm" call: securing an appointment, scheduling the appointment and getting the prospect's contact details (see Figure 5). There are three sources of evidence suggesting that arranging a meeting with the prospect constitutes the business of a "lukewarm" call: (1) accounts for calling (analysed in section 3.1.2.1) lead up to a request for a sales visit; (2) the project occupies the main part of the call; (3) the last component of the project, getting the prospect's detail, is followed by moves toward call closure.

Figure 5: The business of the call in "lukewarm" calls



The methods participants use to initiate and achieve closing the conversation will be the focus of the final section of the chapter.

3.1.3 Closing the call

Closing a call requires participants' collaboration towards bringing the conversation to an end (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). Even though in most "cold" call closings participants work in concert to terminate the call, there are also, on occasion, unilateral closings (Raymond & Zimmerman, 2016; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973) initiated by the prospect who hangs up on the salesperson.

The next extract exemplifies a bilateral closing. It comes from a call in which the participants have agreed to meet to discuss the prospect's telecommunication setup. In line 1, the salesperson has just finished taking the latter's email address.

Extract 3-16 Eplus 3

```

1   S:   <R:i:ght.> Yea:h (.) .h if you've got anything
2       relevant to the phone system and data solutions (0.4)
3       u:::hm #u:#:h (.) it helps (0.3) [the guy]s to go=
4   P:   [°Uh huh°]
5   S:   =through it all .hhhh #a:nd an' I'll send you a
6       calendar request either tonight #or first thing
7       tomorrow ↑morningz
8   P:   Okay. Great. Pthhhh
9       (.)
10  S:   GOOD. LOVELY. Tony it's been a pleasure talking to you:
11      and hopefully you'll find the meeting very informative.
12      (0.2)
13  P:   ↑Okay. Thanks a lot.
14  S:   Lovely. Take ca[: r e.]
15  P:   [Cheers.] Bye-[bye. ]
16  S:   [Cheers.] By:e.

```

The participants align in the production of and transition to the end of their conversation. Line 1 constitutes the first in a series of "possible pre-closings" (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973, p. 303). The salesperson is making provisions for the future meeting by asking the prospect to prepare "anything relevant to the phone system and data solutions" (line 2). The sequence-initial "Yea:h" (line 1) marks the new course of action as a continuation and partial redoing of a non-adjacent action (Heritage, 2013). Further local evidence for the content of the turn being recycled comes from the prospect's reply. He produces an acknowledgement token in

interjacent overlap (Drew, 2009), before the salesperson finishes his TCU, thus “doing” recognising and aligning to this course of action before its actual completion. The salesperson keeps the floor beyond the production of his first TCU through an inbreath (line 5) and continues by informing the prospect of his next action – a move that repeats, confirms, and summarises their prior arrangements, thus being closing implicative (Button, 1987; Davidson, 1978; Sikveland & Stokoe, 2017). The prospect receipts the summary with an acknowledgement and an assessment “Okay. Great. Pthhhh” (line 8) treating it as “known” and not as new information.

Another indication of the imminent closing of the conversation comes from the salesperson’s next turn. He produces a backward-looking appreciation of the conversation (Button, 1987) and a forward-looking assessment of the future meeting “Tony it’s been a pleasure talking to you; and hopefully you’ll find the meeting very informative.” (lines 10-11). Note also the TCU-initial address term, which is often a marker of closing sequences (Rendle-Short, 2007). The prospect aligns to and furthers the pre-closing, by receipting his interlocutors turn and adding a “thank you” token. This is receipted by the salesperson who produces the first good-bye token “Take ca:re” (line 14) which ends up in overlap with the prospect’s “cheers” (line 15). The participants’ last two turns are almost identical and partly overlapping, which is indicative of an aligned closing of a conversation (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973).

By contrast, the next extract will illustrate a unilateral closing. It comes from a call which has not been unfolding in the ordinary fashion described in section 3.1.2. Prior to line 1, the salesperson had tried to gain some legitimacy for her call by implying she has been in contact with the company before “.Hhh Uhm we be- we ↑started a dialogue with reference to: thee document management print solutions”; however, the prospect did not ratify this framing of the call.

Extract 3-17 Tech 28

1 P: O[h, it i]s a sales (.) call.
 2 S: [↑No.]
 3 (0.3)
 4 S: >Yeah.< But what I want to find out is when that
 5 contract’s up for review=Then we can contact at
 6 [t h e] ti:me.
 7 P: [Yeah w’ll]
 8 P: We:ll we’re happy with u:hm ↓the people that we’re
 9 currently using.

10 (0.3)
 11 S: <I'm sure you are, but I wanted to find out when the
 12 contract's up for review; so then I can
 13 c[all maybe nearer the time,]
 14 P: [Yeah no we're happy with wh]o we're currently using.
 15 (0.5)
 16 S: ↑You don't know when the [contract's up for re]view;
 17 P: [O k a y. Thank you.]
 18 P: ((Hangs up))

Throughout this extract, the salesperson pushes forward with “information-gathering”, despite getting non-aligned responses. She fails to engage with the prospect’s refusals to answer her questions. This generates escalated misalignment and disaffiliation leading to the prospect’s initiation of call closure, in overlap, in line 18. Subsequently, he ends the conversation without waiting for his interlocutor’s response. Surprisingly, hang-ups are quite rare in this corpus of “cold” calls (2 out of 150 cases). The examination of this extract illustrates that this unilateral termination is a methodically achieved ordered interactional product.

In line 1, the prospect exposes the conversation as a sales call. The turn-initial “oh” indexes a change in the speaker’s knowledge status (Heritage, 1984a, 2018), thus delivering the turn as a discovery. The indexed change-of-state and the design of the affirmation with the long verb form “**it is** a sales (.) call.” carry accusatory undertones implicating the salesperson has not been forthcoming about the nature of the call.

The salesperson neglects to address the prospect’s concern about the commercial nature of the call. In line 4, she receipts the prospect’s accusatory remark but does not topicalise it. Instead, she starts a new, disjunctive course of action inquiring about the printer contract expiry date. Not only does her action disattend the current interactional concern raised by the prospect, but it also explicitly privileges her own agenda, through the “self-attentive” (Bolden, 2006, p. 661) formulations “But **what I want to find out** is when that contract's up for review=Then **we can contact** at the ti:me.” (lines 4-6). In response, the prospect produces a my-side report “We:ll **we're happy** with u:hm ↓the people that we're currently using.” (Drew, 1984). His response provides the grounds for not answering the question by invoking his commitment to the current supplier through a positive subject-side assessment (Edwards & Potter, 2017) of their services. It also exposes the question as not “mere” information-gathering, but as preliminary move in a longer sales-oriented course of action which he blocks (see Chapter 6 on “Resistance”).

Nonetheless, the salesperson continues to push for an answer. In her next turn, she produces a *pro forma* agreement (Pomerantz, 1984a) followed by a disjunctive marker that introduces a reiteration of her question, thus not accepting the prospect's turn as an adequate response. The past tense verb form indexes the utterance's subsequent position as a recycled query "but **I wanted to find out** when the contract's up for review; so then I can call maybe nearer the time," (lines 11-13). In interjacent overlap, the prospect grabs the floor to reiterate his prior response "**Yeah no** we're happy with who we're currently using." (line 14). The turn-initial skip-tying device deletes the salesperson's prior turn (Broe, 2003). In effect, the prospect ignores his interlocutor's query and reaffirms his previous stance in a way that emphasises its production as a repeat, thus underscoring the lack of conversational progressivity.

In her next turn, the salesperson displays having had trouble in understanding the prospect's overlapped turn. It is not possible to ascertain whether she indeed has heard her interlocutor's response. Nonetheless, she initiates repair producing a candidate interpretation of her interlocutor's prior turn: "↑You don't know when the contract's up for review?" (lines 16). Midway through her turn and in interjacent overlap, again, the prospect initiates call closure with the formulaic "Okay. Thank you." (line 17) and hangs up without producing a greeting and without waiting for an answer from his interlocutor.

Finally, note how here, as in other service encounters that end unsatisfactorily (Aston, 1995; Sikveland & Stokoe, 2017b), "thank you" is not used as a token of appreciation or a display of satisfaction, but as a resource for expediting conversational closure.

3.2. Discussion

This chapter has provided an overview of the conversational "racetrack" (Stokoe, 2014, p. 258) of business-to-business "cold" calls. I outlined the constituent activities comprised in each section of the encounter: the opening, the business of the call, and the closing. I showed how these activities are locally organised and contingently accomplished through the participants' situated work. In particular, I focused on and tracked the identity work that participants performed as part of each activity and argued that temporary or fatal breakdowns in the interaction could be traced back to their misaligned identities.

Based on the analysis undertaken in this chapter, a distinction between first-time "freezing" and returning "lukewarm" calls has emerged. Both participants oriented to whether the caller and call-taker, as representatives of their respective organisations, are

talking to each other for the first time, or whether the caller has been in contact with the prospected organisation before.

The beginning of a “cold” call consists of two parts which are organised to align participants’ identities and enable them to discuss the business of the call. The conversations start with caller and call-taker introducing themselves. Next, salespeople ask to speak to a particular person within the organisation, either through an “open” or a “closed” switchboard request. The former is used mainly in “freezing” calls, where salespeople do not employ the name of the “relevant” person they are seeking and, instead, enlist the receptionist in identifying who that person may be. By contrast, “lukewarm” calls feature “closed” switchboard requests through which the caller also claims prior knowledge of the sought person. The “closed” switchboard request is one of the practices within the repertoire through which salespeople display being acquainted with the “relevant” person. This repertoire is the focus of the next analytic chapter.

The business of the call is launched through a series of accounts for calling. I found that salespeople routinely start off with a “because of” account which explains how they arrived at calling *this* company *now*, thus establishing the legitimacy of the call. Then, they disclose *why* they are calling, thus producing an “in order to” account. Salespeople in “freezing” and “lukewarm” calls furnish their “because of” accounts with different materials. The former seeks to establish a link with the company via their partnership with a third organisation known to the prospect, such as the local county council. Meanwhile, salespeople in “lukewarm” calls invoke their prior interactions with the prospect or another employee of the organisation. They frame the call as part of an ongoing business relationship and project the participants into business partner roles with mutual obligations, rights, and expectations.

“In order to” accounts for calling are the first iteration of what the salespeople put forward to be the business of the call. In “freezing” calls, the salesperson’s account launches “information-gathering” – the first activity that makes up the this section of the call. It is followed by the salesperson taking the prospect’s contact details and making provisions for a future encounter. The order of the activities is, to a certain extent, flexible. It seems that, unlike in “lukewarm” calls, these activities do not make up a single coherent project. According to sales handbooks, “cold” calls are a means of qualifying leads; that is, establishing whether the prospective customers are in need of, interested in, and able to purchase the offered services. However, my analysis showed that the calls are organised to

establish *that and when* prospects will require the company's services as well as to furnish salespeople with the means (contact details) and opportunity to contact them at the right time.

By contrast, the business of a "lukewarm" call consists in arranging a sales appointment – a project which comprises three contingent activities: securing a meeting, scheduling the meeting, and getting the prospect's contact details. Securing a meeting is a pivotal place in the project as its success or failure determines whether the conversation will move forward or not. Chapter 5 will scrutinise this key phase of a "cold" call and will attempt to uncover the practices that yield successful outcomes for salespeople.

In the closing section of the call, participants review the arrangements made for future encounters while working, in concert, to end the conversation. On a rare occasion, calls are closed unilaterally as the result of escalated misalignment originating in the prospect's resistance to one of the salesperson's inquiries.

The analysis presented in this chapter has the merit of providing a complete picture of "freezing" and "lukewarm" cold call encounters. Habitually, conversation analytic studies focus on short stretches of talk or single sections of a conversation. Thus, the role that the overall structure of an encounter plays in organising participants' contribution is often missed. Two analytic findings presented in this chapter have benefited from taking this order of interaction into consideration. First, when I examined open switchboard requests in "freezing" calls, I showed how their design varied based on their sequential location. Second, analysing the overall structure of the business of "freezing" and "lukewarm" calls it became apparent that they differ not only in terms of their constituent activities, but also in terms of their structuring. Specifically, the three activities that comprise the business of a "lukewarm" call make up a single project, which starts with securing a meeting and ends with getting the prospect's contact details. Initiating a subsequent activity is contingent upon the prior having been successfully completed. By contrast, we saw that in "freezing" calls activities can be temporarily suspended, through the initiation of side sequences (Extract 3-11), to be resumed once the interposed activity was finalised.

Having provided a macro-scale overview of the organisation of "cold" calls in this chapter, next I change the analytic scale by zooming in on the first few turns that make up "lukewarm" call openings. The next chapter examines this interactional environment in order to highlight a key phenomenon in "lukewarm" calls: callers doing "being" acquainted with the prospects they are asking to speak to.

Chapter 4

Third-party acquaintanceship in “lukewarm” call openings

4.0 Introduction

While the previous chapter provided a macro-level overview of business-to-business “cold” calls, this chapter focuses on a phenomenon located in the first few turns of “lukewarm” calls. In this environment, we see participants working to establish not only “who they are for each other” (ten Have, 2002, p. 235), but also the caller’s relationship with the company and with the person they are asking to speak to. In the reduced space of a call opening, salespeople have to convince the call-takers that they are acquainted with the “relevant” persons they are asking to speak to in order to get the call-takers to “open” the gates and transfer the call. Gatekeeping has been documented by conversation analysts in ordinary (Houtkoop, 1987; Schegloff, 1979) and institutional environments (Maynard & Hollander, 2014; Maynard & Schaeffer, 1997). In the former, the key role of prior acquaintanceship was highlighted by Schegloff” (1979, p. 26): “Grossly put, such persons may (or may be required to) enter into interaction who have done so before [...] ‘acquaintanceship’ is one major basis for the undertaking of interaction. In “lukewarm” calls, while salesperson and receptionist are strangers to each other, the caller claims to be acquainted with the “relevant” person. The receptionist’s basis for assessing the genuineness of these claims is the salesperson’s communicative conduct. Therefore, each feature of the latter’s talk can serve as evidence of prior acquaintanceship between the salespeople and the persons they are seeking to get in touch with.

This chapter documents the practices and resources salespeople use to perform, for their interlocutors, that they are acquainted with an absent third party – the person they are asking to speak to. In what follows, I describe how “third-party acquaintanceship” (TPA) is accomplished in openings of “lukewarm” calls and I highlight some of the obstacles that speakers face when they do “being” acquainted with an absent third party.

The chapter contributes to several bodies of research. First, it examines the practices employed for doing third-party acquaintanceship. Second, the analysis affords a series of

observations about call openings and “closed” switchboard requests (see the distinction between “open” and “closed” switchboard requests proposed in Chapter 3, section 3.1.1.1) in prospecting calls, which will be discussed in the context of prior EM/CA research (Hopper, 1989; Maynard & Hollander, 2014; Schegloff, 1986). Finally, I reflect on how the public availability of the methods for doing “being” acquainted with an absent third party lends itself to exploitation by salespeople who may employ these practices deceitfully, in order to get past the gatekeeping receptionist.

4.1 Analysis

The ensuing analysis documents how third-party acquaintanceship is performed in the opening of “lukewarm” calls between salespeople and receptionists. In the first section (4.1.1), I highlight the practices for performing TPA, including person reference, switchboard requesting, and self-identification deployed by salespeople performing TPA. In line with prior CA research on the collaborative accomplishment of relationships (Hopper & Drummond, 1992; Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984; Pomerantz & Mandelbaum, 2005), I show how callers’ displays of TPA have to be ratified by receptionists. In the subsequent two sections, I highlight potential tensions between the constraints of the display of TPA and other interactional tasks that have to be accomplished in this sequential environment. Next, section 4.1.4, unpacks the mechanisms through which third-party acquaintanceship contributes to the legitimacy of the salesperson’s switchboard request. Finally, I discuss how call openings are designed as more or less “presumptive” (Maynard & Hollander, 2014, p. 28); that is, displaying the speaker’s orientation to their rights to pose the switchboard request.

4.1.1 Performing third-party acquaintanceship

Call openings are compact and interactionally dense, meaning that many interactional tasks have to be fulfilled within a limited space (Schegloff, 1986). The action sequences that comprise a canonical call opening are summons/answer, (self-)identification/recognition, greetings, and how-are-yous (Hopper, 1989; Schegloff, 1986; ten Have, 2002). When scrutinised, individual call openings exhibit adaptations of canonical form whereby the “deviations” highlight the methods participants use to display, for instance, that they are strangers or intimates (Hopper & Drummond, 1992), or what occasioned the call (Drew &

Chilton, 2000). In the reduced space of call openings, salespeople have limited opportunities for displaying, for their interlocutors, their prior acquaintanceship with the person they are asking to speak to. This section focuses on three practices – callers’ self-identification, other-reference, and “closed” switchboard request – which exhibit their acquaintanceship with the “relevant” person.

The first extract comes from the beginning of a call in which Kathryn, the salesperson (S) is talking to John, the receptionist (R). The switchboard request is located in the caller’s first turn (lines 3-5).

Extract 4-1 Tech 52

- 1 R: (Mornin') BPN.=John speakin' .
 2 (0.8)
 3 S: ↑G'd mornin' ,=I'is Ka:thryn callin' from <Ladybi:rd>.
 4 .hh ↑Would it be possible to speak to ↑Melvin please.
 5 (1.4) ((some background noise in the caller's
 6 office))
 7 R: U::#h Let me see if he's available.=Bear with me one
 8 second?
 9 S: ↑Thank you very much.

This call opening has been adapted from the canonical sequence (Schegloff, 1986), through specialisation, reduction (Wakin & Zimmerman, 1999), and compactness. The call-taker’s first turn (line 1) contains a greeting, an institutional, and a personal self-identification. This *specialised* turn design accomplishes several actions: it informs the caller that the communication channel is open (Pallotti & Varcasia, 2008) and that they have reached a particular company they are presumably seeking (Wakin & Zimmerman, 1999). By moving forward with the conversation, the caller confirms this presumption. Her turn, in line 3, consists of a greeting token, a self-identification, and a switchboard request.

The salesperson also produces a specialised self-identification comprised of her first name and company. She uses a recognitional format “I’ is Ka:thryn callin’ from <Ladybi:rd>” (line 3) which usually signals prior acquaintanceship between interactants (Lindström, 1994; Schegloff, 1979).

The *reduced* opening does not contain a stand-alone greeting nor a how-are-you sequence, elements which are often missing from institutional call openings (Pallotti & Varcasia, 2008; Wakin & Zimmerman, 1999). Both speakers produce compact, multi-TCU turns, which accomplish multiple actions, thus speeding up the progress of the conversation.

Of particular interest is Kathryn's "interlocked turn" (Schegloff, 1986, p. 132) (lines 3-5) through which she first deals with John's prior turn by reciprocating the greeting and self-identification and then initiates the new switchboard request sequence. Thus, she deletes the sequential slot where the receptionist could have reacted to her self-identification. Her last TCU, the switchboard request, becomes the relevant action to be dealt with by the call-taker in his subsequent turn (Sacks, 1987).

The switchboard request consists of a low entitlement construction (Curl & Drew, 2008), a first name reference, and a request marker ".hh ↑Would it be possible to speak to ↑Melvin please." (line 4). The construction "↑Would it be possible" displays the salesperson's orientation to unspecified contingencies that may preclude her from talking to Melvin. It could be heard as displaying Kathryn's orientation to her lack of permission to speak to Melvin (similar to asking "May I speak to Melvin?"). Alternatively, based on the use of the impersonal "it", the construction can be interpreted as indexing external obstacles that may preclude John from performing the requested action, such as Melvin's absence from the office or his engagement in another activity. This is the interpretation John displays in his turn in line 7. He invokes Melvin's availability as a contingency for the switchboard request "U::#h Let me see if he's available.". By orienting to Melvin's availability as the sole contingency for the fulfilment of Kathryn's request, John ratifies Kathryn's request as legitimate.

Several features of Kathryn's turn index her presumed acquaintanceship with Melvin. First, she refers to him by first name, which is a frequent indication of prior acquaintanceship (Hopper & Drummond, 1992). Second, her self-identification, featuring only her first name and company, suggests to John that Melvin will recognise her based on these minimal cues. The gatekeeper could easily call this into question by initiating repair, but then he might come across as suspicious or even hostile.

Third, Kathryn's use of a recognitional form to introduce herself and her company "I's Ka:thryn callin' from <Ladybi:rd>." (line 3) also belongs to the repertoire for doing "being" acquainted with Melvin. At first, the format she uses may appear to not be recipient designed, given that John and Kathryn do not enact knowing each other (Schegloff, 2007a). From John's point of view, hearing an unrecognised caller self-identify through a recognitional form signals she is doing something more than introducing herself. By using this marked reference form – that is a subsequent reference form in an initial position (Stivers et al., 2007) – Kathryn is showing that even though she is a "stranger" to John, she is not a "stranger" to Melvin, who would be able to recognise her. Thus, instead of recipient

designing her self-reference for John, she is “designing the recipient” (Hepburn & Potter, 2011a, p. 236) as a temporary interactant with whom she is having a brief, one-time-only conversation. Thus, rather than introducing herself to her interlocutor, Kathryn is presenting herself as Melvin’s acquaintance, implying that, for John, that is her relevant identity category (Edwards, 1998). Kathryn’s self-presentation as Melvin’s acquaintance further supports the legitimacy of her request to speak to him (Schegloff, 2007a).

To summarise, in Extract 4-1, we have seen Kathryn display a prior acquaintanceship with the person she is seeking to speak to, Melvin. She employs a recognitional self-reference, consisting of her first name and company, while also referring to Melvin by his first name as a way of displaying mutual acquaintanceship. She uses a low entitlement request whose design indexes non-specific contingencies which may preclude her from talking to Melvin. In his response to the switchboard request, John orients to Melvin’s availability as the sole contingency for the fulfilment of the request, thus treating Kathryn’s request as legitimate.

In the next example, the salesperson also enacts acquaintanceship with the person he is looking for. In contrast to Extract 4-1, he does not self-identify, and he uses a higher entitlement request format: “Can I speak to Waqar please.” (lines 3-4).

Extract 4-2 Eplus 40

1 R: Good afternoon Fiorentina,
 2 (0.4)
 3 S: .pthh (.) Hello:=Good afternoon, Can I speak to Waqar
 4 please.
 5 (0.5)
 6 R: U::hm He’s currently not in at the moment,
 7 (0.3)
 8 S: A::h. [(Are=you) expectin’ him in later.]
 9 R: [Uhm Can I leave a message?]

In Extract 4-2, the opening of the call is even more reduced than in Extract 4-1, with the caller’s self-identification missing. In lines 3-4, the salesperson produces a switchboard request, omitting the self-identification. In accord with the preference for progressivity in call openings (Schegloff, 2007a), the call-taker does not treat this omission as accountable, thus aligning as a temporary interactant, for which identification is not necessary.

In building the switchboard request, the salesperson employs a higher entitlement format¹² “Can I speak to Waqar please.” (Curl & Drew, 2008; Drew & Walker, 2010; Zinken, 2015). This format, recurrently used by customers in service and sales encounters (Fox, 2014; Fox & Heinemann, 2016; Levinson, 1983), positions the speaker as rightfully expecting to speak to Waqar and the gatekeeper as willing and able to fulfil the request (Fox & Heinemann, 2016; Zinken, 2015). While this format certainly indexes more entitlement than “Would it be possible to speak to” (Extract 4-1), it still orients to the possibility, however unlikely, of a rejection. This is achieved through the use of the first person modal verb “Can I” and the interrogative syntax which formally allows for both granting and rejecting, with the former being the preferred response (Heritage & Raymond, 2012). “Can I speak to” does not specify what contingencies may hinder the fulfilment of the switchboard request. However, it indexes only external barriers that may preclude the salesperson from talking to Waqar, for instance his absence from the office.

The receptionist delivers a dispreferred response marked through the 0.5 seconds gap and turn-initial “uhm”, the use of an account, and the turn-final mitigation “at the moment”. While the rejection does not carry the salesperson’s course of action forward, its design does not question or undermine its legitimacy embodied by the format of the switchboard request. The gatekeeper’s account indexes external contingencies that preclude the fulfilment of the request: Waqar’s absence from the office. The turn-final “at the moment” qualifies Waqar’s absence as a temporary barrier for the salesperson’s project. Moreover, in line 9, the gatekeeper offers to take a message, thus displaying his willingness to help the salesperson get in touch with Waqar.

The salesperson displays his acquaintanceship with the person he is seeking to speak by using the latter’s first name as a reference term in his switchboard request. In his next turn, the gatekeeper ratifies the implicit claim to acquaintanceship embodied by the first name reference through the pro-term “he” as a subsequent reference to Waqar.

To summarise, in this extract we see how the salesperson does “being” acquainted with Waqar (1) by dropping the self-identification, (2) by referring to the “relevant” person by first name, and (3) by orienting to circumstantial hindrances precluding the fulfilment of the switchboard request. Asking to speak to somebody you are acquainted with is a legitimate

¹² See Maynard and Hollander (2014) for a discussion about entitlement and request formats in switchboard requests in telephone surveys.

request to pose to a receptionist. The latter ratifies it and, while not fulfilling this request, treats it as an appropriate and legitimate course of action.

A third option for formulating a switchboard request consists in using pre-requests. Pre-requests specify the contingencies that preclude the fulfilment of the projected request, for instance, in Extract 4-3, the presence of the “relevant” person in the office: “Is ↑Mike there pleas:e.” (line 3). Compared to the two formats already analysed, it seems that pre-requests embody the highest entitlement and legitimacy for asking to speak to the “relevant” person (Maynard & Hollander, 2014), by singling out a specific circumstantial impediment that could hinder the request’s fulfilment.

Extract 4-3 Eplus 50

1 R: Good morning ↑Towers?
 2 (0.3)
 3 S: pkt Hi,=Is ↑Mike there pleas:e.
 4 (.)
 5 R: >He’s not=I’m afraid. No,=He’s out on an appointment.<
 6 (.)
 7 R: >Can I [ask ‘im<] (0.3) >t’ call< ba:ck.
 8 S: [#U:h-]
 9 (0.6)
 10 S: Yeah, I:’ll call ‘im >back a little bit< LAte(h)r.

The choice in switchboard request construction “Is ↑Mike there pleas:e.” (line 3) displays the salesperson’s orientation to Mike’s presence in the office as the sole pre-condition for the projected switchboard request to be fulfillable. While “Is X there” is syntactically a yes/no question, its function as a request to speak to Mike is based on three features: (1) its content through which the caller checks whether an essential condition for the call transfer is met (Levinson, 2013), (2) the turn-final “please”, which underscores “requesting” as the action accomplished through this TCU, and (3) its sequential location. The gatekeeper’s reply consists of several TCUs doing different actions (lines 5-8). He starts by responding to the question, orienting to his response as dispreferred through the turn-final apology “He’s not=I’m afraid”. Then, he produces a second response through which he provides more information about Mike’s whereabouts “He’s out on an appointment.” (lines 5-6). Then, in line 8, he offers to ask Mike to call the salesperson back. Throughout his turn the gatekeeper aligns with the salesperson’s implicit claim to have the right to talk to Mike while also showing his willingness to facilitate that communication.

As in the previous examples, the request displays the speaker's orientation to an external barrier which precludes the fulfilment of the request. Here, the contingency, Mike's presence in the office, is made explicit through the format of the pre-request. According to Levinson (1983), speakers attune their pre-requests to address the pre-condition most likely to impede on the fulfilment of the request. Taking this one step further, one can wonder whether the reciprocal is also possible, namely that speakers construct their pre-requests to indicate, for the recipients, what barriers would be acceptably blocking their requests. Thus, salespeople display their expectation that unavailability is the likely ground for the rejection of their request, which rhetorically obscures other potential grounds for rejection.

So far, in this section, we have seen that salespeople display prior acquaintanceship with the individuals they are asking to speak to through a combination of three discursive practices: (1) employing recognitional self-identification (for example "I's Ka:thryn callin' from <Ladybi:rd>" in Extract 4-1) or omitting self-identification, (2) referring to the sought individuals by their first names, and (3) employing switchboard requests oriented mainly towards circumstantial hindrances (more on switchboard requests in section 4.1.5). In all three cases, the request is not (immediately) granted. However, we see that the gatekeeper upholds the salesperson's claimed right to ask to speak to the "relevant" person. Even when receptionists do not fulfil the requests, they produce inability accounts, such as the "relevant" person's unavailability or absence from the office. Through the "vocabularies of motive" (Mills, 1940, p. 904) which furnish these accounts receptionists align with callers who, in their switchboard requests, had indexed external barriers that may hinder their fulfilment.

Let us now briefly examine a contrast case: the opening of a "freezing" call in which the salesperson is contacting an organisation for the very first time. In Extract 4-4, the salesperson, Britney, has called Downtown Primary School and is talking to a receptionist. Here, the salesperson does not claim to be acquainted with the "relevant" person.

Extract 4-4 Tech 3

1 R: Good afternoon Downtown Pr↑imary,
2 (0.7)
3 S: .HHhpkt ↑hello, Good afternoon to you, [I'm]=
4 R: [Hello.]
5 S: >my n-< my name's Britney and I'm calling from
6 <Electe:c>, uhm=
7 R: =>Okay.<=
8 S: =and wonder if I could .hhh ↑just have a brief m- u:hm
9 moment of the: (.) the business manager's time

10 there?=We: (.) wE are actually working .hhh alongside
 11 Hamil County Council, u:hb- u:hm We are your preferred
 12 supplier, .hh on you:r >copier contracts.<
 13 (.)
 14 R: All right. Okay

In the ensuing analysis, I will briefly point out the similarities and differences between the call opening in the “freezing” call in Extract 4-4 and the openings analysed so far, where callers perform TPA.

First, note the different format of the self-identification. The salesperson starts in line 3 with what presumably would have been a recognitional form and then repairs it to a non-recognitional self-identification “I’m >my n-< my name’s Britney”. The latter format, a self-introduction, is used when speakers do not presume that interlocutors know them (Schegloff, 1979, 2007a). By contrast, the second component of the self-identification, the company Britney is representing, embodies the presumption that the interlocutor is able to recognise “Electec”. The caller does not provide any details about the company such as its profile or its remit. In this respect, “freezing” calls resemble “lukewarm” calls: in their openings salespeople do not introduce the company that they are representing.

The call openings of “freezing” and “lukewarm” calls are similar in one other respect: their compactness (see also the analysis of Extract 4-1). Callers’ turns encompass more than one TCU that embody different actions, thus eliminating sequential opportunities for their interlocutors to react to each single action. In Extract 4-4, the salesperson produces the self-identification with continuous intonation and uses a delay token to show she is continuing her turn past the transition relevance place (line 6). The interlocutor’s acknowledgement “>Okay.<” (line 7) is hastily produced and latched to the previous turn.

Going back to methods for performing TPA, note the design of the switchboard request in Extract 5. Britney uses a low entitlement format “wonder if I could .hhh ↑just have a brief m- u:hm moment of the: (.) the business manager’s time there?” (lines 8-9). This format displays the speaker’s orientation to her lack of legitimacy for asking to speak to the business manager. Moreover, the salesperson attempts to mitigate any potential imposition on the business manager by minimising her request: she asks to “↑just have a brief m- u:hm moment” (lines 8-9) to speak to her/him. By contrast, when callers perform TPA, they do not treat their requests to speak to the “relevant” persons as imposing on them. The contingencies they orient to are circumstantial, such as the individuals’ presence in the office or their availability to talk on the phone.

Third, in performing TPA, callers most often refer to the relevant person by first name. In “freezing” calls, salespeople do not identify the “relevant” person by name. Instead, they ask the receptionist to identify the employee in their company occupying a specific position, such as the “business manager” in Extract 4-4. In other cases, salespeople ask to speak to the employee whose job remit covers printers or telecommunication management (see also Chapter 3, section 3.1.1.1 on “open” and “closed” switchboard requests).

Fourth, the salesperson goes to great lengths to account for her call (Sacks, 1989b). She informs the receptionist about her company’s business relationship with Hamil County Council. Inferring that Downtown Primary is managed by Hamil County Council, she announces that her company is the school’s preferred copier supplier: “We: (.) wE are actually working .hhh alongside Hamil County Council, u:hb- u:hm We are your preferred supplier, .hh on you:r >copier contracts.<” (lines 10-13). This intricate demonstration of the relevance of the call is missing from “lukewarm” calls. When salespeople call a business and request to speak to somebody they are acquainted with, they do not need to provide additional justifications for calling. Asking to speak to an acquaintance is a legitimate request, which receptionists are accountable for fulfilling (see section 4.1.4 on the legitimacy of switchboard requests).

To summarise, the opening of “freezing” calls differ from those of “lukewarm” calls in several important ways. In the former, the salespeople do not display being acquainted with the persons they are looking for. They introduce themselves to the call-takers and identify the “relevant” persons by reference to their job title or description (see also Chapter 3, section 3.1.1.1). Finally, switchboard requests, index low entitlement for speaking to the “relevant” persons and are often supported by accounts for calling that enhance their legitimacy.

So far, we have seen how salespeople display acquaintanceship with the “relevant” persons they are asking to speak to. While receptionists may not grant the switchboard requests right away, they still go along with their framing as legitimate. This latter observation provides additional support for treating TPA as an interactional accomplishment. Importantly, when callers enact TPA, their performance has to be ratified by call-takers, even though the latter are strangers to the callers and have not been involved in the invoked relationship. When a receptionist does not lend support to a salesperson’s performance of TPA, its enactment fails. Not only is the caller denied access to the “relevant” person, but also their sales project gets blocked. Finally, the inauthenticity of the TPA display may get “exposed” by the receptionist. Let us look briefly at a case where this happens. In Extract 4-5,

the salesperson calls a company anonymised as “Red Dragon” and asks to speak to Thomas. The receptionist declines her request and, thereafter, starts questioning its legitimacy.

Extract 4-5 Tech 50

1 R: Good mornin' Red Dragon,
2 (0.4)
3 S: Good morning.=It's ↑Kathryn calling from Ladybird. Would
4 it be possible to speak to Thomas please.
5 (0.6)
6 R: Thomas Fairchild?
7 (0.4)
8 S: It is ↑Thomas Fairchase.
9 (0.3)
10 R: Yea::h. No: he's not available, Uhm >Sorry< what does
11 Ladybird ↑do? .h
12 (0.3)
13 S: It's in regards to print management and data
14 securi[ty].
15 R: [He would definitely not be working o:n print
16 management.=He's thee uhm em dee?
17 (.)
18 S: .h Right, sorry#. =↑Who ↑would
19 i[t be that I would need] to pkt=
20 R: [It's all right;]
21 S: =[() (speak to)]
22 P: [U:hm we don't really have] any needs for print
23 management=at the mo:ment,=↓Could you just mark that on
24 your: .hhH t(h)ing so that people don't keep calling
25 ↑back.

In Extract 4-5, the salesperson, Kathryn, identifies herself and her company and then asks to speak to Thomas (lines 3-4). The receptionist initiates repair on the person reference which she treats as inappropriate for identifying the referent. She repeats the first name of the “relevant” person and adds his last name “Thomas Fairchild?” (line 6). Thus, she also provides a repair solution which, produced with rising intonation, invites a confirmation from the interlocutor. In line 8, the salesperson does confirm the name of the “relevant” person. However, note the slight difference in pronouncing the last name Fairchild / Fairchase exposed through the salesperson’s embedded correction (Jefferson, 1987). The receptionist does not topicalise this slip. Instead, she uses the “Yea::h. No:” skip-tying device (Broe, 2003) to re-connect her turn to the original switchboard request declining it through an unavailability account. In contrast to other rejections, here the receptionist does not design

her response as dispreferred. Moreover, she does not offer to take a message or advise the caller to call back at a more suitable time. Instead, she starts questioning the legitimacy of the call by enquiring about the salesperson's company, Ladybird.

The trajectory of this call differs from the ones in other “lukewarm” calls already analysed. So far, even when receptionists did not grant the switchboard requests, they treated them as legitimate. They did not question the callers' reason for calling or scrutinise their self-identification. By contrast, in Extract 4-5, the receptionist asks for more details about Ladybird “Uhm >Sorry< what does Ladybird ↑do? .h” (lines 10-11). The salesperson treats this question as soliciting the reason for the call. She informs the receptionist that “It's in regards to print management and data security” (line 13-14).

Upon finding out the reason for the call, the receptionist informs Kathryn that Thomas is not working on print management: “He would definitely not be working o:n print management.” (lines 15-16). The informing is designed to highlight, rather than soften, the contradiction with Kathryn's presumption, embodied in the switchboard request, that Thomas would be interested in taking the call. Note the emphasis on “definitely” and the use of the modal verb “would” which indexes recurrent, scripted, or generalised conduct (Edwards, 2006). She refutes not only the possibility that Thomas is involved in print management at the moment, but also that he would ever get involved with this. While Kathryn had not claimed that explicitly, the TPA performance and, in particular, the design of the switchboard request, had encouraged the receptionist to see this call as relevant for Thomas (see also section 4.1.4 on the legitimacy of switchboard requests). By announcing that Thomas does not work on print management, the receptionist highlights Kathryn's erroneous assumptions. She also informs Kathryn that Thomas is the company's managing director, which the salesperson, claiming prior acquaintanceship to Thomas, should have known. Thus, the receptionist implies that Kathryn's TPA display is not genuine and that she acts as if she knows Thomas, when in fact she does not.

Kathryn does not orient to the implied accusation of inauthenticity and, instead, treats the receptionist's turn as a simple informing. After receipting the information, she moves on with her sales project by asking to speak to another company employee about print management. Upon hearing that the caller has started a new course of action, the receptionist comes in in overlap to stop it (line 22). She uses a “no need” account to block Kathryn's sales project (see also Chapter 6, section 6.1.1 on sales blocks).

To summarise, in this extract, the receptionist does not cooperate with the salesperson. She does not go along with Kathryn's display of being acquainted with Thomas.

While not contesting it directly, she questions its performance and exposes its inauthenticity. Extract 4-5 provides further support for the argument put forward in this analytic section that TPA display is an interactional accomplishment. Callers display their acquaintanceship with the “relevant” persons through the options for designing their actions in call openings. In responding to these actions, call-takers ratify or challenge the TPA displays, with consequences for the outcome of the calls.

Finally, this call offers the opportunity to reflecting on ways to improve “cold” calling practices. The salesperson’s obvious mistake was the incorrect pronunciation of the “relevant” person’s name in line 8. However, her first error may have actually occurred even earlier, in line 4, when she asks to speak to Thomas. While Kathryn’s low entitlement request indicates this is a business call, her use of a *first-name-only* reference implies that she is acquainted with Thomas. Given that he is the managing director of the Red Dragon, in business conversations, Thomas should probably be referred to using formats that index his status, for instance *first+surname*, perhaps even preceded by a title (Laurier, 2016). This conjecture is supported by the type of repair initiated by the receptionist in her subsequent turn: “Thomas Fairchild?” (line 6). This repair operation treats the reference format used by Kathryn as the trouble source and replaces it with a *first+surname* form which is proposed to be a more appropriate option. While the repair also disambiguates the reference, that is not its main concern. Compare this repair operation with other available alternatives. For instance, in an identical sequential environment (Extract 4-10, line 6), the receptionist repairs a problematic name reference by asking “Which Charles please” whereby she solicits further information that would disambiguate an insufficiently clear reference. Thus, while both repair operations treat the name reference as the trouble source, here, the receptionist also corrects the salesperson’s reference, treating it as inappropriate. To conclude, Kathryn slips up in her very first turn, in which she uses what is deemed by her interlocutor to be an infelicitous *first-name-only* reference in a low entitlement switchboard request to speak to the company’s managing director. Her mistake is actualised and made visible in the recipient’s turn where it is replaced with a *first+surname* reference. Subsequently, as I have highlighted, the call goes from bad to worse, exposing Kathryn’s false acquaintanceship performance.

4.1.2 Getting into trouble while performing third-party acquaintanceship: caller self-identification

So far, I have shown that salespeople do “being” acquainted with the persons they have called to speak to not only through the use of *first-name-only* references, but also through their options for designing their switchboard requests and self-identification. I have also shown how receptionists go along with these displays of TPA and how they treat the switchboard request as legitimate. In the next two sections, I present a series of cases in which performing TPA causes interactional trouble. More specifically, it occasions sequence expansion and self-repair, thus slowing down the progressivity of the conversation. In this section, I focus on the trouble occasioned by the missing self-identification. These cases shed light onto the difficulties callers face when displaying TPA while also dealing with the task of presenting themselves to their interlocutors.

In more than a third of the “lukewarm” calls in the dataset (44 out of 109 cases) salespeople introduce themselves before asking to speak to the “relevant” persons. Most often, callers self-identify, using recognitional forms, by *first-name-only* mention the company they represent (for instance “It’s ↑Kathryn calling from Ladybird.” in Extract 4-5). While identification / recognition is a key element of any canonical opening sequence, it is dispensed with in some institutional call openings to achieve efficiency (Pallotti & Varcasia, 2008; Wakin & Zimmerman, 1999). For instance, in calls to emergency lines, callers’ self-identifications are routinely missing from their first turns as the main business of the call, while reporting an incident takes precedence (Wakin & Zimmerman, 1999). In the rare cases when caller self-identification does occur in the opening of an emergency call, it may be treated by call-takers as slowing down the progress of the main task-at-hand (Zimmerman, 1992). Finally, in calls to institutions, callers may be asked to identify themselves later in the call, as part of an institutionally-mandated ongoing project such as booking an appointment (Sikveland & Stokoe, 2017a). As I have already argued, in the opening of “lukewarm” calls, by not self-identifying, the caller treats the call-taker as a temporary conversational partner. Moreover, the missing self-identification conveys to the receptionist that the caller, while not known to the current call-taker, is known to the “relevant” person.

Nonetheless, given that in call openings interactants have to establish who they are for the conversation ahead, missing self-identifications can and sometimes are treated as accountable by receptionists. For instance, in Extract 4-6, the receptionist delays the fulfilment of the switchboard request by first inquiring into the caller’s identity (line 6).

Extract 4-6 Eplus 59

1 R: Lionel DePaul Stage ↑Door,
 2 (0.5)
 3 S: .pkt Oh he:llo,=Good morning.=Can I speak to Randell;
 4 (0.4)
 5 R: Yes. Who's c↑alling.
 6 (0.3)
 7 S: #Uh it's Guy from Eplus.
 8 (0.5)
 9 R: Thank you.
 10 ((ring))

In Extract 4-6, the salesperson has called the Lionel DePaul theatre and is asking to speak to Randell (line 3)¹³. The gatekeeper does not respond to the request in his subsequent turn. He acknowledges it with a turn-initial “yes”, which does not constitute a full response to a remote request (Houtkoop, 1987; Lindström, 2017). He then initiates repair by inquiring about the caller’s identity using an elided version of the question “Can I ask who is calling”. Reducing the question to “Who’s c↑alling”, the speaker minimises its importance and mitigates its imposition. The salesperson treats the inquiry as somewhat inapposite by delaying his response through a turn-initial “#Uh” (Schegloff, 2010). His response is formatted as a recognitional self-identification indicating to the gatekeeper that the name and company are offered as information to be passed on to the “relevant” person not as a self-introduction done for the current recipient. In line 10, we see the gatekeeper aligning to this course of action through a sequence-closing third “Thank you.”, thus treating the self-identification as providing information in response to his turn in line 6, which is retrospectively interpreted as a request for information. The fulfilment of the request is not explicitly announced. Instead, it is only made available to the salesperson through the ring (line 11) he hears, which indicated to him that the gatekeeper has dialled Randell’s extension. The call-taker accomplishes this “gatekeeping” through the sequential positioning of his identity inquiry. By asking the caller to self-identify before responding to his switchboard request, the receptionist makes his response contingent on the caller’s identity.

The accountability of callers’ missing self-identifications is worked out interactionally. This is even clearer in the next extract. Here the receptionist’s identity inquiry

¹³ Extracts 4-6, 4-8 and 4-15 feature calls made to the same company, Lionel DePaul theatre. In each case, the salesperson fails to reach the “relevant” person.

“pt Can I ask who’s ca:lling.” (line 6) is corrected by the salesperson in his next turn “You certainly may.=It’s Guy from Eplus.” (line 7).

Extract 4-7 Eplus 25

1 R: Good afternoon Leonard Constructions,
 2 (0.3)
 3 S: mcht (0.3) .h ↓Hell↑o:↓:, >hi there<. Can I speak to
 4 Jo:hn.
 5 (0.5)
 6 R: pt Can I ask who’s ca:lling.
 7 (0.2)
 8 S: You certainly may.=It’s Guy from Eplus.
 9 (0.8)
 10 R: U:#:h one sec?
 11 (0.4)
 12 ((phone beeping))

In Extract 4-7, the salesperson has called Leonard Constructions and is asking to speak to John (lines 3-4). After a 0.5 seconds gap, the receptionist produces the first pair part of a pre-second insert expansion (Schegloff, 2007b): “pt Can I ask who’s ca:lling.” (line 6). Similar to the previous extract, by inserting the identity inquiry before the response to the switchboard request, the receptionist makes his response contingent upon the salesperson’s identity. The salesperson’s response in line 8 consists of two TCUs. The first part is a *pro forma* compliance “You certainly may.”. Note the replacement of the verb “can” with the verb “may” and the emphasis on the latter. This embedded correction (Jefferson, 1987) renegotiates the participants’ deontic statuses underscoring the receptionist’s low entitlement to inquire into the salesperson’s identity. He then self-identifies by first name and company.

In the two extracts analysed so far, we have seen that and how receptionists treat the callers’ self-identification as accountably missing. In both cases, the receptionist makes the fulfilment of the switchboard request dependent on the salesperson’s identity, by interpolating it between the first and second pair part of the switchboard request sequence. By contrast, in the next extract, the salesperson will first respond to the switchboard request and then ask the caller to self-identify (lines 5-6).

Extract 4-8 Eplus 64

1 R: GOo:d afternoon,= Lionel DePaul Stage Door,
 2 (0.4)

3 S: Oh good afternoon ().=Can I speak to Tom Miller
4 please.
5 (0.3)
6 R: I'll just see if he's in.=Who >shall I< say is
7 ca:llin' .=
8 S: =#Uh it's Patrick from Eplus. Thank you.
9 (0.3)
10 R: Okay, Hold on one sec'nd.

In Extract 4-8, the salesperson asks to speak to Tom Miller (lines 3-4). In the next turn, the receptionist responds to the switchboard request “I’ll just see if he’s in.” (line 6). While she does not immediately grant the request, she does display her willingness to fulfil it. Only afterwards does she ask the caller to self-identify “Who >shall I< say is ca:llin'.” (lines 6-7). The order of these actions shows the receptionist is not questioning the legitimacy of the switchboard request, nor making its fulfilment contingent upon the caller’s identity. Moreover, the design of the identity inquiry announces that she will be communicating that information to the “relevant” person. The salesperson responds by providing his first name and company (line 8).

In this section, we have seen two ways in which call-takers respond when callers omit doing self-identification. In Extract 4-8, the receptionist responds to the switchboard request and only then asks the salesperson to self-identify. In Extracts 4-6 and 4-7, the receptionists insert the identity inquiry between the two parts of the switchboard request sequence, thus making their responses contingent on it. In these extracts we see salespeople pushing back against this interactional constraint. Finally, the data show that and how the accountability of self-identifying is worked out interactionally. Moreover, how the caller’s self-identification is relevant – as providing information for the “relevant” person or as self-presentation for the current interlocutor – is also negotiated in the interaction.

4.1.3 Getting into trouble while performing third-party acquaintanceship: references to the “relevant” person

A second locus for interactional trouble in the opening of “lukewarm” calls is the reference to the “relevant” person. In most of the cases presented so far, salespeople use *first-name-only* references, by which they perform acquaintanceship with the “relevant” person. However, in 21 out of 109 “lukewarm” calls in the dataset, salespeople refer to the persons they are asking to speak to by first and last name. Given that in all these cases, they could have used a *first-*

name-only reference, it is puzzling why they have opted for the former. In what follows, I will present some cases that shed light onto this question. I will show how the selection of reference terms can be dictated by acquaintanceship, but also by practical matters such as achieving identification of the referent.

In Extract 4-9, the salesperson refers to the “relevant” person, Marion Woodenbrough, by *first+surname* (line 4). Subsequently, she also claims to have spoken to her in the past (lines 18-20), so we can surmise that her use of *first+surname* reference indexes acquaintanceship.

Extract 4-9 Tech 18

1 R: Good morning.=Gee Dee ↑James and Co,
 2 (.)
 3 S: H:ello Gee Dee James and Co; ↑Can I please speak with
 4 Marion Woodenobrough plea:se°.
 5 R: .hh u:hm Marion i:s uhm in our Hamilton office.
 6 S: A::h so I can call her there;
 7 (.)
 8 R: Y[es.
 9 S: [#MZCH #MCH:=Excuse me. .h It's Marion that deals with
 10 you:r uhm >the document management print solutions<
 11 copiers etcetera isn't it. .h
 12 R: It i:s, B#ut [she:'s uhm working for kt pkt .Hh=
 13 S: [Yeah.]
 14 R: =(0.2) u:hm she:'s (0.6) you kno:w (0.4)
 15 no[t doing h]er=
 16 S: [Y e a h.]
 17 R: =own job at the moment, S[o:
 18 S: [No that's right, Because when
 19 I spoke to he:r .hh u#h it's just to keep in contact
 20 with her an:d just sort of start building a
 21 relationship really, .Hh (so we) want to come in and do
 22 'er a: (0.2) .pthh cost analysis for her.=So: which
 23 (0.7) #uh office shall I: (.) call her on?

While referring to a person by their first name is a strong indication of prior acquaintanceship, *first+surname* references can also be used when the speaker is acquainted with the referee, as in Extract 4-9. The salesperson asks to speak to Marion Woodenbrough using a version of the “Can I speak to X” format that is used in conjunction with *first-name-only* references in Extracts 4-2 and 4-6.

In responding, the receptionist treats the caller's switchboard request as legitimate. Even though she does not grant the request, she provides information that would allow the

salesperson to reach Marion. More importantly, she also treats the caller as knowledgeable about the company that she has called. This is evident from the recognitional form “our Hamilton office” (line 5) that she uses to indicate Marion’s whereabouts. This place reference is deployed without any additional explanation about how the company is organised, thus relying on the interlocutor’s prior knowledge for fully understanding the reference (Schegloff, 1972; Stivers et al., 2007).

The salesperson claims to be acquainted with Marion in lines 18-20 where she invokes a prior conversation with the latter “Because when I spoke to her .hh u#h it’s just to keep in contact with her and just sort of start building a relationship really”. One should not consider this claim to be evidence of her acquaintanceship with Marion – whether or not the salesperson had spoken to Marion before is irrelevant for the current analysis. Instead, one might be interested in exploring why the salesperson mentioned it at that particular point in the conversation. To answer this question, let us look at what follows this display of acquaintanceship. In lines 22-23, the salesperson asks the receptionist where she can reach Marion. Note that the latter had already informed the caller that Marion is working in the company’s Hamilton office and the salesperson had acknowledged that in her next turn. The receptionist’s informing in line 5 treated the salesperson as knowledgeable about the company’s office arrangements, an assumption which the salesperson did not contest in her reply. Thus, for the salesperson to be able to ask for more information about the Hamilton office without appearing phoney, she has to explain how she knows Marion. By clarifying that she is not in a business relationship with Marion yet and that she is working towards building one, the salesperson recuperates the integrity of her acquaintanceship performance and accrues legitimacy for her subsequent request for information.

It seems that, in business-to-business calls, both *first-name-only* and *first+surname* references can be used for and treated as displays of TPA, in conjunction with the other resources identified in section 4.1.1. However, the two reference options are not identical with respect to the kind of acquaintanceship they index (Ekberg, 2014). In Extract 4-9, there are subtle features through which the salesperson constructs her relationship with Marion as incipient. For instance, in lines 9-11, she seeks confirmation from the receptionist that Marion is responsible for the company’s office equipment: “.h It’s Marion that deals with you:r uhm >the document management print solutions< copiers etcetera isn’t it. .h”. By using a declarative syntactic format, she indexes a shallow epistemic gradient (Heritage, 2012a), positioning herself as knowledgeable about Marion’s role within the company. The “knowing” stance taken by the salesperson is in accord with her claim of being acquainted

with Marion, while the uncertainty about the latter's job remit suggests their acquaintanceship is somewhat limited. A clearer indication for the incipency of the relationship can be found in lines 20-21, where the salesperson mentions that she plans to "start building a relationship" with Marion. This formulation suggests the business relationship between Marion and the salesperson is still in its very early stages.

The use of *first+surname* reference seems to belong to the repertoire of performing TPA; however, it indexes an incipient relationship between the speaker and the third party. In Extract 4-9, the salesperson claims to have interacted with the "relevant" person in the past, while also displaying uncertainty with regard to the scope of Marion's job. This suggests that speakers distinguish between various shades of acquaintanceship which they perform in nuanced ways through discursive resources such as reference terms and knowledge displays.

While in Extract 4-9 the *first+surname* reference to the "relevant" person indexed an incipient acquaintanceship, this may not always be the case. In what follows, I will show that and how last names can be used to deal with a more practical issue: identifying/recognising the referent. I will be using several extracts to construct my argument. I will highlight two problems related to identification/recognition: (1) disambiguating between employees with the same first name and (2) not recognising the referent. In Extract 4-9, we see how *first-name-only* references can be treated by receptionists as insufficient for identifying the person the caller is looking for. Then, in Extracts 11 and 12, we see salespeople using *first+surname* references in transition space repair as solutions for potentially forthcoming identification issues. Finally, in Extract 4-9, the salesperson repairs the problematic *first-name-only* reference by replacing it with a title + surname reference in response to the receptionist's difficulty in recognising the referent.

In Extract 4-10, the salesperson asks to speak to Charles (lines 3-4). The receptionist defers her response by initiating repair on the person reference (line 6).

Extract 4-10 Eplus 17

- 1 R: Good afternoon,=Sunshine Sch↑ool,
 2 (0.3)
 3 S: .pth Oh=good afternoon, Uhm can I speak to Charles
 4 please.
 5 (0.6)
 6 R: Which Charles please=
 7 S: =#U:h M:ilton °hh°
 8 (0.6)
 9 R: Okay=Hold on please.

In Extract 4-10, the salesperson refers to the “relevant” person by first name, which indexes their acquaintanceship. This reference turns out to be problematic for the fulfilment of the switchboard request. In line 6, the receptionist produces the first pair part of a post-first insert sequence (Schegloff, 2007b), whereby she initiates repair on the person reference. Her turn “Which Charles please” solicits additional information for identifying the person referred to by *first-name-only*. As such, she indicates that the reference is insufficient for complying with the switchboard request. In line 7, the salesperson produces the second pair part of the insert sequence containing the sought repair solution. She provides Charles’s last name, “M:ilton”, as a further clue which presumably would facilitate the identification of the referent. In line 9, the salesperson acknowledges the provision of the repair solution with a sequence-closing-third “Okay”. She then goes on to deal with the switchboard request.

While in Extract 4-10 it is the receptionist who treats the *first-name-only* reference as insufficient for identification, in the next two extracts we see salespeople orienting to this potential issue by initiating repair on it in the transition space following the completed TCU in which the trouble source is located.

In Extract 4-11, the salesperson refers to the “relevant” person by his first name, “Kei:th”, and then repairs that reference to *first+surname*, “Keith <Belville,>” (lines 4-5).

Extract 4-11 Eplus 4

1 R: .h Good morning The Marcus Hotel Johnson speak'n' =How
 2 can I help ↑you?
 3 (0.3)
 4 S: Oh hello. Good mornin', ↑Is Kei:th in today=Keith
 5 <Belville,>
 6 (.)
 7 R: (>Who shall I say<) is calling sir?

In the extract above the switchboard request is performed via the pre-request “↑Is Kei:th in today” (see Extract 4-3 for an analysis of this format). The reference to the “relevant” person is located mid-TCU. The salesperson brings the TCU to completion by adding two more lexical items before launching the transition space repair. He repairs the *first-name-only* reference “Kei:th” by replacing it with a *first+surname* reference “Keith <Belville,>”. By repairing the reference instead of employing a *first+surname* reference in the switchboard request the salesperson performs TPA while also displaying a concern for precision in other-

referencing. By adding the surname, the salesperson orients to the possibility that a *first-name-only* reference may be insufficient for the identification of the referent by the receptionist. As we have seen in Extract 4-9, a *first+surname* reference in the switchboard request may index an incipient acquaintanceship, which in this case could be incompatible with the high entitlement format of the request.

Similarly, in the next extract, the salesperson uses transition space repair to replace the initial person reference. Here, the salesperson replaces a *first-name-only* reference “↑Eva:n” (line 3) with a *first+surname* reference preceded by a term of endearment “your lovely Evan Dambry.” (line 4).

Extract 4-12 Tech 17

- 1 R: Good morning. Business Conference Centre,=How can I
 2 h↑elp?=
 3 S: Oh good morning to you.=Can I sp↑eak with ↑Eva:n
 4 please;=your lovely Evan Dambry.
 5 (0.3)
 6 R: ↑Evan is not here ye:t. [E::h]=<You can find him:=
 7 S: [Q::h]
 8 R: =arou:'twel- #1 yeah twelve or one o'clock.

In 4-12, the salesperson does “being” acquainted with Evan through the practices described in section 4.1.1 (see the analysis of Extract 4-2): omitting the self-identification, referring to the “relevant” person by first name and using a high entitlement request format. After bringing the TCU to completion, she initiates repair on the person reference in the transition space. She expands the initial *first-name-only* reference to a *first+surname* reference preceded by the qualifier “your lovely” which index the speaker’s familiarity with the referent (Laurier, 2012; Placencia, 2004).

The use of the possessive pronoun “your” is also worth noting as it reveals another facet of performing TPA. By referring to Evan as “your lovely Evan Dambry”, the salesperson acknowledges the presumed relationship between the receptionist, as the representative of the Business Conference Centre, and the “relevant” person as an employee of that company (Stivers, 2007).

The relationship between the receptionist and the “relevant” person is also oriented to in the final extract analysed in this section. Here the salesperson repairs the initial reference

from “Waqar” (line 4) to “Mister Feldman” (line 7) after the receptionist displays having difficulties with recognising the referent.

Extract 4-13 Eplus 47

1 R: Good morning Fiorentina,
 2 (0.4)
 3 S: .hh Goo' morning. .h (.) Trying to catch up with=uh h
 4 (.) Waqar.
 5 (0.8)
 6 R: U:[: : h]
 7 S: [Mister F]eldman.
 8 (0.7)
 9 R: Feldman=He's currently not here at the moment.=He's
 10 just in a meeting.=#U:hm: Can I leave a message for
 11 him?

The switchboard request in Extract 4-13 is different from other formats discussed so far. It is a declarative construction that indexes the salesperson's intention to get in touch with Waqar. Note the colloquial formulation “catch up with” (lines 3-4) which suggests he has been in touch with Waqar in the past. The first clue that the person reference could be problematic is found in the salesperson's turn where he hesitates before employing a *first-name-only* reference “with=uh h (.) Waqar.” (line 4). It turns out that the reference is indeed problematic for his interlocutor. After a 0.8 seconds gap the receptionist takes a turn which starts with a delay token produced with an elongated vowel “U::h” (line 6), which displays his difficulty in responding to the salesperson's request. The latter comes in in overlap and repairs the person reference which he treats to be the source of the receptionist's trouble in responding to the request. The repair solution, “Mister Feldman” replaces the initial reference “Waqar”. In contrast to the previous two extracts, here, the repair solution is prompted by the delay in the receptionist's response which is interpreted by the salesperson as having been occasioned by the *first-name-only* reference. Based on the repair solution, we can make out that the salesperson treats the receptionist's trouble as occasioned by him not being able to identify the referent. Thus, the repair solution does not repeat the first name “Waqar”, but instead consists of a modified reference, that would presumably be more familiar to the interlocutor who probably does not know the referent by his first name. The familiarity of the referent's last name is confirmed by the receptionist who repeats only the surname “Feldman” before responding to the switchboard request (line 9).

To summarise, in this section, I have identified the alternative practices salespeople use for referring to the “relevant” person in their “closed” switchboard requests to receptionists. It seems that *first-name-only* and *first+surname* references are treated similarly by receptionists, as displaying the interlocutor’s acquaintanceship with the referent. However, by examining the use of *first+surname* references, I have shown that they can be used by the caller to claim an incipient acquaintanceship with the “relevant” person. It is worth restating that the reference to the “relevant” person is not the sole basis for TPA. As I have argued in the first analytic section of this chapter, acquaintanceship with third parties is performed also through the design of the switchboard request and the speaker’s (absent) self-identification.

Additionally, I have shown how last names can also solve a more practical problem: the identification of the referent. Salespeople employ *first+surname* references in self-repair, thus disambiguating a potentially imprecise reference. Finally, the analysis demonstrated the importance of considering the sequential environment in which a reference is deployed. I have shown how the same reference format *first+surname* has different interactional functions depending on whether it is used in the switchboard request or in transition space repair.

4.1.4 Third-party acquaintanceship and the legitimacy of “closed” switchboard requests

Throughout this chapter, I have suggested that by displaying prior acquaintanceship with the person they are asking to speak to, salespeople frame their requests as legitimate. In this section, I aim to unpack how acquaintanceship warrants the legitimacy of the “closed” switchboard request in which callers use names to identify the person they are seeking to speak to. In calling a business, being acquainted with sought person seems to provide enough grounds for the receptionist to forward the call to them. By comparison, as we have seen in the opening of the “freezing” call in Extract 4-4, the legitimacy of the “open” switchboard request is built by invoking other business relationships between the involved parties.

In the next extract, we see one aspect of prior acquaintanceship being unpacked by the salesperson in the service of warranting his switchboard request. In lines 7-9, he mentions a prior discussion he had with the “relevant” person.

Extract 4-14 Eplus 20

1 R: To:m The Crownley () speakin' can I help you.
 2 (0.3)
 3 S: Oh hello, Good morning.=I:s:=uh Mike in today?
 4 (0.4)
 5 R: (May) I ask who's callin'.
 6 (.)
 7 S: Uh yeh. Paul Gilbert from Eplus. >It's< to do with a
 8 conversa:tion I had about ↑three weeks ago with him.

In Extract 4-14, the salesperson asks to speak to Mike using a pre-request format “I:s:=uh Mike in today?” (line 3) which makes a fulfilment of the request conditional on Mike’s presence in the office. Note that the salesperson is not asking whether Mike is in the office at the moment (as in Extract 4-3), but whether he had come to work on that day. This question implies that the caller might be familiar, to some extent, with Mike’s work arrangements. In particular, the turn-final “today”, which adds what might seem unnecessary temporal specificity to question, indexes the speaker’s familiarity with some aspects of Mike’s work schedule, but not others. He implies knowing Mike might not come to the office every day. Finally, it is worth noting the speaker’s hesitation in the selection of the reference term for Mike. Not only is the reference preceded by a short delay token “uh”, but the prior word, “I:s:” is elongated, thus embodying the speaker’s search for the next item in the TCU (Kitzinger, 2013). While the nature of the trouble with the reference term is not revealed, what is made available, for the receptionist, is the caller’s hesitation in the selection of the reference.

In line 6, the receptionist replies with an identity inquiry “(May) I ask who’s callin'”. As I already argued (see also the analysis of Extracts 4-6 and 4-7), the insertion of this question after the switchboard request indicates that the receptionist’s response is contingent on the salesperson’s identity. The latter responds, in lines 7, by identifying himself with *first+surname* and company. He expands his turn with another TCU in which he provides an unsolicited reason for the call “>It's< to do with a conversa:tion I had about ↑three weeks ago with him.” (lines 7-9). The salesperson’s gloss provides minimal information about his conversation with Mike. There is no mention of the topic of the conversation or whether Mike is expecting this call. The receptionist is treated as a non-involved party who does not need to know more about this matter. In the absence of more details, the receptionist has to

treat the conversation as the ordinary business that Mike is involved in, unless he is prepared to treat the gloss as accountable and solicit further details.

A caller's prior acquaintanceship with the person they are trying to reach provides an inferential framework for the "reason for the call" (Sacks, 1985). It makes available for the call-taker, a range of plausible and legitimate reasons why the caller is asking to speak with the person they are looking for. Inferring such a reason enables the call-taker to do their job. As receptionists, call-takers are accountable for screening incoming calls. They are tasked with blocking unsolicited calls and with forwarding relevant calls, in which callers provide reasonable grounds for calling. One such legitimate reason is put forward by the salesperson in Extract 4-14. The caller is contacting Mike to continue a presumably business-related prior conversation. This provides the salesperson with appropriate grounds for forwarding his call to Mike.

In the next example, we see the call-taker employing a procedure for attesting the legitimacy of the switchboard request. In line 14, he asks the salesperson to confirm that the "relevant" person is expecting his call (line 14).

Extract 4-15 Eplus 57

1 R: Good mornin' Linoel DePaul Theatre,
2 (0.9)
3 S: mkth Q:h. Hello::. .h u:hm (0.3) Can I speak to RANDe11
4 please.
5 (.)
6 R: Randell, C'n I ask who's callin'.
7 (.)
8 S: pt Um(p)- My name's Guy::. I'm from Eplus.
9 (0.6)
10 R: Eplus:,
11 (0.4)
12 S: That's correct.
13 (.)
14 R: Is he expecting your ca:ll.
15 (.)
16 S: .hh Uhm(pt)- (0.5) Yes::.
17 (0.2)
18 S: W'l[l kin]d of. Not toda- not ex#ACTly now.=No.
19 R: [Okay.]
20 (.)
21 R: .h Okay (.) >Bear with me a second.< Thank you.

In Extract 4-15, the salesperson, Guy, has called the Linoel DePaul Theatre and is asking to speak to Randell (lines 3-4). Before answering the switchboard request, the receptionist enquires into the salesperson's identity (line 6), making his response contingent on it. In response, the salesperson introduces himself using his first name and company "pt Um(p)-My name's Guy. I'm from Eplus." (line 8). Note that, in contrast to other cases, where callers use a recognitional format here the salesperson employs a non-recognitional form "My name's Guy:", whereby he introduces himself to the receptionist. However, in referring to his company, he uses a recognitional format that proves to be problematic for the recipient who initiates repair on it in line 12.

After establishing the salesperson's identity, the receptionist does not immediately respond to the switchboard request. In line 14, he initiates a new insert sequence inquiring whether Randell is expecting the salesperson's call. Note how the question, preferring a "yes" response, does not question the legitimacy of the call (such as in Extract 4-5). Instead, the salesperson is trying to ascertain that forwarding the call falls within his remit, as implied through the caller's TPA display. The salesperson's reply consists of several iterations whereby he starts with a confirmation and ends with a negation (lines 16-18). Nonetheless, the receptionist still grants the switchboard request (line 21).

To conclude, the extracts analysed in this section have provided further insight into the role that TPA displays have in conveying the legitimacy of the switchboard request. Being acquainted with the "relevant" persons entitles callers to speak to them. For the call-takers, this means that fulfilling the request falls within their remit. Thus, the legitimacy of the switchboard request is not inherently tied to the salesperson's actions or identity. Instead, it is worked up interactionally and emerges when the grounds for the caller's switchboard request match the grounds for the call-taker's response as normatively accountable actions.

4.1.5 Presumptive vs. cautious call openings

In this final analytic section, I focus on how the various elements of "lukewarm" call openings work together to convey the caller's right to ask to speak to the "relevant" person. Prior work on switchboard requests in survey interviews proposed a continuum from least to most presumptive requests for survey participation, based on the design options for several elements of call openings such as entitlement, contingencies, mitigation, pre-emption, and partitioning (Maynard et al., 2010). It seems that the distinction between presumptive and

cautious requests might be relevant in business-to-business “lukewarm” calls as well; albeit, it is based on other features of the call openings.

To reiterate, based on the analysis conducted, I have identified three recurrent forms for constructing a switchboard request:

- (1) “Would it be possible to speak to X”
- (2) “Can I speak to X”
- (3) “Is X there/free/available”

I have argued that these formats differ with regard to the degree of entitlement they display as well as with regard to the specificity of the indexed contingencies. The first construction can be heard either as a request for permission or as a request that indexes unspecified external contingencies precluding the fulfilment of the request. It is important to mention that recipients never treat it as a request for permission and, instead, always orient to external circumstances that may interfere with the request’s fulfilment. Nonetheless, this format displays the highest caution, as it indexes a wide array of non-specific contingencies for the request’s fulfilment. This format allows the receptionist to select the conditions that are essential for the request’s fulfilment. The second design option narrows down the array of possible contingencies, indexing only external circumstances. By putting forward the presumption that the salesperson is entitled to speak to the “relevant” person, this format restricts the receptionist’s options for rejecting the request. Finally, the third format is the most specific, making the switchboard request contingent upon the pre-condition indexed in the design of the pre-request. Thus, we can observe a continuum from cautious requests – achieved by indexing low entitlement and a wide range of contingencies to presumptuous requests – embodied by high entitlement and orientation to one specific contingency.

The alternatives for switchboard requesting co-occur with specific options for salesperson self-identification and for referring to the “relevant” person (see Table 1). Callers who ask to speak to the relevant person using option (1) identify themselves before producing the switchboard request, while callers who use options (2) or (3) never self-identify. Also, when referring to the “relevant” person, callers using option (1) select one of three alternatives: *first-name-only* (15 cases), *first+surname* (eight cases), first name + job title (four cases). The latter reference format is never used when salespeople employ options (2) or (3). Finally, while *first-name-only* references are prevalent in all three switchboard requests, their incidence in pre-requests is the highest, as they appear in six out of seven cases.

Table 3: “Closed” switchboard requests in call openings

		Switchboard request format		
		“Would it be possible to speak to X”	“Can I speak to X”	“Is X there/free/available”
Caller self-identification	Yes	27 cases	0 cases	0 cases
	No	0 cases	28 cases	7 cases
Referring to the “relevant” person	First name only	15 cases	15 cases	6 cases
	First + surname	8 cases	13 cases	1 case
	First name + job title	4 cases	0 cases	0 cases
Total cases		27 cases	28 cases	7 cases

To conclude, these observations are in accord with Maynard *et al.*'s (2010) characterisation of requests as more or less presumptive. At the cautious end of the continuum are switchboard requests performed by callers who self-identify, who use low entitlement requests oriented to a wide array of contingencies, and who refer to the “relevant” persons by first name + job title. At the other end, callers do not introduce themselves and use pre-requests referring to the “relevant” persons by first name. The presumptuous configuration is rare in the dataset and also resembles, more than the other configurations, the opening of ordinary telephone calls between familiars. The numerical evidence presented in Table 3 supplements the detailed analysis presented in this chapter and corroborates the main argument that TPA is performed not only through practices for other-referencing, but also through the self-identification and the format of the “closed” switchboard request.

4.0 Discussion

In this chapter, I have examined third-party acquaintanceship displays in call openings of business-to-business “lukewarm” calls. I focused on the methods salespeople use for showing that they are acquainted with the person they are asking to speak to. I have demonstrated that, despite occasional interactional hurdles, displaying TPA is helpful because it legitimates callers' switchboard requests and it reduces the length of the call's opening.

This chapter contributes to interactional research on relationships by examining a previously undocumented phenomenon: how participants display their acquaintanceship with an absent party to a stranger. EM/CA studies have investigated how interactants become

acquainted (Svennevig, 1999), how they display their acquaintanceship to each other (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984) and how they negotiate shared knowledge of absent third parties (Ekberg, 2013). However, to date, there are no studies that explore how acquaintanceship between two individuals is shown by one of the parties in interactions with strangers.

EM/CA studies have acknowledged that relationships constitute one of the seen but unnoticed features of social interaction (Mandelbaum, 2003; Pomerantz & Mandelbaum, 2005). Focusing on acquaintanceship, this chapter shows how it is displayed through the methods interactants use for organising call openings. Thus, acquaintanceship does not become the focus of the interaction. In a regular call, it is not explicitly claimed or asserted. However, on a few occasions, salespeople do invoke a prior conversation (Extract 4-14) or their relationships (Extract 4-9) with the “relevant” person. These TPA claims are noticeably different from the rest. They occur towards the end of the call opening. They are designed and geared towards dealing with local interactional issues.

In the interactional environment of “lukewarm” call openings, salespeople show they are acquainted with the person they are asking to speak to not only through name references, but also through the design of their self-identification and switchboard request. Each element plays a role in the acquaintanceship performance. The use of *first-name-only* references informs the receptionist that the caller has the right to refer to the “relevant” person by first name, a prerogative of acquaintances. However, one should not surmise that alternative reference forms do not index acquaintanceship. As I have shown in section 4.1.3, *first+surname* references are also used in TPA, either to index incipient acquaintanceship or to pre-empt interactional difficulties such as ambiguous person references. Thus, name references behave like tie-signs (Goffman, 1971) in that there is no one-to-one correspondence between them and relationship types.

Besides name references, salespeople also display TPA by minimising or omitting self-identification. When they self-identify, callers use recognitional forms which signal to the receptionists that callers’ identification can and should be treated as information to be passed on to the “relevant” persons. When callers skip self-identification, they speed up the opening of the call and position the call-takers as a temporary interactants.

The third component of the TPA performance is the design of the “closed” switchboard request. There are three frequent forms salespeople use: (1) “Would it be possible to speak to X”, (2) “Can I speak to X”, and (3) “Is X there/free/available”. These

forms differ with regard to the degree of entitlement they enact and the specificity of the contingencies they index.

Getting past the gatekeeping receptionists is one of the first hurdles salespeople face in “cold” calls. If and when they get to speak to the “relevant” persons, they face another challenge, crucial to the success of the call: getting the prospect to agree to a meeting. The next chapter documents how salespeople approach this difficult and delicate interactional task.

Chapter 5

Getting appointments in business-to-business “cold” calls

5.0 Introduction

Business-to-business “cold” calls are the first step in a series of encounters leading to a commercial transaction. One way of progressing with the sale consists in moving from telephone to face-to-face encounters. Thus, a successful call is one in which salespeople secure appointments for either them or a colleague to visit the prospects at their place of business to make a sales presentation. While agreeing to a meeting does not commit the prospect to a future commercial agreement, it often works as a “foot-in-the-door”, rendering a rejection of the service offer more difficult to achieve (Bone, 2006).

In Chapter 3, I showed that “arranging a sales appointment” constitutes the business of a “lukewarm” call, comprising three activities: (1) securing a meeting, (2) scheduling the meeting, and (3) getting the prospect’s contact details. Salespeople also try to set up an appointment in a few “freezing” calls. This chapter examines the sequential organisation of appointment-making in both “freezing” and “lukewarm” calls.

Prior conversation analytic work has outlined a range of practices people draw on for making future plans to meet; for instance, through invitations (De Stefani, 2018; Drew, 1984, 2018; Margutti & Galatolo, 2018; Routarinne & Tainio, 2017) and through making arrangements (Ekberg & LeCouteur, 2014; Houtkoop, 1987). The current chapter extends this body of work by documenting the practices mobilised by salespeople making appointments to visit prospective customers. I show that this activity is accomplished through a two-part sequence consisting of (1) a preamble and a (2) meeting request. The preamble enables salespeople to work up a conducive environment for the meeting’s acceptance. The meeting request opens up an conversational slot where prospects can influence the outcome of the activity towards success or failure. An acceptance or display of commitment puts the prospect on the record as having agreed to a meeting and allows for the conversation to progress to the next step – the scheduling initiation. By contrast, other responses such as rejections and non-committed or hedged acceptances are indicative of trouble. They are not followed by a scheduling initiation and eventually result in the salesperson’s failure to secure the meeting.

Thus, the response to the meeting request plays a decisive role in the outcome of the activity and, by extension, of the “cold” call as a whole.

A few cases in the collection show how salespeople exploit the sequential organisation of appointment-making to deprive prospects from the opportunity to accept or refuse the meetings. In these cases, salespeople imply, in the preamble and request, that the prospects are already on board with the meeting. This framing enables them to move forward with scheduling without the prospects having to voice their acceptance of the meeting request. The prospects get the opportunity to respond only after the scheduling has been initiated, which, as noted earlier, presupposes that the meeting has already been agreed to. Such cases illustrate how salespeople talk their interlocutors into meeting with them by restricting the sequential opportunities for refusals. Thus, this chapter contributes to our understanding of social influence as an interactional accomplishment by showing how it is practically achieved through sequential and turn-taking mechanisms.

5.1 Analysis

The analysis is organised as follows. The first section introduces the identified sequential pattern based on a single extract from a “lukewarm” call, in which we see how the salesperson secures an appointment with the prospect. The subsequent two sections examine cases from “freezing” and “lukewarm” calls. I identify a variety of designs for preambles and meeting requests and show how locally available resources are mobilised in their construction. Finally, section 5.1.3.1 presents cases in which salespeople exploit the pattern to hinder prospects from rejecting the meetings.

5.1.1 Securing a meeting – the canonical form

Let us start with the two-part sequence through which salespeople attempt to secure appointments with prospect. Extract 5-1 comes from the beginning of a “lukewarm” call between a salesperson (S), who is selling telecommunication systems, and the prospect (P), who works for a mobile technology company.

Extract 5-1 Eplus 8

1	S:	.Hh Mister Gupta I hope you recall we:: discussed	} Preamble
2		about the telecoms,=uh especially you:r old	
3		Alcatel systems.	
4		(0.7)	
5	P:	[()]	
6	S:	[A:]ndu::h its maintenance and .h <u>l</u> ines and calls	
7		and stuff. .h A:nd you <u>a</u> s ked me to send some	
8		details about the company and you said that you	
9		are going to discuss with one of your collea:gues	
10		senior colleagues I ↑believe.	
11		(0.6)	
12	P:	Yeah.=	
13	S:	=U:h so:: I'm just wonderi:n' whereabouts are we in	
14		terms of the conversation .h uh fo=or- Can we come	
15		and have a <u>ch</u> at about u:hm your phone systems	
16		andu:h see how we could be of he:lp to you	
17		sometime next month o:r .h end of this month?	
18		(0.3)	
19	P:	Y- yeah we can do that. °Yeah°.=	
20	S:	=↑Oh. Fantastic,	
21		.h So: ↑u:hm mkt (0.5) shall we look at like the:	
22		next- the third week of January or ↑so?	
23		(0.6)	
24	P:	°Uh third week of January let me che:ck°, Uh w-	
25		what date exactly.	

I will return to this extract later in the chapter in more detail. To set the scene for the subsequent analysis, note the following key features of the two components.

The preamble in lines 1-12 contextualises, frames, and accounts for the subsequent meeting request (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1990). In Extract 5-1 this is achieved through the embedding of the future appointment in an ongoing commercial relationship in which the meeting is the next relevant step. The preamble works like a pre-sequences in that it paves the way for an upcoming action (Schegloff, 2007b). However, a preamble differs from an action-specific pre-sequence (such as a pre-announcement or a pre-invitation) in several key aspects. A pre-sequence: (1) consists of an adjacency pair, (2) it foretells the upcoming action, and (3) it checks whether relevant preconditions for its implementation are fulfilled to avoid a dispreferred response (Schegloff, 2007b). By contrast, a preamble (1) often consists of an adjacency pair; however, variations are frequent and relevant in terms of the interactional functions fulfilled by the preamble, (2) it is *designedly opaque* with regards to the upcoming action, and (3) it furnishes the necessary preconditions which should ensure that the base FPP (the meeting request) receives a preferred response.

The **meeting request** sequence occupies lines 13-20. It consists of a first-pair part (FPP), a second-pair part (SPP) and a sequence-closing third (SCT), whereby the FPP embodies a request for an appointment and the SPP embodies an acceptance. The SCT consists of a “news” receipt and an assessment. The FPP is itself expanded, with increments (and in other cases with full TCUs), in pursuit of the prospect’s response.

As the prospect agrees to meet with the salesperson, the meeting request sequence is here followed by the scheduling initiation, which signals that the conversation has progressed to the next activity – scheduling the meeting. While, in this extract, the salesperson puts forward a time frame for the meeting in her initial solicitation, this should not be treated as part of the scheduling activity. Here, the time frame is produced as a turn increment to pursue the prospect’s tardy response. We will also see the salesperson in the next extract proposing a time frame for the meeting; however, as the prospect does not produce a committed acceptance, the conversation never gets to the meeting’s scheduling.

5.1.2 Getting appointments in “freezing” calls

While appointment-making is a key component of “lukewarm” cold calls, there are a few “freezing” cold calls where getting a meeting comes up either as part of making provisions for future encounters (one case) or as the main business of the call (five cases). This section examines one of each cases highlighting the contingencies and locally available resources that shape the preamble and meeting request.

In Extract 5-2, the salesperson is talking to the administrator of Kinnear Community School. The extract is located late in the call, after the interlocutors have discussed the school’s current printer contract that expires in nine months. The preamble starts with the salesperson asking the prospect to confirm that she has made an appointment with another supplier, which she had disclosed a few moments before line 1.

Extract 5-2 Tech 6

1	S:	You (w-) you- have you just uhm: <u>literally</u>	}	Preamble
2		arra- (ar) <u>anged</u> an appointment just with <u>them</u> . =Solely,		
3		(0.3)		
4	P:	°YE[S:°,]		
5	S:	[At the] moment,		

6 Is- is it >sort of< timely then
7 you're thinking:=>perhaps this< .hhh uh::#::: °you
8 know:°# (0.3) within the next couple of weeks,=we may:
9 uhm ↓>you know< (w-) send a consultant to come and .hhh
10 and speak with you? (.) .HHH
11 [And they can see]=
12 P: [Possibly,]
13 S: =what savings can be made?
14 P: Possibly.=I've got pl:[enty o]f time,
15 S: [mm?]
16 (0.4)
17 P: Uh:m I sh[all just- start to (uh-)]
18 S: [You have, () that's unus]ual to hear
19 that?

} Meeting request sequence

The preamble (lines 1-5) is comprised of an adjacency pair initiated by the salesperson. It shifts the focus of the conversation on the prospect's plans to meet with a potential supplier. This is a move which does not foreshadow the upcoming appointment request, but, as we will see, it will be used by the salesperson to create an auspicious context for requesting a meeting. The FPP in lines 1-2 "You (w-) you- have you just uhm: literally arra- (ar)ranged an appointment just with them." tries to establish that the prospect has set up a meeting with the company she mentioned had contacted her about printers. This question indexes a B-event – the prospect's plans to meet with the other provider. The declarative syntax is indicative of a "knowing" stance (Heritage, 2012a), building on the prospect's prior disclosure of his plans. An acquiescing response would mean that the school has started the supplier review process. During this process, a prospect is supposed to meet with several suppliers to collect offers. Thus, for the salesperson asking for a meeting, it is relevant to establish that the review process has started.

The preamble has an intricate sequential architecture. Although the salesperson's turn is potentially complete after "them" (line 2), she produces the latched increment "Solely" by which she further specifies the question. The prospect's response to the new version of the question is even more informative for the salesperson, as it tells her how many potential competitors are being currently reviewed. The prospect's response is delayed by 0.3 seconds. As she starts to answer (line 4), the salesperson extends her turn a second time with the increment "at the moment" presumably in pursuit of her interlocutor's missing response. However, she finds herself in overlap and, as her interlocutor has already answered her question, she continues her turn with a new TCU – the meeting request. Thus, the preamble in Extract 5-2 ascertains that the prospect has started reviewing potential suppliers in

preparation for the expiration of her current contract. As we will see, in asking for an appointment, the salesperson builds on this contingency to construct the future meeting as well timed and well fitted to the prospect's supplier review schedule.

The meeting request component occurs in lines 6-13. The FPP comprises the salesperson's lengthy request for an appointment, initially between lines 6-10, and then extended (lines 11 and 13) in pursuit of a response (Davidson, 1984). The request for an appointment starts with a preface "Is- is it >sort of< **timely** then **you're thinking:**" (lines 5-6) that frames the solicited meeting would be judged as well timed by her interlocutor. It trades on the precondition established through the preamble that the prospect has started to review suppliers which allows the salesperson to propose that it is the prospect who will find the meeting timely¹⁴ and, thus, is likely to accept it. After the preface, the salesperson exhibits some difficulties in formulating the time frame for the meeting. She would have presumably suggested ">perhaps this< week" (line 7). However, she stops after "this", trails off, and comes back with a "°you know:°" prefaced time frame "within the next couple of weeks" (line 8). As indicated by the "common knowledge component" (Stokoe, 2012b, p. 236), her final choice of time frame is more aligned with the prospect's preference to postpone the meeting displayed throughout the conversation (both prior to Extract 5-2 as well as in the prospect's response to the appointment request in line 12). The salesperson uses the common knowledge component for a second time in a search self-repair in the formulation of the request: "we may: uhm ↓>you know< (w-) send a consultant to come and .hhh and speak with you?" (lines 8-10). Here, "you know" encourages a granting response from her interlocutor (Asmuß, 2011), by constructing the sales representative's visit as a course of action that the recipient should be aware of or at least expect. Correspondingly, the turn is syntactically designed as a declaration – a form associated with a "knowing" stance requiring acquiescence from the recipient (Heritage, 2012a).

The prospect's hedged acceptance "Possibly," (line 10) comes in overlap with the beginning of the salesperson's continuation "And they can see what savings can be made?" (lines 11 and 13), whereby the latter pursues her interlocutor's initially absent response. In line 12, the prospect repeats her equivocal acceptance in the clear. Adding "I've got pl:enty of time," she accounts for why she is not accepting the meeting right away, while also pushing back on the presumption embedded in the salesperson's turn that a visit might be

¹⁴ I'm thankful to Derek Edwards (personal communication) for this observation

opportune at the moment. Noteworthy, the stress and elongation in the production of the word “pl:enty” further highlights the misalignment between the interlocutors on the issue of the meeting’s timeliness.

Crucially, after the prospect’s response, the salesperson does not initiate the scheduling of the meeting, displaying her understanding of the prospect’s non-committed acceptance as insufficient. Instead, after a 0.4 seconds gap, the latter self-selects and was probably going to explain she had just started the review process, another indication of her lack of commitment to the meeting. In post-transition overlap (Drew, 2009), the salesperson initiates repair on her interlocutor’s prior assertion (line 12), so the latter abandons her turn. Neither the abandoned, nor the new course of action leads to the scheduling of a meeting. Even though the prospect did not reject the possibility of a meeting, her hesitant response was insufficient for the scheduling to be initiated. Next, the salesperson tries to turn the prospect’s assertion about her time availability into an auspicious condition for the meeting with the sales rep (line 18-19) but fails to accrue support for her action and also misses the opportunity to initiate the scheduling of the meeting. In fact, by the end of this call, the salesperson will not have succeeded in securing the appointment.

Recurrently, salespeople treat a hedged and “reluctant” response to a request for a meeting as insufficient. They do not progress to the scheduling of the meeting and, instead, address issues that are voiced alongside the “reluctant” response and which, ostensibly, underlie prospects’ non-acceptance. Therefore, as was the case in this extract, they fail to secure appointments altogether.

In the next extract, the salesperson uses a different method for building an auspicious environment for the meeting request. Extract 5-3 comes from near the beginning of a “freezing” call. Prior to line 1, the salesperson had checked whether the prospect’s company is currently using a Yeltel communication system.

Extract 5-3 Eplus 6

1 S: Yeah uhm we: uh: are a senior partner to Yeltel for
 2 over twenty-four years now. .hh We offer three six five
 3 support, .hh And we’re a local company to you, (m)
 4 .pthhh pthhh ↑I was just wondering if we could come
 5 down and have a chat to you Mike.=.hh And int-
 6 introd(t)uce you to uh us, .mhhth And >see if we can be
 7 of< assistance to you in the new f- in the f- in the
 8 future.
 9 (1.0)

10 P: Uhm I'd be happy to speak to you.=It's not gonna be for
 11 a while,
 12 S: [Oh no] we're booking into February Ma::rch.=I'm just=
 13 P: [()]
 14 S: =wondering if we could (t-) tee up a meeting sort of back end
 15 of February or uh- Ma:rch?
 16 P: I'm thinking actually in the next tax year. After April.
 17 (0.2)
 18 S: Oh yeah:. Let's get something booked in,

While in the previous extracts, the preamble was comprised of adjacency pairs, here it consists of only the salesperson's turn (lines 1-3). The turn is designed as a speaker-centred informing and, thus, does not make a response from the prospect relevant (Stivers & Rossano, 2012). In presenting his company, the salesperson selectively invokes factual details potentially relevant for the prospect, such as the company's connection to Yeltel (the telecommunication system currently used by the call-taker's business) and its geographical location. Crucially, through word selection, these factual details acquire evaluative undertones, through which an objectivised portrayal of the company is accomplished (Edwards & Potter, 2017). The company is described as a "senior partner" to Yeltel having had a long-lasting relationship with them. Moreover, being "a local company" indexes not only geographical proximity, but also the two companies' co-membership in the local business community. Even though this presentation of the caller's company does not foreshadow the upcoming meeting request, it creates a favourable environment for it.

The request sequence starts with the salesperson's request in line 4 and unfolds over several adjacency pairs in which the interlocutors negotiate the time frame for the meeting. Agreement over a convenient time frame is achieved in line 18, after which the conversation transitions to the next activity, the scheduling of the meeting. In lines 4-5, the salesperson makes a low entitlement request "↑I was just wondering if we could come down and have a chat to you Mike.". By prefacing the request for a visit with "I was just wondering", the salesperson mitigates the importance of the act of requesting and, by extension, the imposition associated with it. The past continuous form of the verb employed in the main clause, together with the high onset of the TCU, allow for it to be heard as "the reason for the call" despite its sequential location (Couper-Kuhlen, 2001b, 2001a). After the first version of the meeting request, the salesperson expands his turn twice, presumably to pursue the prospect's absent response. It is noteworthy that the new TCUs are "and" prefaced, thus

seemingly adding to the action-in-progress and deleting the gap indicative of an absent response (Heritage & Sorjonen, 1994).

In response, the prospect asserts his willingness to have a discussion with the salesperson, albeit not in the near future. His response can be glossed as a provisional partial acceptance “Uhm **I’d be happy** to speak to you.” (line 10). First, it is accomplished through an invocation of his positive stance towards a future discussion with the salesperson. It is noteworthy that the prospect’s response foregrounds the speaker’s perspective and stance towards the salesperson’s proposal, while also reformulating the terms of the future interaction (Stivers & Hayashi, 2010) – thus the prospect comes across as having accepted the meeting of his own accord (Steensig & Heinemann, 2015). Second, while the salesperson had put forward a site visit and a “chat”, the prospect is agreeing “to speak” to the salesperson, which can mean either a face-to-face or a telephone interaction. In his second TCU, the prospect produces an account for not-yet-accepting the meeting: “It’s not gonna be for a while,” (lines 10-11). Looking back at Extract 5-2, the prospect had raised a similar issue related to the timing of the meeting. However, she had formulated it from her own perspective “I’ve got plenty of time,” (Extract 5-2, line 13). In Extract 5-3, the prospect frames the timing issue as a misalignment between two timelines: his company’s calendar for reviewing suppliers and the salesperson’s expectations of having a meeting sometime soon. The salesperson exploits the fact that this formulation entails a presumption about his calendar for the meeting. He disavows his interlocutor’s presumption and puts forward a time frame for the meeting that is ostensibly aligned with the prospect’s envisaged schedule: “Oh no we’re booking into February Ma:rch.” (line 12).

Next, the salesperson reformulates his request to fit with what he worked out is the prospect’s desired time frame “I’m just wondering if we could (t-) tee up a meeting sort of back end of February or uh- Ma:rch?” (lines 12 and 14-15). However, he does not secure the meeting right away. The prospect does not accept the proposed time frame and produces a counter-proposal “I’m thinking actually in the next tax year. After April.” (line 16). The salesperson accepts this in line 19 and then moves forward to the scheduling “Let’s get something booked in,” which is done through a proposal which frames the meeting as a now shared project.

In this section I have examined two cases from “freezing” calls in which salespeople attempt to get meetings with prospects. I have shown how securing a meeting is organised as a two-part sequence comprising a preamble and a meeting request. I also illustrated how the transition to the next activity, scheduling the meeting, is indicative of the successful outcome

of the meeting request. In Extract 5-2, after the prospect's non-committed agreement to a meeting, the conversationalists do not move forward to its scheduling. The call ends without the salesperson getting an appointment. By contrast, in Extract 5-3, after resolving an outstanding issue about the meeting's time frame, the salesperson initiates the scheduling at which point the prospect can no longer back out of the meeting, to which he appeared, on the record, to have agreed to.

I have also highlighted some of the sequential and turn-design variations in the identified pattern. While in Extract 5-2 the preamble consists of an adjacency pair, in Extract 5-3 it is accomplished through a single turn that has not been designed to require a response. As we have seen in Extract 5-2, the salesperson uses the prospect's confirmation that she is meeting with a supplier as a license to ask for a meeting. By contrast, in Extract 5-3, the salesperson does not open an interactional slot for his interlocutor. The preamble works to produce a favourable presentation of his company and, thus, does not require the prospect's contribution. These sequential options are available to interactants in "lukewarm" calls as well. I will argue that these alternatives are systematically selected by the FPP producer (the salesperson) to manage the interlocutor's contribution to the sequence and to ensure smooth progress of the sequence.

5.1.3 Getting appointments in "lukewarm" calls

Let us return to Extract 5-1 and examine it in more detail. The salesperson, who works for a company selling telecommunication systems, has called the prospect who works for a mobile telephony provider. The extract starts just after the how-are-you sequence.

Extract 5-1 Eplus 8

1 S: .Hh Mister Gupta I hope you recall we:: discussed about
 2 the telecoms,=uh especially you:r old Alcatel systems.
 3 (0.7)
 4 P: [()]
 5 S: [A:]ndu::h its maintenance and .h lines and calls and
 6 stuff. .h A:nd you asked me to send some details about
 7 the company and you said that you are going to discuss
 8 with one of your collea:gues senior colleagues I
 9 ↑believe.
 10 (0.6)
 11 P: Yeah.=
 12 S: =U:h so:: I'm just wonderi:n' whereabouts are we in
 13 terms of the conversation .h uh fo=or- Can we come and

14 have a chat about u:hm your phone systems andu:h see
 15 how we could be of he:lp to you sometime next month o:r
 16 .h end of this month?
 17 (0.3)
 18 P: Y- yeah we can do that. °Yeah°.=
 19 S: =↑Oh. Fantastic,
 20 .h So: ↑u:hm mkt (0.5) shall we look at like the: next-
 21 the third week of January or ↑so?
 22 (0.6)
 23 P: °Uh third week of January let me che:ck°, Uh w- what
 24 date exactly.

The preamble, located between lines 1-11, embodies the “because of” account for calling (see Chapter 3, section 3.1.2.1). The salesperson starts recounting her prior interaction with the prospect “.Hh Mister Gupta I hope you recall we:: discussed about the telecoms”. Note how her talk is not only prompting her interlocutor to recall their conversation, but her turn is also designed to add, piece by piece, details of that conversation, allowing her interlocutor to display his remembering at several points in the conversation, but also continuing past those TRPs if he fails to do so. First, she repairs the reference to telecoms through a latched “add on” replacement (Couper-Kuhlen & Ono, 2007) “uh especially you:r old Alcatel systems.” (line 2). Then, after a 0.7 gap and in overlap with the prospect’s minimal non-discernible response, she glues on (Couper-Kuhlen & Ono, 2007) another piece of information “A:ndu::h its maintenance and .h lines and calls and stuff.” (line 5). As no response is forthcoming at this point, she continues with a full new TCU through which she recalls the prospect’s actions “**you asked me** to send some details about the company and **you said that you are going to discuss** with one of your colleagues” (lines 6-9). She ends her turn with a post-positioned subject-side frame (Edwards, 2007) “I believe” (line 9) by which she hedges the certainty of her assertions which are now framed as her personal understanding of the conversation. Thus, she pre-empts potential factuality-based challenges from her interlocutor, who, as a participant, had direct access to the recalled conversation. Her informing is ratified by the prospect allowing her to continue with the appointment request.

The preamble contextualises, frames, and accounts for both the appointment request and the proposed meeting. In this part of the sequence, there are some differences between “freezing” calls and “lukewarm” calls (see also Chapter 3, section 3.1.2.1). In the latter, salespeople invoke their previous interactions (such as telephone conversations or email exchanges) between the two companies, thus framing the call as part of an ongoing business relationship. This further allows for interactants to be cast into roles with mutual obligations.

For instance, in this extract, the salesperson was supposed to send the prospect more information about her company, while the latter had committed himself to discussing the potential deal with his superiors. In this context, the call is justified as following up on an ongoing negotiation about a potential business agreement, which is what the salesperson continues to do in lines 12-13 “U:h so:: I’m just wonderi:n’ whereabout are we in terms of the conversation”.

The meeting request occupies lines 12-19 and is accomplished through a three-part sequence consisting of a FPP, a SPP and a SCT. It starts with the salesperson asking for an update on their prior conversation; however, this line of action is abandoned mid-TCU in favour of a request for an appointment. The prospect agrees to the meeting (line 20) which elicits a change of state token (Heritage, 1984a, 2016) and a positive “high-grade assessment” (Antaki et al., 2000, p. 235) from the salesperson, who then moves on to the scheduling initiation.

There are two noteworthy features about the salesperson’s request for an appointment. First, the meeting is formulated as a casual short conversation – having a “chat about u:hm your phone systems” (line 14) and not a service presentation, a pitch, or a sales call – the terms frequently used to refer to this stage of the sales cycle when salespeople meet face-to-face with prospects. Thus, word selection plays a crucial role in appointment-making. Throughout the collection, salespeople employ terms that rhetorically frame (Billig, 1987) the meeting as a casual, even friendly, encounter during which prospects will not be sold to. Instead, meetings are described as potentially beneficial, in this extract, for instance, as aiding the prospect’s company.

Second, the meeting request contains an indication of the time frame for the meeting (line 15-16). The prospect’s agreement to meet with the salesperson is also an implicit agreement to have the meeting within the following two months. In other cases in the collection (Extracts 5-2, 5-3, and 5-7), the prospect consents to the meeting, but raises timing-related issues. For instance, delaying the meeting constitutes one of the strategies prospects use to resist salespeople’s proposed sales trajectories by slowing down the sales process (see Chapter 6, section 6.1.2). Conversely, salespeople push in the opposite direction, as can be seen in this extract, where the salesperson offers two options “sometime next month o:r .h end of this month” (lines 15-16), with the second, preferred alternative (Sacks, 1987) closer to the present.

In line 20, the salesperson moves to the next activity, scheduling the meeting. As I showed in Chapter 3, the scheduling is accomplished over several adjacency pairs in which salespeople and prospects negotiate the details of the salesperson’s visit. At the point when

scheduling is being undertaken, the prospect is taken to have accepted the meeting. This is a crucial detail that gets exploited by salespeople who push for a *pro forma* scheduling of the meeting to be amended at a later time – as I will show in section 5.1.3.1.

In Extract 5-1, then, we have seen how the preamble is furnished with the salesperson's recollection of her prior conversation with the prospect. Building on the prospect's acknowledgement, the salesperson asks for a meeting and, after the prospect accepts it, she initiates the scheduling.

So far, we have seen salespeople asking for meetings and, upon the prospects accepting their requests, going ahead with the scheduling. The meeting request gives the prospect the right and opportunity to go on record accepting or rejecting the appointment, while the scheduling initiation treats the meeting as having been accepted. We have also seen how references to time frames for those meetings figure as part of the initial requests (Extract 5-2) or are negotiated post-acceptance (Extract 5-3). However, in both cases, the meeting's scheduling starts after the request has been accepted and marks the successful completion of this prerequisite condition. The next extract features a case where the boundaries between these activities start to blur. In his meeting request (lines 20-22), the salesperson will ask to schedule a visit to see the prospect.

Extract 5-4 Eplus 21

1 S: Not too bad,=I had a note to: (.) .h catch up with you,
 2 U:hm (1.2) regardin' (.) digital copiers.
 3 (1.2)
 4 S: S[o ()]
 5 P: [O::h. Y]es.=
 6 S: =where you are in the scheme of things.
 7 (0.7)
 8 P: U:h we- we- I've got- (.) sort of two or three
 9 meetings: (0.2) planned in: <January>?
 10 (0.3)
 11 S: °Oka[y°.
 12 P: [#U:h (.) ↓So .Hh (0.2) to review things=To be
 13 honest I don't actually know who in the team is
 14 supposed to be looking at this sort of stuff.=So I've
 15 (>jus' sort o'<) scheduled the meetings myself.
 16 (0.4)
 17 P: .Mhht (0.2) #a[:n' I]'ll tend to figure it out next=
 18 S: [()]
 19 P: =week=.pthh hheh [hh
 20 S: [HEH heh .hh Alright,=Well (p/t) u:hm
 21 it'd be prudent in which cas:e (.) if I could put a
 22 time in to come and see you.
 23 (0.6)
 24 P: ↑Yeah,=↑Sure.

25 (0.7)
 26 P: U:hm (1.2) So: so far I've go:t (0.2) thee: seventh
 27 (0.4) and thee: thirteenth. (0.3) So I suppose some t-
 28 point in those two weeks would be good.
 29 (0.6)
 30 S: °Seventh and the thirteenth:. Okay.°

The salesperson and prospect in Extract 5-4 have been in contact before. Evidence for that can be found as early as lines 1-2, where the salesperson accounts for his call as having been occasioned by a reminder prompting him to call the prospect. Note how the preamble, in particular the casualness indexed by the formulation “catch up with you” (line 1) obscures a purposeful or agenda-based motivation that might be attributed to the call. Next, the salesperson mentions “digital copiers” (line 2) as the topic he has called to discuss¹⁵. His interlocutor fails to respond immediately, so he pursues the absent response (Pomerantz, 1984b) with an increment that adds more information about what aspect of the digital photocopiers he has called to enquire about: “So () where you are in the scheme of things” (lines 4 and 6). He ends up overlapping with the prospect’s display of remembering and continuer “O::h. Yes.” (line 5). Through these vague formulations indexing B-events (Labov & Fanshel, 1977), the salesperson invites his interlocutor to provide an update on his company’s plans regarding their photocopiers, without actually asking for this information explicitly.

The prospect responds in line 8, reporting he has set up a few meetings with suppliers. He then extends his turn (Ford, Fox, & Thompson, 2002) continuing with an account of the trouble he has encountered with the scheduling of the meetings: “To be honest I don’t actually know who in the team is supposed to be looking at this sort of stuff.” (lines 12-14). Claiming he does not know whose responsibility it is to set up meetings; and that he has only temporarily taken on this task, the prospect constructs the supplier review process as an improvised, not-yet fully planned activity. Moreover, he claims he is not the person formally in charge of scheduling meetings. He ends his turn by sharing his plan to clarify the situation in the upcoming week. The announcement of this potential solution is followed by three particles of post-completion laughter signalling trouble (Jefferson, 1984b). It is noteworthy

¹⁵ It is worth underlining that we do not need to know whether or assume that requesting a meeting was on the salesperson’s agenda for this call. The aim of this analysis is to describe the range of methods salespeople use to secure appointments. In particular, the method used here by this salesperson does not include framing the solicitation of a meeting as the reason for the call.

that the salesperson does not align as a troubles recipient. He takes the prospect's laughter as an invitation to laugh and then uses that as an opportunity to close the topic with the SCT "Alright," (line 20) and move forward to the meeting request.

The meeting request sequence starts in line 20 with a request to schedule a visit "Well (p/t) u:hm it'd be prudent in which cas:e (.) if I could put a time in to come and see you.". The well-preface signals that the action carried out by the turn privileges the current speaker's agenda, while also constituting a shift in topic (Heritage, 2015). The conditional formulation and the past form of the modal verb "could" index permission, making a granting/rejecting response relevant. As the prospect had framed the review process as troublesome, the salesperson opts for an impersonal justification of the request "it'd be prudent" (line 20) which obscures the speaker's personal stake or interest in the meeting (Edwards, 2007). Importantly, note that the salesperson is not asking whether the prospect wants or is able to meet with him. Instead, his question already hints at the meeting's scheduling by asking for permission to schedule a visit. This move is enabled by the prospect's disclosure of having already scheduled other meetings with potential suppliers.

In line 24, after a 0.6 seconds pause, the prospect grants the salesperson's request with a type-conforming response (Raymond, 2003) "↑Yeah," and then supplementing his acceptance with a second agreement token "↑Sure" – a response format frequently encountered in acceptances of remote proposals (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1990; Lindström, 2017).

The scheduling is initiated by the prospect in line 26. This role-reversal is occasioned by the design of the meeting request through which the salesperson had asked if he "could put a time in" to visit the prospect. The prospect's scheduling initiation "U:hm (1.2) So: so far I've go:t (0.2) thee: seventh (0.4) and thee: thirteenth." (lines 26-28) is tied, through the skip-connector "U:hm (1.2) So:" (Schegloff, 2010) to the salesperson's meeting request, thus being designed as a response to it.

To sum up, this case illustrates how the boundaries between securing an appointment and its scheduling can be blurred through the design of the salesperson's meeting request. The request builds on the presumption, established through the preamble, that the prospect has already started to review potential suppliers and, thus, is likely to be interested in a meeting. Finally, evidence for the double implication of the salesperson's turn comes from the prospect's answer. First, the prospect agrees to the meeting (treating the prior turn as a request), but then also he provides an overview of his availability (treating the turn as a scheduling inquiry). While, in this extract, the salesperson created the opportunity for the

prospect to accept or refuse the meeting, in the cases presented in the next section, prospects will not have this option available. We will see how salespeople manipulate the design of the two-part sequence in ways that discourage or close down the prospects' opportunities for accepting/rejecting meetings.

5.1.3.1 Getting an appointment without asking for one

In the cases below, we examine adaptations of the two-part sequence for securing a meeting, whereby the prospects' opportunities to contribute to the preamble and appointment request are minimised. By exploiting turn-taking and sequence organisation, the salesperson's turns do not invite or require the prospect's input. The methods showcased below enable salespeople to get appointments without asking for them. In the dataset I analysed, these methods are available only in "lukewarm" calls, where salespeople are able to invoke their prior interactions with prospects as the grounds for assuming that the latter are on board with the meetings.

In Extract 5-5, the salesperson working for a telecommunication company has called the prospect who works for a hotel. The extract comes from the beginning of the call and starts with the salesperson indexing his prior interaction with the prospect.

Extract 5-5 Eplus 20

1 S: OBviously(h) uhm did promise to catch you.=Round
2 now.=>Obviously we< had a chat in uh:m kind of late
3 December. .Hhh [uh I] mentioned before we=
4 P: [(mm)]
5 S: =deal with a number of hotel:s and .hhh big big
6 restaurants:.=Hospitality EXperts in the London
7 area,=And I just really wanted to tee up a time for .hh
8 one of my experts to kind of pop down and see how we
9 can help out regarding the telephony really;
10 .hh[h uh:m] I don't >know< if you've got a- a date=
11 P: [Okay,]
12 S: =in mind that works for yourself?
13 (0.5)
14 P: I got this wee- uh:: I hav:e uh let's see this wee::k::
15 I hav:e uh:: (0.8) .ptk (0.7)
16 S: Ne==
17 P: =Thurs- (0.3) uh nex:t uh:: next Tuesday?

The preamble is encompassed in lines 1-7 and consists of the salesperson's multi-TCU turn and the prospect's minimal continuer (line 4). Through its composition and, particularly, the choice of words, the salesperson's account (lines 1-3) sets the call within the context of the business relationship between the interactants and their companies. The salesperson invokes a prior interaction with the prospect and refers to his own action of committing to contact the prospect as a "promise" – an activity bound to the category "relationship". Thus, the current call is defined as an instance of an ongoing business relationship. This framework makes available a series of normative expectations for and entitlements of involved parties' actions. In particular, the mutual care of implicated parties for each other is further used in the preamble, in which the caller indicates the purpose of the meeting is to aid the prospect's company.

The appointment request (lines 7-9) is latched to the preamble, thus not providing a sequential slot for the prospect's contribution. Moreover, the prior TCU is produced with continuing intonation, indicating to the interlocutor that the speaker has not finished his turn. The meeting request starts with an account-like preface "And I just really wanted" (line 7). It is noteworthy that the connector "And", in turn-initial position, marks the action embodied by the forthcoming turn as a continuation of the speaker's prior action, namely the reason for the call. The speaker displays his investment in the organisation of the meeting, through the use of the psychological predicate "wanted" which communicates the speaker's desire (Childs, 2012) to set up an appointment between the prospect and one of his colleagues. Within the previously activated framework of a business relationship; and through the client-oriented formulation of the purpose of the meeting, the salesperson appears to be acting in the prospect's interest. The salesperson's reference to the meeting is produced as a description of the actions of the visiting company representative "one my experts **to kind of ↑pop down and see**" (line 8), disclosing the envisaged location of the meeting to be the prospect's place of business. The potential imposition of a site visit is mitigated through the hedge "kind of" and the use of the formulation "pop down", which implies a casual and short visit. Last, the reference to the visiting salesperson as "one my experts" (line 8) further implies that the meeting will benefit the prospect, who will be getting advice from an experienced professional.

The design of the request as an assertion does not elicit an acceptance or rejection as the interlocutor's next relevant action. In line 11, the prospect produces an acknowledgement "Okay," which ends up in overlap with the salesperson who keeps the floor for the scheduling initiation. He asks the prospect to provide a potential date for the meeting. The

design of the request further implies the prospect's agreement to the site visit. This comes across mainly from the presumption, embedded in the formulation "you've got a- a date in mind that works for yourself", that the prospect might have already, based on his availability, picked a preferred date (Lindström, 2009). In his response, the prospect attends to the matter of selecting a date, explicitly orienting to his availability, by mirroring the salesperson's formulation "I got this wee-" (line 13). He finally comes up with a proposal for a date in the upcoming week, which, in the context of a prospecting call, is quite a short time frame for scheduling an appointment.

To sum up, securing a meeting is accomplished through a variation of the two-part sequence, whereby the preamble and the meeting request consist mainly of the salesperson's turns, while the prospect contributes with passive reciprocity tokens. In the next extract we will see the prospect's input can be restricted even more, to just one acknowledgement token, produced in overlap.

Extract 5-6 starts at the end of the reciprocal how-are-you sequence (line 1) of a call initiated by the salesperson. While in previously examined "lukewarm" calls, the salesperson claims to have been in contact with the current interlocutor, here she invokes extensive prior interactions with two of the call-taker's colleagues, Eva and Fernando.

Extract 5-6 Eplus 2

- 1 S: I'm very we:ll.=Thank you.=Thanks for askin', .h
 2 ↑Walter ↑very very quickly just before sometime I spoke
 3 to Eva, .mht A:ndu:h we discussed about the telecoms
 4 contracts=I used to be in touch with Fernando: last
 5 year? .hh A:ndu:h we discussed about your Yeltel
 6 contracts which are up for renewal by early next year?
 7 (0.3)
 8 S: .Pt[h So] Eva advised me to have a quick chat with=
 9 P: [Mkay,]
 10 S: =you an'schedule a meeting in to discuss about the:
 11 Yeltel: .h (.) contracts. .h U:h just (a) wonderin' if
 12 u::h you're available sometime (.) °December or January
 13 time°?
 14 (0.5)
 15 P: U::h be more likely: January 'cause u::h (0.7) December
 16 I'm g'nna be on holidays quite lot.
 17 (0.2)

The preamble in Extract 5-6 is located in lines 2-7 and 9. It consists of the salesperson's long turn (lines 2-6), a 0.3 gap, and the prospect's acknowledgement token 'Mkay' (line 9). The

latter overlaps with the beginning of the next turn, which suggests that the salesperson had moved on to the next sequence even before his interlocutor had acknowledged her account for the meeting. Another novel feature of this preamble is the speaker's mention of her conversations with two of the prospect's colleague, Eva and Fernando. This forms the context for the appointment request. The salesperson presents the meeting as having been suggested by Eva. As such, the salesperson does not need to request an appointment at present. Moreover, by informing her interlocutor that his colleague has suggested the meeting, she is indicating that the prospect's company has already shown interest in a commercial agreement. The meeting request component (here designed as an informing) does not provide a sequential slot for the interlocutor to respond. After a short in-breath and turn-initial hesitation, the salesperson moves to initiate the scheduling of the meeting “.h U:h just (a) wonderin' if u::h you're available sometime (.) °December or January time°?” (11-13). This is the first sequential opportunity the prospect is given to display his stance towards the meeting. Note that the question's formulation presupposes his agreement and problematizes the time frame for the meeting. While the prospect does push back with his type non-conforming response, “U::h be more likely: January 'cause u::h (0.7) December I'm g'nna be on holidays quite lot.” (lines 15-16), he still does not backtrack to reject the meeting.

So far, we have seen how salespeople design the components of the two-part sequence to minimise the prospects' contributions. In the final case, we will see the launching of the appointment-making sequence with a declarative request to reschedule a postponed meeting.

Extract 5-7 Eplus 11

- 1 S: ↑I'm just >really seeing< if we can reschedule the
2 meeting with Jim Cross that you had last yea:r. .hhh
3 Go(uh)- way back last year in fact,=.hhmh And it was to
4 (da:-) to do with the phone system?
5 (0.2)
6 P: Oh right,
7 (0.2)
8 S: Yeah.=Uh I'm just wondering IF y- uh:m you are
9 availabl:e uh:m i:n: March or >something of< that
10 nature?
11 (0.8)
12 P: Uh::m:::(b-) probably be better >with a little bit<
13 sooner than tha:t,

In lines 1-3, the salesperson announces the “in order to” reason for the call: rescheduling a prior business meeting between his colleague, Jim Cross, and the prospect. When the latter does not respond, he extends his turn twice. First he specifies the meeting’s timing “hhh Go(uh)- way back last year in fact” (line 3) and then its gist “And it was to (da:-) to do with the phone system?” (lines 3-4).

Given the absent preamble, how does this case fit with the two-part sequential pattern identified in this chapter? We see in the extract that, while the preamble’s absence is not treated by the interlocutors as accountable, nonetheless it is consequential for the sequence’s unfolding. Within the overall structure of this “lukewarm” call, the preamble would have occupied the “because of” reason for the call position (see Chapter 3) in which salespeople account why they are calling the prospect’s company at this particular time. As I showed in Chapter 3, “because of” accounts provide a space in which salespeople can invoke prior interactions with prospect as a way of contextualising the call and building a common ground necessary for the intelligibility of the upcoming meeting request. By skipping this move, the salesperson in Extract 5-7 treats his interlocutor as sufficiently informed about the arrangements made for the meeting with Jim Cross that is supposed to be rescheduled. However, it turns out that the prospect requires further information about the meeting, prompting the salesperson to extend his turn. The details he provides – the timing and gist of the meeting – are usually specified by callers in preambles (see, for instance, Extract 5-6).

Even though the reason for the call could be heard as a request, its design does not allow the prospect to accept or refuse the meeting. First, by announcing he is seeking to reschedule the meeting, the prospect does not make its acceptance problematic. The action of “rescheduling” implies that, at some point in the past, the prospect had accepted a meeting with the salesperson’s colleague, Jim Cross. As such, a further request for a meeting would be, at this point, redundant. Zooming in on the composition of the preface, “↑I’m just >really seeing<” (line 1), it is worth noting that, through the neutral description “seeing” as a reference to his own action-in-progress, the salesperson does not convey any personal expectations or desires with regard to the successfulness of his endeavour. Moreover, he restricts the scope of this endeavour through the use of the particles “just” (Lee, 1987) and “really”, thus mitigating the potentially burdensome request. Also noteworthy are the different ways in which the salesperson refers to the prior sales meeting. Initially, he uses a definite article “**the** meeting”, which implies expected recognition (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979). To aid the recognition, the salesperson adds further details about the meeting such as the full name of a participating sales rep and a time frame.

When, at the end of his TCU (line 2) there is no reaction forthcoming from the recipient, the salesperson corrects his initial time reference, replacing it with a more specific one “way back last year in fact”. The corrected version also offers a potential explanation as to why the prospect had trouble remembering it. The salesperson’s initial formulation might have implied the meeting had been scheduled closer to the present. As this response pursuit is not successful either (Pomerantz, 1984b), the speaker adds new but minimal information about the topic of the meeting “hmmh And it was to (da:-) to do with **the phone system?**” (lines 3-4). This prompts a news receipt “Oh right,” (line 6) from the prospect, which enables the salesperson to move to the scheduling of the meeting.

In his next turn, starting line 8, the salesperson initiates the scheduling enacted by a Yes/No interrogative which includes a time frame for the meeting “Uh I’m just wondering **IF** y- uh:m you are availabl:e uh:m **i:n: March or >something of< that nature?**” (lines 8-9). By inquiring about a time for the appointment, the salesperson treats the prospect as having accepted the rescheduling of the meeting. Interestingly, the format of the Y/N question relies heavily, for its meaning, on the prior sequence as this does not specify, for instance, what the prospect should be available for.

It is noteworthy that in the formulation of the inquiry, the salesperson again employs the minimiser “just”, which mitigates the presumed imposition of the inquiry. Moreover, the scheduling is designed to be client-centred, as it explicitly indexes only the prospect’s availability as a contingency for the meeting. Additionally, the time frame, even though it starts out as a specific time interval – the month of March – is relaxed to accommodate a larger non-specified interval. However, it is precisely the timing that seems to be an issue in the prospect’s response (lines 11-12) as he produces a counter-proposal to meet sooner. Despite this minor misalignment, the prospect’s response is conducive to the salesperson’s project, as it implies he agrees to the site visit.

To sum up, the cases analysed in this section have illustrated how salespeople can adapt the two-part sequence through which securing an appointment is enacted to restrict prospect’s opportunities to refuse the meeting. These adaptations are available only in “lukewarm” calls and trade off claims of prior interaction between the two parties as a warrant for the future meeting.

5.2 Discussion

This chapter has identified and described a two-part sequential pattern that underpins the activity of “securing a meeting” in “cold” calls. The structure is comprised of a preamble and

a meeting request sequence. The chapter documented a range of options that participants have available when designing these sequences. It showed how the variability in design is contingently accomplished by participants dealing with interactionally emergent concerns while drawing on locally available resources.

In and through this activity, interactants deliberate cooperatively whether a meeting will take place or not. While the salesperson initiates the activity, the prospect determines its success or failure by accepting or refusing the meeting. If the latter agrees to the meeting, the conversation progresses to the next activity, the scheduling of the meeting. This step forward is logically and practically dependent on both interactants endorsing the meeting.

The preamble occupies the first slot within the sequence and prefaces the ensuing meeting request. Preambles can be constructed as a series of TCUs occupying the same turn as the request (Extract 5-3) or as a one (Extract 5-1) or more adjacency pairs (Extract 5-4). In the space provided by the preamble, salespeople work up favourable auspices for the meeting to take place, such as its timeliness or relevance for the prospect. In contrast to some other types of pre-sequences, such as pre-invitations (Schegloff, 2007b) and pre-announcements (Terasaki, 2004), which are type-specific and foretell the actions they are prefacing, preambles do not portend the ensuing requests. Their imperviousness is achieved through salespeople's use of backward-oriented accounts and questions. For instance, in "lukewarm" calls, they index and make relevant prior interactions with their interlocutors, while in "freezing" calls they invoke relevant details about the prospect's business which have been established earlier in the same telephone call. When preambles are designed as adjacency pairs, they require the prospect's contribution, usually acknowledgments, continuers, or news receipts, to progress to the next component of the structure.

The meeting request sequence follows on from the preamble. The request gives the prospect the opportunity to accept or refuse the appointment. While preferring acceptance, the requests in Extracts 5-1 to 5-4 still enable prospects to produce rejections. By contrast, the cases featured in the last analytic sub-section (Extracts 5-5 to 5-7) illustrate request designs which do not allow rejections, for instance by stating rather than asking for a meeting (Extracts 5-5 and 5-6) or by bearing the embedded assumption that the meeting has already been accepted (Extract 5-7). They are followed by scheduling initiations which also treat the meeting as being accepted.

The extracts analysed in the final section are an illustration of how a salesperson influences a prospect's responsive conduct by manipulating sequential and turn design features of the talk to close down the latter's opportunities to refuse the meeting. These cases

shed empirical light on the interactional mechanisms of social influence. We see how salespeople, instead of asking prospects whether they are willing or able to meet, inform them about the plan to have a meeting as a *fait accompli*. These two design options differ in terms of their response relevance and the assumptions about whether the prospects are on board with the meetings. Compared to a request, an informing does not have refusals among its relevant response options. Thus, salespeople preclude prospects from refusing to meet. Furthermore, salespeople's informings, formatted as declaratives and indexing events in the speaker's territory of knowledge, do not require a response from the recipient in order for the conversation to progress (Stivers & Rossano, 2010). Therefore, salespeople are able to move forward to the next step in their project, scheduling the appointment, even in the absence of the prospect's response. Thus, in these cases, social influence is enacted through salespeople's choices for turn and sequence design which are consequential for prospects' responsive conduct and, ultimately, for the outcomes of the "cold" calls.

Getting an appointment to meet with a prospect face-to-face is crucial for the progress of the sale. This chapter has shown how salespeople mobilise conversational resources and how they manipulate conversational structures to secure meetings with prospect. However, salespeople are not always successful in their attempts to get appointments. In fact, more often than not "cold" calls fail to entangle prospects in the emergent sale. The final analytic chapter explores how salespeople deal with prospects' resistance to their attempts to move the sale forward.

Chapter 6

Dealing with resistance in business-to-business “cold” calls

6.0 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the interactional features of successful appointment-making in “cold” calls. This chapter, by contrast, focuses on those interactional episodes in which prospects resist salespeople’s attempts to engage them in a commercial transaction.

Salespeople rarely secure meetings with prospects, with success rates around 3% (3 in 100 calls result in a scheduled appointment) (Bauer, 2017). Instead, they often encounter resistance from prospects and must overcome hesitation, objections and rejection. If they are unsuccessful, the encounter draws quickly to a close, often with both parties displaying dissatisfaction with the interaction. Thus, the empirical examination of how sales resistance is accomplished and dealt with provides valuable insight into the mechanisms perpetuating sales failure and customer dissatisfaction. In this chapter, I examine the sequential and interactional unfolding of resistance both in “freezing” and “lukewarm” calls.

Resistance has been mainly discussed in social psychological terms, as a response to a persuasive attempt. Within this framework, resistance has been conceptualised (1) as a feature of a person’s attitudes, (2) as a process of counterarguing, (3) as a personal motive, or (4) as the outcome of a persuasive process (Knowles & Riner, 2006; Wegener, Petty, Smoak, & Fabrigar, 2004). Focusing on psychological processes, these conceptualisations pay little attention to the interactional manifestations of resistance.

Based on the examination of naturally occurring resistance in ordinary and institutional settings, conversation analysis puts forward a different understanding of resistance. In interactional terms, resistance is enacted through responsive turns that do not align with the ongoing course of action (*cf.* Muntigl, 2013) or its implications, and may even challenge the basis of the interlocutor’s initiating action. A recipient can resist a single action, such as a directive (Kent, 2012), a question (Yao & Ma, 2017) or a proposal (Ekberg & LeCouteur, 2015). For instance, Heritage and Sefi (1992) show how young mothers resist health visitors’ advice giving by producing misfitted responses which do not treat prior talk as

advice. Recipients can also resist the presumed agenda or project promoted by a course of action. In “cold” calls, Mazeland (2004) discovered that prospects avoid producing positive assessments of products which could be treated as displays of interest and which would entice them to make a purchase.

Continuing this line of work, this chapter explores the sequential and interactional organisation of resistance in “cold” calling. Resistance is viewed here as a collaborative accomplishment, the product of prospects and salespeople jointly orienting to some turn-at-talk *as resistance*. In this chapter I document two communicative practices through which prospects enact resistance and I review the range of methods salespeople employ to deal prospects’ resistance. Section 6.1.1 examines *sales blocks* – prospects’ dispreferred responsive turns to transaction-oriented actions projecting the termination of the encounter. Section 6.1.2 describes *stalls* – prospects’ turns that propose sales trajectories that slow down the sale’s progression and minimise their commitment to the sale. I show that and how salespeople treat the two types of resistance differently, orienting to their specific affordances for continuing the pursuit of the jeopardised sale. I conclude with a discussion of the conceptual implications for the discursive respecification of resistance to influence/persuasion and practical implications for sales training.

6.1 Analysis

In this section, I show how resistance is interactionally accomplished and dealt with in “cold” calls. I focus on two different methods used by prospects to interfere with the progress of the prospecting activity: blocking and stalling the sale. In each section, I first discuss the sequential production of resistance and then go on document the range of responses to it.

6.1.1 Sales blocks

One way in which prospects resist the sale is by blocking courses of action which would have moved the sale closer to a transaction. A *sales block* constitutes a prospect’s rejection or rejection implicative response that treats the interlocutor’s initiating action as a preliminary to a sale. Initiating actions range from enquires about the prospect’s business to descriptions of the salesperson’s company. Prospects’ dispreferred responses do not only close off the ongoing courses of action, but also foreclose the future accomplishment of a commercial transaction (Mazeland, 2004).

Let us start by examining the sequential organisation of resistance through sales blocks. Prior to line 1, the salesperson (S) had made a switchboard request which the receptionist (R) rejected explaining that the person in charge of printers is out of the office.

Extract 6-1 Tech 2

- 1 S: Oka:y? Next Monday, =>And< what's her name (.) please.
 2 (0.7)
 3 R: ↑Uh::wrw- (.) w- (0.4) <Well as I say=she can't tell you
 4 any different to what I can at the moment:, So:, (0.2)
 5 #i- (.) >you know there's< no- there's no point really,

The analysis in this section will focus on the sequential and turn-constructural features of the turns which make up the salesperson's inquiry (line 1) and the prospect's response (lines 3-5). The next sections will have a broader focus, including the examination of the salesperson's turn following the block.

Four features of the FPP “>And< what's her name (.) please.” (line 1) are relevant for the current analysis. First, it is a request for the business manager's name which makes a delivery of that information the relevant and preferred SPP. Second, prefaced with “And” it is framed as a routine question, part of an activity in progress (Heritage & Sorjonen, 1994). It is noteworthy, then, that the question is not designed as a preliminary, but as part of an ongoing information gathering project. Third, the design of the request – compact verb form and no indexed contingencies – positions the speaker as highly entitled to ask for the business manager's name. This suggests that the provision of that information by the recipient is unproblematic (Curl & Drew, 2008; Lindström, 2005). Last, the incremental “please” repairs a possibly incomplete request (Wootton, 2007). Additionally, filling a place where inducements are often produced (Davidson, 1984) “please” underscores the request as effortlessly fulfillable by the recipient, instead of functioning as a politeness marker (Ervin-Tripp, Guo, & Lampert, 1990).

Let us consider the receptionist's response to this high entitlement information request. The SPP in lines 3-5 consists of two TCUs. The first TCU bears several markers of dispreference (Schegloff, 2007b): (1) 0.7 seconds gap, (2) turn-initial delay, (3) abandoned TCU start with multiple pauses, (4) “well”-prefaced, elaborated TCU (Heritage, 2015), and (5) account for not answering. The account “she can't tell you any different to what I can at the moment:” (lines 3-4) virtually accomplishes the refusal to supply the name of the business

manager. It proffers a link between this request and the salesperson's future agenda of contacting the business manager to discuss a potential commercial agreement that the current call-taker had already presented as unlikely. The receptionist justifies not supplying the requested information by excavating and rejecting the question's presupposition. Additionally, she frames her response as a partial repetition of her prior talk. This implies a lack of progressivity and projects disaffiliation. It also highlights a failure in mutual understanding by implying that the salesperson's inquiry is inapposite because the information she is after – the contract expiry date – had already been supplied.

The second TCU, "So:, (0.2) #i- (.) >you know there's< no- there's no point really," (lines 4-5) moves the conversation towards sequence and call closure. Prefaced with "So", the TCU is offered as a conclusion of the prior talk. Again, the prospect refers to the futility of the salesperson's presumed agenda. Through the use of "you know", the implications of the prior turn are proposed to be known by both interlocutors. This move initiates call pre-closure (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973).

Based on the analysis of Extract 6-1, we see that blocks encompass the following features: (1) they are responsive turns occupying the second position within adjacency pairs, (2) they implement dispreferred actions that do not align with the course of action set out by the FPP, (3) the misalignment is accomplished mainly, but not solely, through accounts hinged not on the ongoing course of action, but on a future commercial transaction between the two companies, (4) prospects stop the advancement of the ongoing course of action by invoking that, for their company, the foreshadowed commercial transaction is inopportune, not necessary, or disadvantageous, and (5) they orient to the initiating action as a vehicle in the salesperson's project of moving the interaction forward towards a transaction. Thus, by treating the FPPs as preliminary moves in the service of prefigured transactions even though salespeople do not design them to be recognisable as such (Schegloff, 2007b), prospects "expose" their interlocutors' commercial agendas.

Next, I will present the range of methods salespeople use to deal with sales blocks. I document four practices: (1) challenging the integrity of the block, through a non-minimal post-expansion; (2) circumventing the block – which is typically a new sequence, often after a SCT, tangential to the prior sequence; (3) producing counters to the block, through post-expansions that do not make a response relevant like challenges do and (4) redoing the blocked initiating action.

6.1.1.1 Challenging the integrity of the block

Let us now look at how salespeople deal with prospects' sales blocks, by examining Extract 6-2 in which the salesperson has called a school and is talking to the head teacher. Prior to line 1, the latter had informed the salesperson that the school's copier contract runs for two more years.

Extract 6-2 Tech 36

1 S: And so who [would ↑b]e the best person to .hh=
 2 P: [Okay.]
 3 S: =literally send an email to now and perhaps (then)
 4 follow that up,.hh when the time co:mes as we'd
 5 li[ke to] °review° [()]
 6 P: [We:ll] [there wouldn't be any:]
 7 (.) purpose behind it because we do have a: a
 8 longstanding contract, So:, (.) Okay?
 9 (.)
 10 S: But when it expires you'd be loo[king] to get=
 11 P: [Yeah.]
 12 S: =costs wouldn't [you? ()]
 13 P: [So we don't] really: yeah we don't
 14 really need to have any (0.2) reminder. Thank you.

The extract features the salesperson's unsuccessful challenge (lines 10 and 12) of the prospect's block (lines 6-8). The ensuing analysis will focus on: (1) how the prospect's turn is designed to block the sale and (2) how the salesperson challenges the integrity of the block, by pointing out that the invoked grounds – the pre-existing contract – will run out at some point, thus allowing the school to search for a new provider.

The salesperson's initiating action consists of several sales-oriented elements. It starts with an information solicitation: "And so who would ↑be the best person to .hh literally send an email to now" (lines 1 and 3). As we saw in Chapter 3, requesting information about the identity of the employee who is in charge of purchasing decisions is one of the first steps in qualifying leads in "freezing" calls. In formulating her query, the salesperson also announces a future pre-transaction step: sending that person an email in the immediate future.

Additionally, she projects yet another, non-specified type of contact to be initiated at a later time: "and perhaps (then) follow that up,.hh when the time co:mes as we'd like to °review°" (lines 3-5). She formulates her plans for future contact as minimally intrusive "to .hh literally send an email" (lines 1 and 3) and as well-timed "perhaps (then) follow that up,.hh when the

time comes” (lines 3-4). Although these formulations appear affiliative as they take the perspective of the prospect, they also serve the sales agenda, by restricting the latter’s available grounds for rejection (*cf.* Bone, 2006).

The head teacher refuses to answer and blocks the sales process: “Well there wouldn’t be any: (.) purpose behind it because we do have a: a longstanding contract” (lines 6-7). Several features of the response’s design support this claim. First, the turn’s onset in overlap and the turn-initial “Well” indicate that it will not conform to the grammatical and interactional constraints set up by the FPP (Drew, 2009; Heritage, 2015). Second, the speaker overtly refuses to provide an answer (Ekström, 2009), thus both misaligning and disaffiliating with the salesperson and her course of action (Steensig, 2013). Third, he characterises the continuation of the sale, proposed by his interlocutor in her prior turn, as purposeless, motivating his implicit refusal. Additionally, he backs up his account with a report of the school’s long-term contract with their current supplier “we do have a: a longstanding contract” (line 8). Through the choice of a compound verb form “do have” instead of the simple “have” the prospect argues more emphatically against (Antaki, 1994; Billig, 1987; Raymond, 2017) an implicit assumption, that the school might be interested in the services on offer. Last, by exposing and refuting this assumption the prospect treats the salesperson’s current action as a vehicle for advancing the sale towards a transaction and, thus, blocks its progress.

It is noteworthy that the prospect’s turn contains an additional TCU “So:, (.) Okay?”. This increases the response-relevance of his account (Stivers & Rossano, 2012) by transforming it into a statement not only requiring but also preferring a confirmation (Schegloff, 2007b). Furthermore, it imposes additional constraints on the response design, making a “yes/no” response the preferred type-conforming format, which, in turn, renders type-nonconforming responses more conspicuous (Raymond, 2003).

How does the salesperson deal with this sales block? She challenges the integrity of the head teacher’s account on the basis of its incompleteness. She invokes the cyclical renewability of commercial agreements which makes a decision about a commercial transaction a necessary and predictable undertaking: “But when it expires you’d be looking to get costs wouldn’t you?” (lines 10, 12).

Several aspects of the turn’s design are worth noting. First, its nonconformity to the constraints set up by the prior turn is managed through the turn-initial adversative “but” which foreshadows a misaligning and disaffiliative action. In fact, compared to the prospect’s turn,

which was disaffiliative mainly on the basis of its structural misalignment leading to a sequence closing, the current turn embodies an overt disagreement, thus escalating the disaffiliation.

Second, the question is borderline hostile as it is designed to elicit a confirming response from the prospect which would undermine his own prior stance, but would enable the salesperson to resume the sales process. The use of “B event” declarative + tag has been documented by Hepburn and Potter (2011a, 2011b) as one of the practices that child protection officers use to deal with callers’ resistance to advice. It seems that in both settings, this practice fulfils a similar function of pursuing the interlocutor’s alignment to a course of action they had previously resisted to. More specifically: the question consists of a declarative statement followed by a tag, making a confirmation of the need to renew printer contracts the preferred next action (Heritage, 2002b; Heritage & Raymond, 2012).

The prospect ignores the response constraints set up by the salesperson’s turn by starting in overlap and prefacing his turn with ‘So’, which ties it to his own prior turn and, thus, disregards and sequentially deletes the salesperson’s turn (Sacks, 1992a). As before, he produces a rejection implicative account “So we don’t really: yeah we don’t really need to have any (0.2) reminder.” (lines 13-14). The account explicitly rebuffs the necessity of further contact with the salesperson’s company, functioning as an upgrade of his prior blocking response. Additionally, the word choice for formulating the salesperson’s transaction pursuit as a “reminder” enables him to retake epistemic ownership of his school’s administrative organisation. In this context, a “reminder” is proposed to be an internal tool, managed by employees, thus being beyond the scope of outside commercial agents. By ending his turn with the appreciative “thank you” (line 15) the prospect moves from a rejection implicative response to a pre-closure (Sikveland & Stokoe, 2017b).

To summarise, salespeople can challenge prospects’ blocks of their initiating actions. This method of dealing with resistance is not only ineffective, but also contributes to the decline in social solidarity which starts with the prospect’s disaffiliative response and which will culminate, a few seconds later, with the abrupt and unilateral termination of the call by the prospect (Raymond & Zimmerman, 2016). By contrast, the following sections show that and how escalating disaffiliation can be avoided by other means of dealing with sales blocks.

6.1.1.2 Circumventing the block

Extract 6-3 is part of the Fine Bar Windows corpus consisting of incoming calls to a home improvement company selling windows and doors. The salesperson (S) has called the prospective client (P) to offer advertising space in a school leaflet. The former is a representative of a marketing company contracted by the school.

Extract 6-3 FBW 213

1 S: .=An' I was jus' ri:nging to see if you'd be interested
 2 in promoting obviously you:r: uhm ne:w sho:wroom that
 3 you've got o:pen.
 4 (1.0)
 5 P: °No:. Not really.=I'm- I'm- To be honest we've got that
 6 covered well.°
 7 (0.6)
 8 S: ↑RIGH',
 9 (0.6)
 10 S: Pkt ↑Uh=where 'ave you previ- jus- you (prefer)
 11 (that)/(it) in the Shuttle?
 12 (1.3)
 13 P: Uhm- Mainly it's on Google to be honest.=°It's- it's°
 14 onli:ne it's the- the thing that makes a big
 15 difference.
 16 (0.6)
 17 S: RIGH'.=It's jus' that this (.)
 18 P: Be- (.)
 19 S: >Yes,<=
 20 P: =(Please) / (To me's) jus' pure relevance an- an' you-
 21 you're ta:lkin' to schools you're talkin' of education
 22 ain't talkin' of wi:ndows. It just- i- for me it
 23 doesn't work together.
 24 (.)
 25 P: I'm sorry.

In this extract the salesperson circumvents the prospect's block in pursuit of sales progressivity. The caller's offer of advertising services (lines 1-3) is rejected by the call-taker (lines 5-6). Additionally, the former's ensuing work to carry on with the sale (lines 10-11, 17) is again blocked by the latter (lines 13-15 and 18-25).

The offer of advertising services employs a compact variant of the reason for calling "if" format described by Curl (2006): "An' I was jus' ri:nging to see if you'd be interested in promoting obviously you:r: uhm ne:w sho:wroom that you've got o:pen." (lines 1-3). The offer is transaction-relevant as its object consists of promotional services that the

salesperson's company would provide for the prospect's company. If, in responding, the latter aligns with the salesperson's offer, he moves the sale forward. If, in turn, he rejects the offer, he stops the process from advancing. After a long gap, foreshadowing a misaligning response (Schegloff, 2007b), the prospect rejects the offer and blocks the sale. His turn (lines 5-6) starts out with an unequivocal rejection embodied by the lexical TCU "No:". The rejection is further elaborated with a hedged "Not really." and a my-side (Edwards & Fasulo, 2006) sufficiency statement "To be honest we've got that covered well."

How does the salesperson handle this rejection? First, she uses a sequence-closing third "↑RIGH'," to acknowledge/accept the prior turn (Gardner, 2007; Schegloff, 2007b). The continuing intonation prefigures that there is more to follow. Indeed, after a 0.6 silence, the salesperson abandons the pursuit of a sale, but instead starts to fish for information about the company's current advertising arrangements. Her inquiry, done through a confirmation-soliciting declarative (Heritage, 2002b), "Pkt ↑Uh=where 'ave you previ- jus'- you (prefer) (that)/(it) in the Shuttle?" (lines 10-11) claims knowledge about the company's advertising practices and preferences (Heritage, 2012b), thus working towards a position of epistemic authority from which she would potentially be able to discuss with or advise the prospect on this subject.

In dealing with the block, the salesperson seems, at first, to be abandoning the sale. Her question is not oriented towards a future commercial transaction, but towards the company's current advertising preferences. Any response to this question would not immediately advance the sales agenda, and thus engage with a blocked course of action. Instead, by sidestepping the block, the salesperson keeps the topic of advertising media open and builds up grounds for a forthcoming, although at this point not transparent, continuation of the sale. Last, due to its non-straightforwardness, this practice requires at least two or more steps for another transaction-relevant offer to be produced. Crucially, as it consists of at least two adjacency pairs, it is built to solicit and rely on the prospect's alignment and cooperation for its fruition (Figure 6).

Figure 6: The sequential organisation of circumventing a block

- 1 S: Initiating action
- 2 P: Rejection / Rejection-implicative response
- 3 S: (Acknowledging +) Circumventing
- 4 P: → Response enabling or hindering sales resumption
- 5 S: Further pursuit or sales resumption

In Extract 6-3, the prospect does not align with the course of action initiated by the salesperson. In line 13, he produces a type-nonconforming (Raymond, 2003) indirect reply (Walker, Drew, & Local, 2011) by which he informs the salesperson that his company uses mainly Google advertising services: “Mainly it's on Google to be honest.” The format of the answer has two noteworthy characteristics. First, the contrast, established through the use of the proper noun “Google”, paralleling the use of the salesperson’s “Shuttle”, treats the question as off the mark by highlighting its incorrect presumption of the company’s advertising preferences. Second, through his indirect response, the prospect uses the slot created by the question to do more than answer the question (Walker et al., 2011). By mentioning their use of Google and that “It's- it's° online it's the- the thing that makes a big difference.” (lines 13-15), the prospect identifies the online medium as an essential and relevant difference between the advertising practices they are currently engaged in and what the salesperson had been suggesting. By implication, this renders her offer not relevant for his company, thus blocking the progress of the sale.

In line 17, the salesperson acknowledges the account and immediately starts a new sequence “It’s jus’ that this” which is then discontinued in response to her interlocutor’s bid for the floor (line 18). The indexical terms “it” and “this” employed in the design of the aborted TCU renders it heavily reliant on prior talk for its meaning, thus suggesting the salesperson was going to continue on the topic of advertising media. Additionally, the overall construction of the turn’s beginning can be heard as prefacing a contrastive line of action, departing from the trajectory set up by the prior turn, which is in line with the prospect’s turn being a block.

To support the arguments: (1) that circumvention-initiated sequences need at least two adjacency pairs to achieve sales resumptions and (2) that they are contingent upon the prospect’s alignment, consider Extract 6-4 from a call featuring a successful circumvention. Line 1 starts with the prospect’s rejection implicative account which he has issued in response to the salesperson’s request for a site visit.

Extract 6-4 Eplus 1

1 P: .h U#:hm I mean I- I'd have to speak to:: u::hm (0.8)
 2 it- (.) #uh- there wouldn't really be much point in
 3 just coming down havin' a meeting with me because I'm
 4 sure it would sound impressive but I'don't really have

5 no idea as to whether or not it would be any advantage
6 to us. .Hh uh Either financially or logistically.
7 .hh[h U]#::HM:: (0.3)
8 S: [I-]
9 S: ↑At the mo:ment what is your whole spend (.) annually,
10 On lines and calls and mobiles.
11 (0.3)
12 P: #U #u Absolutely no idea. Hhh (.) (No idea.)
13 (0.6)
14 S: Okay, u:hm So would a finance director have uhm access
15 to that.
16 (0.5)
17 P: U::HM Yeah.=I'm sure he would. Yeah:.
18 (0.3)
19 S: Yeah, u::hm <Can we- can we bring him in on the meeting
20 as well?
21 (0.9)
22 P: .hhh U:HM: (1.6) Possibly.

Several features of this extract are worth noting. The salesperson's pursuit of the prospect's block unfolds over three adjacency pairs (lines 9-22), with the last one reinstating the sale and receiving a hedged aligning response. In contrast to the prior example, here the salesperson does not acknowledge the prospect's sales block. In lines 8-9, he launches a new sequences circumventing the prospect's account for rejecting the sale by asking him about the company's current expenditure on the services he is offering. Building on his prior "lack of knowledge" account, the prospect does not answer the question. His extremely formulated response "Absolutely no idea" discourages further probing in this direction (Pomerantz, 1986). Crucially, the salesperson drops this line of inquiry and, building upon his interlocutor's turn (Bolden, 2006) asks whether another company employee, the financial director, would possess the sought information. Importantly, his question is designed not only to prefer a confirmation, but also to facilitate it by using a script formulation (Edwards, 1994) "**would a** finance director have uhm access to that" (line 13) which is harder to refute than a single case (Edwards, 2006). In line 15, the prospect produces a delayed acceptance (Kendrick & Torreira, 2015) followed by a confirmation which, by recycling the verb "would" aligns with the prior turn in responding to a generic and not an actual situation. However, the use of the pronoun "he" renders some specificity to the response. This is exploited by the salesperson in the resumption of the sale "<Can we- can we bring him in on the meeting as well?" (line 17). This turn reinstates the previously rejected meeting and, decisively, deals with the prospect's initial account for rejecting it. Although not a committed

acceptance, the prospect's response in line 19 promotes sales progressivity. By the end of the call, the salesperson will have secured the meeting.

6.1.1.3 Countering the block

The next extract is a continuation of the call featured in Extract 6-3, in which the prospect has already resisted to the service offer as well as to the circumvention employed in pursuit of sales resumption. In line 1, he launches another sales block.

Extract 6-5 FBW 213

- 1 P: (Please) / (To me's) jus' pure relevance an- an' you-
 2 you're ta:lkin' to schools you're talkin' of education
 3 ain't talkin' of wi:ndows. It just- i- for me it
 4 doesn't work together. (.) I'm so[rry.]
 5 S: [↑W'11] to be honest
 6 >though< ↑we get- we get people from all differen- 'cos
 7 I do these f- f:olders for schools up and down the
 8 country and we get things
 9 [from like insurance an'-]
 10 P: [°() that's why I'm not] in it.°
 11 (.)
 12 P: °Thank you for your time.°

In lines 1-4, the prospect justifies his rejection, invoking the unsuitability of the school leaflet as an advertising medium for a construction company. His account is strengthened by the “my side” framing “It just- i- for me it doesn't work together.” (line 3), which makes it more difficult for the salesperson to challenge (Billig, 1989). Followed by the formulaic apology “I’m sorry”, it foreshadows a call pre-closure (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973).

However, this move backfires. The narrowness of the “my side” judgment provides the salesperson with an opportunity to continue her pursuit. She counters the prospect's account by invoking examples which disconfirm it. She draws on her professional knowledge as a resource for reporting cases which contradict the incompatibility appraisal put forward by her interlocutor: “I do these f- f:olders for schools up and down the country and we get things from like insurance an-” (lines 7-9). By reporting her own knowledge of disconfirming cases she avoids directly contradicting the prospect's prior statement (Drew, 1984), but still disputes its validity as an argument for not going ahead with the sale. This mitigated opposition still leads to decay in affiliation as can be seen from the prospect's response.

The last part of her turn is produced in overlap with the prospect's turn who comes in mid-TCU. The salesperson relinquishes the floor without finishing her turn. Speculating from the part of the prospect's turn that is discernible (line 10) and from his next turn (line 12), his intrajacent overlap (Drew, 2009) is stopping the salesperson from developing her counterargument which would have required a response and would have also kept the conversation going. Instead, he quickly moves into pre-closure by producing an appreciation "Thank you for your time." (line 12). The incompatibility between this appreciation and his identity (Zimmerman, 1998) as call-taker and non-aligned offer recipient makes his move to close the conversation even more evident.

All three practices for dealing with blocks presented so far relied on the salesperson engaging with the prospect's resisting turn. By contrast, the last extract examined below shows the salesperson redoing his initiating action and, thus, providing a new response slot for the prospect while also avoiding the disaffiliative move of pursuing a blocked course of action.

6.1.1.4 Redoing the initiating action

Extract 6-6 is part of an unsolicited sales call received by a Fine Bar Windows employee about advertising services offered by the salesperson's company. The extract comes from the beginning of the conversation, just after the identification sequence has been completed.

Extract 6-6 FBW 115

1 S: .HHhh U::hm (0.4) The rea:son for the ca:ll, I- (0.2) I
 2 actually wo:rk for a company called Smartmark
 3 Me:dia=it's in regards tuh- .hhh actually (targeted)
 4 A:dverts towards people looking for your se:rvides.
 5 (0.4)
 6 P: °.hhh° kt (.) We're alri:ght (.) ↑thank you:=we're
 7 alright=we've got our own in 'ou:se (.) u::h ma:rketing
 8 tch- tchompany.
 9 (0.4)
 10 ?: THuh
 11 S: A:lri:gh'. No:=Yea:h- (0.2) ab- abso:lutely=I mean i°t°
 12 is (0.3) °e::° (0.2) #e- #uh- >ba:sically< in a
 13 nutshell what we're actually doin' is no:thin' (0.6)
 14 #like your (act'lly) () that kind of stuff an' goo:gle
 15 (ad) words (nowt) like that (0.2) .HHH U::hm °hhh° (.)
 16 ↑As peo:ple sea:rch fo:r (0.4) °for sort=o' wi:ndow
 17 co:mpanie:s°, .HHH uh conservatories (.) anythin' like

18 that (0.3) within sort of Mi:dlandsci:ty=an' the
 19 surrounding areas. .HHH You can actually ta:rget these
 20 people DIrectly
 21 (0.5)
 22 S: <Jus' you:
 23 (.)
 24 S: Nobody else.
 25 (2.0)
 26 P: >Go on,<

This extract features a case in which the salesperson successfully deals with the prospect's block. His comeback turn (lines 11-20), after the prospect's rejection (lines 6-8) of what is treated as a sales offer (lines 1-4), painstakingly maintains an affiliative stance while still pursuing the blocked sale by redoing his offer.

In lines 1-4, the salesperson starts with the ostensible reason for calling “.HHhh U::hm (0.4) The rea:son for the ca:ll,” but then momentarily discontinues that TCU to introduce his institutional identity “↓I- (0.2) I actually wo:rk for a company called Smartmark Me:dia”. Then he continues with a TCU that appears to be fitted to the abandoned reason for calling “it's in regards tuh- .hhh actually (targeted) A:dverts towards people looking for your se:rvice.” The juxtaposition of the caller's “relevant” identity (Edwards, 1998), together with his announcement that the call's purpose revolves around his company's services renders the caller's turn hearable as a service offer (Sacks, 1992a; Stokoe, 2012a).

The prospect's turn consists of several components of a dispreferred rejection implicative response: turn-initial delay, a sufficiency report “We're alri:ght”, an appreciation “↑thank you:”, a repetition of the sufficiency report backed up by a report announcing that the services offered by the salesperson are already covered “we've got our own in 'ou:se (.) u::hm ma:rketi:ng tch- tchompany.”. The upshot of this report (Drew, 1984) renders the offered services redundant, thus blocking the continuation of the sale.

The practice used by the salesperson for resurrecting the sale consists of an initial display of alignment through the receipt of the turn with an acknowledgment token “A:lri:gh'.” followed by agreement “No:=Yea:h-” upgraded to “abso:lutely”. (line 10). To the latter he latches an “I mean” prefaced TCU through which he explicates his prior turn disattending the prospect's rejection (*cf.* Maynard, 2013). By aligning with the prospect, he refutes speculations that his action might be motivated by the unfruitful outcome of his prior turn and, thus, aimed at occasioning a different response. In redoing the offer, he sets up a contrast between simple advertising that are not provided by his company and sophisticated

marketing tools that he is offering. This is achieved through the use of the contrastive “actually”, the shared and common knowledge constructions “like **your** (act’lly) () **that kind of stuff**” and the recognitional categorical references “an’ **google (ad) words** (nowt) like that”. By contrast, the advertising services offered by the salesperson are not referred to by a category name. Instead, he provides a process-focused description of how they work, which suggests that they are something new, with which the interlocutor would not be familiar. Additionally, he proposes that the offered services would enable the company to target local prospective clients. This is ascribed to be one of the company’s unattained goals “You can **actually** ta:rget these people Directly” (lines 19-20).

The prospect fails to respond, as indicated by the gaps in lines 21 and 23. So, the salesperson extends his prior TCU by adding two increments which are syntactically and semantically dependent on the prior TCU (Ford et al., 2002), thus “deleting” the prospect’s gap and proposing the TCU was incomplete prior to the extensions (Bolden, Mandelbaum, & Wilkinson, 2012). Additionally, using these increments, the salesperson constructs new transition relevance places, opening new slots for the prospect to respond to the offer (Ford et al., 2002) . The first increment, “<Jush’ you:” (line 19), adds a crucial detail to the description of the offered services: The prospect’s company would get exclusive access to the previously mentioned interested prospective clients. The second increment “Nobody else.” (line 21) strengthens the prior argument by reformulating it and thus, highlighting the competitive advantage the company would get over its competitors.

In line 25, the prospect revises his position and aligns with the salesperson’s course of action by producing a “go ahead” response, thus treating the prior turn as a “pre” (Schegloff, 2007b). His minimal “>Go on,<” comes after a 2.0 seconds gap. This is a feature of dispreferred turn formats, putting the prospect’s response in the category Kendrick and Torreira (2015, p. 19) call “qualified acceptance”. By using a dispreferred turn format feature to deliver an aligning action the prospect displays reluctance (Bilmes, 2014) to take a stance which contradicts his immediately prior position. By not accounting for the change in stance, the prospect’s alignment can be heard as the result of the salesperson’s intervention¹⁶.

To sum up, by redoing the offer after aligning with the prospect’s rejection, the salesperson affiliates with his interlocutor while still continuing a blocked course of action.

¹⁶ See Steensig and Heinemann (2015) for an investigation of the use of modal constructions in Danish for framing complying responses as either (1) elicited solely by the obligating function of the requesting action or as (2) unproblematic and independent of the obligations set up by the request.

Compared to other methods for resurrecting a sale after a block, this method enables the salesperson to produce a new version of his prior sales-related action, after the prospect had taken a negative stance against it, without appearing to disregard his interlocutor's position.

While resisting by blocking the initiating action brings the ongoing course of action to a halt, resisting through stalling, which we will see next, seems to carry the ongoing action forward, albeit amending its trajectory.

6.1.2 Stalls

By stalling, prospects interfere with the progress of the prospecting activity. They set up trajectories that slow it down or jeopardise the forthcoming commercial transaction. For instance, while a salesperson may propose a face-to-face meeting to do a service presentation, the prospect may instead ask to be sent all the relevant information via email. Thus, even though the prospect has not declined receiving service information, the sales trajectories they outline is less conducive for the sale. Stalls pose a variety of problems, ranging from slowing down the sale to drawing it out over an unforeseen period, while the salesperson waits for a response from the customer. Thus, salespeople treat these trajectories as less-than optimal and propose alternatives which speed up the sale to ascertain its success.

Before presenting the discursive practices and resources salespeople use to deal with stalling, I will first briefly outline the main features of this method based on the examination Extract 6-7. The 18 omitted lines were analysed in section 6.1.3 as part of Extract 6-4. There, we saw the prospect rejecting the salesperson's request for a site visit and then blocking the sale by suggesting that he would be unable to assess the benefits of the commercial agreement proposed by the latter. In turn, the salesperson circumvents the prospect's account for rejecting the meeting and, in the end, manages to overcome the block and continue the pursuit of a site visit. In the fragment featured in the extract below, the prospect continues to stall the sale.

Extract 6-7 Eplus 1

1 S: But in[iti]ally: wha- when would be a good time=
 2 P: [Yeah.]
 3 S: =to cal- come down to see yourselves about this.
 4
 5 ((18 lines omitted, see Extract 6-4))
 6

7 P: .hhh U:HM: (1.6) Possibly. U::HM (0.6) .hhh .HSHH .Hsh
8 .Hsh .Hshh .Hs↑hh <Do=you wanna: (0.4)do=you wanna: (.)
9 can you give me a call back in a week,=I've got a
10 meeting with Ke- oh no=actually there's no- it's just
11 over a week. .hh >I could do with=h- having a meet
12 with< the managing director really and discussing this
13 conversation with=h- him, You kno:w say- askin' whether
14 or not it's worth >setting=up< (.) setting up this
15 meeting. .hhh U:hm (.) Can you give me a call back i:n
16 like the end of next week,=And we'll: u:hm °pcht° maybe
17 arrange a date then. hh
18 S: .hh Yeah,=Well what I could do provisionally: is uh
19 send you an invitation through outlook for the end of
20 the month, .HH And uh once you've spoke to your
21 colleague we can: (0.2) u:h sort of establish .HHhh
22 u:hm whether (0.3) you know w- w- whether it needs to
23 be mo:ved,=Is- is that feasible?

My aim in discussing Extract 6-7 here is to show how the prospect interferes with the progress of the sale, thus slowing it down and potentially endangering it. Then, in the following sections, I will focus on how salespeople deal with the stall.

By considering the sales trajectory outlined by the prospect (lines 7-17) against the one envisaged by the salesperson (line 1 and 3) it becomes apparent that the former's proposal is less conducive towards the sale. In lines 1 and 3 the salesperson asks to visit the prospect at the company's place of business. The request is accomplished through an inquiry about a convenient time for the meeting and, thus, framed as accommodating the prospect's schedule. As I showed in Extract 6-4 analysed in section 6.1.1.2, the request is unsuccessfully blocked, and, in line 7, the prospect re-aligns with the proposed meeting through the hedged acknowledgement "Possibly". At this point in the interaction, the prospect launches a new sequence which outlines an alternative sales trajectory consisting of a future telephone call instead of face-to-face contact. Because the salesperson's proposal for a meeting is still unresolved, the prospect's alternative comes across as a competing proposal. This interpretation is sustained by several features of the turn implementing it. First, it is sequentially placed after the prospect had, without committing, acknowledged the request for a meeting. Second, the commencement of the turn is delayed several times. Third, the design of the request for a call is repaired from "Do=you wanna:" to "can you". The replacement of a form indexing volition with one indexing ability further acknowledges that the outlined course of action is not in accord with the interlocutor's preferred sales trajectory.

A second set of arguments which warrant the interpretation of the prospect's turn as a stall enacting resistance comes from the way the next contact with the salesperson is handled. First, as I already noted, the prospect asks for a phone call instead of a site visit. Second, he delays the contact, first by a week and then by a slightly longer period. Also, he makes the decision of setting up a meeting contingent on the outcome of a discussion with his manager. Last, he frames the meeting as a weak probability "we'll: u:hm °pcht° maybe arrange a date then" (lines 16-17). Taken together, these features construct the sales trajectory proposed by the prospect as less likely to lead to a successful transaction.

Last, the salesperson (lines 18-23) does not align with the new sales trajectory. He recycles the initial course of action which had outlined a face-to-face meeting. He reframes it to accommodate the contingencies invoked by his interlocutor: the necessity of conferring with his colleagues and the compatibility with his schedule. Nonetheless, through this turn, he replaces the phone call with a site visit as the next step in the sales process. Also, he ascertains a future contact by announcing he is going to schedule a meeting provisionally. Once a date and a time have been formally agreed upon and confirmed through an electronic invitation, the onus will be on the prospect to cancel or reschedule.

To sum up, prospects stall the sale by proposing arrangements for future contact that (1) slow down the sale and (2) limit their commitment to the commercial transaction. There are three strands of evidence which support the interpretation of a stall as a practice for enacting resistance. First, they often propose an alternative route for the sale to the one the salesperson had suggested. Second, the prospects' alternatives slow down the sale: (1) by postponing future contact, (2) by replacing direct means of contact with less direct ones, and (3) by constructing the transaction as unlikely or contingent on several other company employees or company internal events. Third, salespeople treat these sales trajectories as less than optimal and, while acknowledging and accepting them *pro forma*, they pursue their original plans or propose alternatives which speed up the sale. In following sections, I will document the practices employed by salespeople to deal with stalls.

6.1.2.1 Justifying an alternative course of action

The next extract we see the salesperson asking to meet with the prospect. Throughout the omitted 41 lines, the prospect (P) does not respond to the request, making line 6 the first place where the potential future arrangements are being oriented to. In response to the meeting request, the prospect proposes an alternative sales trajectory that replaces face-to-face contact

with email. The salesperson's response, starting line 8, deals with the outstanding request by highlighting its disadvantages and, thus, justifies substituting email communication with a site visit.

Extract 6-8 Eplus 3

1 S: #U::h I >w's jus' really seein'< if we could come down
2 and have a chat to you about Yeltel.
3
4 ((41 lines omitted))
5
6 P: hh >Have you got somethin' you can: (.) you can email
7 acro:ss some inf[ormation, ()]
8 S: [Well it's- tha]t is not- it's not- t-
9 the trouble is there's so much we can offer you. .h
10 This is why U::M (0.2) I can get someone in the:re who
11 can just come i:n have a chat with you for about half
12 an hour=look at what you've got, (.) Once they've made
13 contact with yo[u], .h th]en they can send you the=
14 P: [Uhuhm]
15 S: =information [that y]ou need. hh 'Cause what we=
16 P: [°Uhuhm°]
17 S: =DO:n't wanna do is (.) bomba:rd you with stuff (what)
18 you don't wanna look at.
19 (0.5)
20 P: Okay.
21 (0.5)
22 S: So: let's >I've got t- I've got the< di:ary=open at the
23 mo:ment, (.) .hh Are you available for the back end of
24 February?

This is an example where the salesperson successfully replaces the sales trajectory outlined by the prospect, with a more conducive alternative. It is accomplished through the use of several discursive resources. First, the onset of the turn needs to be considered. The salesperson starts in overlap with the prospect, at a time where the latter potentially produces the last word of his turn. According to Drew (2009), this type of “recognitional” overlap onset occurs when the second speaker treats the prior turn as somewhat inapposite or as heading into a problematic direction and, thus, intervenes to stop it before it is complete. In effect, according to Drew (2009), the early onset is “indicating that in a sense no answer is possible”. Second, through the “well” preface (Heritage, 2015) the turn is designed to break away from the constraints imposed by the prospect's request. The TCU is subsequently repaired four times, until the final version is produced. Notably, abandoned versions either contain or foreshadow

the employment of the freestanding negative marker “not”. By contrast, the use of the word “trouble” (line 8), connoting a negative state of affairs, relinquishes the need for the negative marker in the final version of the TCU. Thus, the salesperson avoids going on record as having opposed the prospect’s request (Lee, 2011a).

Next, the TCU as a whole, “the trouble is there’s so much we can offer you.” (line 9) accomplishes several jobs. The negative valence foreshadows a non-acceptance. The announcement of trouble generated by the diversity of the “offer-able” services begins to account for this non-acceptance. Most importantly, it justifies the non-acceptance by invoking objective difficulties derived from the multiple possible offers and, thus, argues against an interpretation of the non-acceptance as a commercially motivated move (Edwards, 2007).

The explanation is continued in the second TCU “This is why U::M (0.2) I can get someone in the:re who can just come i:n have a chat with you for about half an hour=look at what you’ve got,” (lines 10-12). Here, the visit of a sales representative is brought up as a solution to the already mentioned difficulties. Two additional features of the turn are relevant. First, the visit is sketched as minimally disruptive for the prospect through the use of minimisers (“just com in”) and hedges (“about half an hour”). Second, by using neutral, active verbs and phrases such as “can get”, “come in”, “have a chat” “look” the salesperson depicts the visit as an agenda-free meeting.

Subsequently, in the next TCU, the meeting is linked to the prospect’s request for information which will then become “fulfil-able”, “Once they’ve made contact with you, .h then they can send you the information that you need.”. Thus, this alternative action is presented as a necessary step in the accomplishment of the prospect’s information solicitation. Moreover, the request, formulated by the prospect in more casual terms in lines 6-7, is upgraded here to a “need” that the site survey will allegedly fulfil.

The first signs of the recipient’s stance towards the redirected course of action occur during the salesperson’s turn, in the form of overlapping continuers (lines 14 and 16). Typically, through “uhum” participants “do” passing the turn, signalling speakers they can (Goodwin, 1986) and should (Jefferson, 1984a) continue their talk. This is the case for the first occurrence of “uhum”, in line 14, positioned midway in a compound TCU, recognisably designed, from the outset, to have two parts, through the use of the construction “Once... then...” (Lerner, 1991). However, the barely audible “^ouhum^o”, in line 16, does not occupy a similar sequential location. As such, it might function as display of understanding of how the

salesperson outlines the site visit to fit with the sales trajectory the prospect had initially put forward. This interpretation is sustained by two clues: (1) by the position¹⁷ of the token, just after the term “information”, which the prospect had used in his request and (2) by the salesperson’s next action of relinquishing the floor, thus making it relevant for his interlocutor to come in. Nonetheless, as the latter does not take the opportunity to respond, the salesperson extends his turn with an outbreath followed by a TCU which pursues a response from the prospect. Noteworthy, the pursuit does not treat the absent response as having been generated by a lack of understanding or common knowledge, which according to Pomerantz (1984b) are the first options for designing pursuits. Instead, he presses for an agreement, orienting to the prospect’s missing response as foreshadowing disagreement (Clark et al., 1994). The turn is semantically and grammatically dependent on prior talk, as it starts with an elided subordinate conjunction “Cause”. This TCU delivers an emphatic upshot of the salesperson’s site visit proposal. It underscores the annoyance the prospect is being spared by allowing the visit to inform a customer-tailored information delivery. This effect is achieved through a dramatic prosodic production of the negative verb “DO:n’t wanna do” (lines 15 and 17) and the employment of the figurative “↓bomba:rd” whose delivery and poetics (Jefferson, 1996) contribute to the enactment of potential frustration.

The success of the salesperson’s manoeuvre is visible in the prospect’s minimal agreement “okay” (line14). This enables the salesperson to advance his course of action by initiating the scheduling of the site visit. This next step builds upon the agreed sales trajectory, thus marking the end of the negotiation.

In this extract, then, the salesperson changes the sales trajectory from email contact, requested by the prospect, to a site visit. The latter alternative is framed as less disruptive and as enabling the delivery of personalised services. The prospect’s minimal agreement is treated as acceptance and the pursuit ends with the scheduling initiation.

6.1.2.2 Introducing an impromptu alternative

Extract 6-9 is a part of “lukewarm” call. The salesperson spoke to the prospect in the past; however, no transaction agreement has been reached yet, as the prospect’s company is currently still engaged in an ongoing contractual commitment. In this call, the salesperson sets

¹⁷ See also Schegloff (1982, 2000) for a discussion of the “mm hm” token positioned mid-TCU and used to “do” recognition

up a future contact time to discuss a potential contractual agreement. While the prospect's initial suggestion indicates he would like the salesperson to contact him some time before June, the prospect will successfully push to have the meeting sooner, at the end of March.

Extract 6-9 Eplus 9

1 S: So when do you want me to recontact you Tom.
 2 (0.9)
 3 P: We'll probably start lookin' I imagine around June
 4 again,= But I would suggest you: (0.4) contact me
 5 befo:re then.
 6 (0.3)
 7 S: [Y e a : h .]
 8 P: [So I could at] least put you in thee uh- (0.2) just
 9 to u:h >just just< to refre[sh ()]
 10 S: [.HHH I'll] tell you what.
 11 Why don't #we ge(t)- I'll tell you what. Let's do this,
 12 (.) Why don't we get #u:#::#:hm where are you based,
 13 u:h >whereabou:ts are you ba[sed.<]
 14 P: [Countysh]ire.
 15 (0.5)
 16 S: Countyshire, #u:hm .h I think #a#:hh I know wha' we've
 17 go:t, We've got an lovely girl, (0.4) uhm She's based
 18 down that way, .hhh[h] Why =
 19 P: [Righ'.]
 20 S: = don't we get her to come in and see you end of
 21 Ma:rch,
 22 P: Yeah.=
 23 S: =Least you've got a a face, .hh=
 24 P: =Y[eah.]
 25 S: [#An'] and then we can start the ball rolling. .h
 26 I've got her diary,

In this extract, the salesperson asks the prospect for a preferred contact time (line 1). In response, the latter reports (Drew, 1984) the approximate date¹⁸ when his company would start searching for a service provider. Additionally, he advises the salesperson to contact him prior to that date, thus taking a transaction-supportive stance. The salesperson delays his acknowledgement which ends up being produced in overlap with the prospect's TCU (lines 7-8) through which the latter pursues a response from his interlocutor by justifying the necessity of timely contact (Davidson, 1984; Pomerantz, 1984b).

Instead of responding to the pursuit, the salesperson launches, in overlap, a new

¹⁸ The telephone call occurred at the beginning of January, which places June approximately five months into the future.

course of action, prefaced with “.HHH I’ll tell you what”. This preface works as a “pre-pre” (Schegloff, 1980, p. 161) securing a longer turn. It also announces that its format and the action it embodies will disregard the constraints set up by the prior turn (Sacks, 1992b), while still being tangentially relevant for it. Additionally, its format and onset in overlap indicate the incipient course of action was spontaneously prompted by the prior talk it is interrupting, thus not being planned in advance. Throughout his turn (lines 10-13), the salesperson starts, aborts, and then recycles his own prior TCUs. By frequently interrupting his turn-in-progress he frames his talk as under development. Thus, his course of action comes across as spontaneously produced and constantly adjusted in real time, instead of being the result of a pre-planned scheme. Furthermore, he delays exposing the announced proposal by inserting an additional question about the prospect’s location. Then, he integrates the prospect’s answer into the proposal of sending a female colleague to see the prospect in March. The proposal is formulated as having been spontaneously brought about by the prospect’s location “Countyshire, #u:hm .h I think #a#:hh I know wha’ we’ve go:t,” (lines 16-17) which coincides with the colleague’s whereabouts. In line 19, the prospect acknowledges the salesperson’s justification for sending his colleague to meet him (Gardner, 2007), even before the proposal for a meeting has been made explicit (lines 18 and 20). Next, he agrees with the proposal (line 22 and 24), encouraging the salesperson to move to the next phase of his project – scheduling the meeting (see also Chapter 5).

Both methods for dealing with stalls, featured in Extracts 6-8 and 6-9, allow salespeople to replace prospects’ proposals for moving forward with the sale with more advantageous alternatives, either by replacing an email with a face-to-face meeting (Extract 6-8) or by moving a meeting a couple of months closer to the present (Extract 6-9). It is worth noting that the two methods occur in different sequential environments. In Extract 6-8, the salesperson’s turn occupies the second position in a sequence initiated by the prospect asking to be contacted by email “hh >Have you got somethin’ you can: (.) you can email acro:ss some information, ()” (lines 6-7). As I have shown, the salesperson’s response is designed to deal with the constraints of the FPP, by providing a recipient-centred justification for not complying with the request. Instead, in Extract 6-9, the prospect’s proposal of a future meeting in June is responsive to the salesperson’s initial question “So when do you want me to recontact you Tom.” (line 1). Thus, the latter’s impromptu proposal for an alternative date for the meeting is designed as a new sequence which is independent from and in competition with the prospect’s turn, through its overlapped beginning and promotion of an alternative action plan.

To sum up the analyses presented in this section, I have shown two methods salespeople employ to deal stalls; that is, sales trajectories that have been outlined by prospects and that jeopardise the commercial transaction. To deal with this type of resistance, salespeople propose alternative sales trajectories which speed up or consolidate the sales process. Salespeople propose contact dates which are closer to the present, compared to the ones proposed by prospects or argue for a more direct means of contact to replace a less direct one the prospects had requested.

6.2 Discussion

This chapter contributes to the respecification of persuasion and resistance as interactional phenomena. It presented two methods for enacting prospecting resistance – sales blocks and stalls – as well as a range of practices and resources salespeople use to overcome them.

By “sales block” I am referring to a prospect’s dispreferred response to a salesperson’s transaction-oriented offer, request, query, or proposal. In responding, prospects do not align with the course of action initiated by salespeople on the basis of its role in moving the interaction forward toward a transaction. Prospects account for their rejection by announcing that the proposed future business agreement is not necessary or beneficial for their company, thus blocking the prospecting activity which would have advanced towards a transaction. In dealing with this type of resistance, salespeople have to manage the delicate task of pursuing a blocked course of action. The practices salespeople use to deal with sales blocks, documented in section 6.1.1, differ with regard to their disaffiliative character. A challenge to the integrity of the block constitutes an overt disagreement and erodes social solidarity. Similarly, countering misaligns prospect and salesperson and does not promote sales progressivity. When salespeople circumvent the block, they launch a new course of action, thus avoiding an overtly disagreeing and disaffiliative move. Nonetheless, if this new course of action is treated by prospects as pursuing a sales agenda, they will again block the sale. Finally, by redoing the initiating actions, salespeople avoid continuing a blocked course of action, while still being able to pursue a sales agenda.

Stalls are enacted through prospects’ proposals for sales trajectories that slow down the sales process and minimise their commitment to the commercial transactions. In the three extracts examined in section 6.1.2, prospects show their willingness to contact the salesperson (Extract 6-7), receive commercial information via email (Extract 6-8), and meet with the salesperson in the near future (Extract 6-9). Even though none of these courses of

action would foreclose a future commercial agreement, salespeople still treat them as less than optimal. They put forward different action trajectories, which are more conducive for the sale. To support their proposals, they either provide additional justification for them (section 6.1.2.1) or introduce them in a spontaneous manner (section 6.1.2.2).

Comparing the findings presented in this chapter with those of other interactional studies on resistance in institutional settings a couple of observations are relevant. First, resistance enacted through blocks of the service provider's course of action has been documented in other prospecting encounters (Mazeland, 2004) and in one other setting – Work Focused Interviews (Drew, Toerien, Irvine, & Sainsbury, 2010). The blocks work in both settings to prevent service providers' projects from getting successfully completed. By contrast, resistance through stalling has not yet been documented. Probably, this type of resistance is specific for multi-stage activities, like distributed sales. Participants accomplish resistance by slowing down the advancement of the activity from one stage to the next.

According to several CA studies, in some settings, displaying resistance can have beneficial outcomes. In medical interactions, resistance to treatment recommendations is a key component of the concordance process by which doctor and patient align their understandings of the latter's medical condition (Ijäs-Kallio, Ruusuvuori, & Peräkylä, 2010). In sales encounters, customers' objections seem to lead to better outcomes for the customers (Clark et al., 1994). By contrast, in the unsolicited sales calls analysed in this chapter, resistance did not produce favourable results for prospects. Sequences that encompass blocks often ended without a sale and, in two cases, with hang-ups. By contrast, most stalls were successfully dealt with by salespeople, who were able to impose their own sales trajectories. It is possible that resistance may yield more benefits for customers at other stages of the sale, for instance the negotiation of prices and services.

In the sales literature, resistance is also regarded as beneficial: “this is because by revealing objections, true buyer needs can be uncovered” (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005, p. 15). The findings presented in this chapter do not support this assertion either. First, neither sales blocks nor stalls can be linked to “buyer needs”, whether manifest or hidden. In fact, it is salespeople who orient to prospects' alleged needs, interests, or goals in the service of designing their offers to be more attractive. Second, the methods for enacting resistance documented in this chapter are mainly linked to the sequential infrastructure for accomplishing joint courses of action such as offering services and requesting meetings. In conclusion, resistance should be understood as a product of the sequential organisation of talk, on the backdrop of the sequential organisation of selling as a multi-stage activity.

Chapter 7

Discussion

7.0 Introduction

This thesis reports a comprehensive empirical investigation of business-to-business “cold” calls between salespeople and prospective clients. “Cold” calls are considered the lifeblood of business. They occupy an important role among a company’s prospecting tools. Even though they are habitually recorded for quality assurance purposes, business-to-business “cold” calls have not yet been systematically examined. By shining an empirical light on these conversations, the current investigation expands our knowledge of “cold” calling practices and lays the basis for empirically grounded communication training.

The findings in this thesis challenge existent conceptualisations of prospecting encounters (reviewed in Chapter 1, section 1.1). Supposedly, through “cold” calling, salespeople are qualifying leads; that is, they are identifying potential clients who need, are interested in, and are able to buy their products. As a result a company is able to effectively concentrate their selling efforts towards the most profitable potential clients (Gombeski, Cantor, Bendycki, & Wack, 2002). If “cold” calling was geared at *appraising* a prospect’s likelihood to become a client, why then are “cold” calls treated as a nuisance?

The empirical examination undertaken in this thesis reveals that prior theoretical models of prospecting are divorced from the everyday reality of “cold” calls. In the examined telephone conversations, salespeople *tried to convince* their interlocutors that they needed multifunctional printers or telecommunication systems. They did not seek to establish whether the prospects were interested in or able to purchase these services; instead, they *treated them as already willing and able* to engage in future commercial transactions. Moreover, not all “cold” calls were occupied with qualifying leads. My analysis revealed that, in a subset of the calls, salespeople worked to set up appointments with prospects. With a few exceptions, I found that qualifying was specific for “freezing” calls in which salespeople were contacting prospects for the first time, while appointments were most often pursued in “lukewarm” calls, in which salespeople claimed to have had prior interactions with the prospects. Thus, the conversation analytic examination of “cold” calls has uncovered subtle and relevant differences within prospecting encounters, while also exposing that and how they function as sites and tools for social influence.

“Cold” calls are a nuisance not only because they are unsolicited sales attempts, but also because, when given the opportunity, callers relentlessly pursue their commercial goals, at the cost of infringing normative expectations for social interaction. For instance, salespeople often introduce themselves with recognitional formats (such as “I’s Ka:thryn callin’ from <Ladybi:rd>.” in Extract 4.1), thus confusing call-takers or misleading them about who they are and why they have called. Furthermore, when prospects refuse to answer their inquiries or reject their requests for appointments, salespeople keep pursuing a preferred response, at the cost of escalating disaffiliation. These apparently minor breaches have major consequences; they erode social solidarity and, if repeated, lead to prospects unilaterally ending the telephone conversations by hanging up.

“Cold” calls are also unpleasant for call-takers because of the marked asymmetry with respect to participants’ information about the other party, their knowledge about the agenda of the conversation, and their access to the conversational floor. Salespeople research prospects and their companies in advance as well as keep records about prior interactions. By contrast, prospects, especially those in “freezing” calls, have limited information available about their interlocutors and their companies, thus, having to rely on what their interlocutors are willing to offer. While salespeople do disclose their reason for contacting the prospect, they work to obscure the call’s sales agenda, for instance by framing it as a returning call requested by the prospect (in “lukewarm” calls) or as a casual information-gathering exercise (in “freezing” calls). Furthermore, I found that salespeople control the conversation, using (and sometimes even abusing) turn taking and sequence organisation mechanisms. Their turns habitually occupy initiating positions within sequences of talk, thus enabling them to direct the trajectory of the interaction. By contrast, prospects’ contributions are often in second position, with the occasional exception of other-initiated repair sequences.

Examining a site where persuasion and resistance occur naturally, this thesis makes an important contribution to the empirical study of interpersonal influence. In “cold” calls, salespeople try to get their interlocutors to disclose information about themselves, their co-workers, or their companies. They also seek to inveigle them into accepting to meet face-to-face as the next step towards a future commercial agreement. I showed how these social influence attempts were organised *in situ* through the mobilisation of conversational mechanisms. The research presented in this thesis offers solid empirical arguments for taking the communicative practices of persuasion and resistance into consideration, thus making a strong case for conceptualising social influence in interactional terms.

Finally, the thesis reiterates key ethnomethodological tenets that relationships, identities, and social processes emerge in and as features of talk-in-interaction, thus challenging more traditional accounts of these psychological phenomena and continuing the respecification project of discursive psychology. It engages with these interactional phenomena in a previously unstudied institutional setting, entering a fruitful dialogue with business/sales studies which will hopefully inspire future respecification projects.

In the remainder of this chapter, I first review the findings of each analytic chapter. Then, I discuss the thesis' possible limitations, based on which I outline directions for future research. In the final section, I discuss opportunities for communication training for sales professionals.

7.1 Discussion of findings within each analytic chapter

Conducted within the frameworks of conversation analysis and discursive psychology, the research presented in this thesis extends our knowledge of the interactional organisation of telephone-based commercial encounters. It documents the sequential trajectory of actions and activities such as accounting for calling, switchboard requesting, and making appointments, thus adding to the conversation analytic toolkit.

7.1.1 Chapter 3: The overall structural organisation of business-to-business “cold” calls

The first analytic chapter examined the yet-uncharted composition of a business-to-business “cold” call, thereby providing the first empirically grounded comprehensive overview of this type of encounter. I described the constituent activities comprised in the three sections of the encounter: the opening, the business of the call, and the closing. The chapter also documented the overall structural organisation of “cold” calling, thus contributing to this less known and understood order of interaction (Robinson, 2013). Finally, it identified and described two types of “cold” calls: first time “freezing” calls and returning “lukewarm” calls.

Focusing on the overall organisation of the conversation, I showed that and how the business of a “lukewarm” call consisted of a coherent project of getting an appointment with the prospect. The project comprised three sequentially and contingently ordered activities: securing a meeting, scheduling the meeting, and getting the prospect's contact details. Progressing to the “next” phase of the project was possible only when the prior activity had

been successfully completed. By demonstrating the importance of sequential structures that operate within larger interactional units such as complete encounters, projects, and activities, this chapter highlights the shortcomings of other approaches to the investigation of commercial encounters (such as, Félix-Brasdefer, 2015; Ventola, 1987) which neglect this order of organisation.

The findings presented in Chapter 3 extend conversation analytic work on switchboard requests (Houtkoop, 1987; Maynard & Hollander, 2014; Maynard & Schaeffer, 1997; Schegloff, 1979, 1986), and accounts/reason for calling in telephone conversations (Couper-Kuhlen, 2001a, 2001b; Sacks, 1989b). Based on the caller's practice for identifying the person they are looking to speak to, I highlighted a distinction between "closed" and "open" switchboard requests. I showed that these identification practices had sequential and interactional implications. "Closed" switchboard requests (which employed the name of the "relevant" person) made a granting or a rejection relevant next. By contrast, "open" switchboard requests (which used descriptions/formulations of the "relevant" person) enlisted the interlocutor in the identification of the "relevant" person; thus requiring a two-part response that dealt with both aspects of the initiating action. One practice for describing the "relevant" person relied on the salesperson's accounts for contacting the company. The examination of "cold" calls revealed that salespeople offer two different accounts for calling. They start with a "because of" account, which explains to call-takers why they have called this company at this particular moment. Through this move they work up the legitimacy of the call, before disclosing its purpose. Then they introduce the "in order to" account of the call which puts forward the purpose or aim of the ensuing conversation.

Finally, the chapter is one of only a few studies that examine the sequential organisation of complete conversations. It contextualises the findings presented in the rest of the thesis as well as in prior conversation analytic studies of "cold" calling which focused on self-contained sequences such as assessments (Mazeland, 2004) and invitations (De Stefani, 2018). The merit of the chapter derives from the analysis' scale: while prior studies (for example, Carranza, 2017; Whalen & Zimmerman, 1987) have focused on shorter encounters, the "cold" calls examined in this thesis varied in length, from several tens of seconds to 15 minutes, thus posing a challenge for CA, which is better equipped to deal with short stretches of talk.

7.1.2 Chapter 4: Third-party acquaintanceship in “lukewarm” call openings

Chapter 4 focused on the first few turns that comprise “lukewarm” call openings in which salespeople interact with receptionists. In asking to be connected to the “relevant” person – the prospect to whom they will present their service offer – salespeople also show they are acquainted with them, in order to enhance the legitimacy of their switchboard request. Being acquainted with the prospect entitles the salesperson to speak to them and prompts the receptionist to transfer the call.

The repertoire for displaying acquaintanceship is comprised of practices for self-identification, switchboard requests, and person reference. Salespeople either omit to introduce themselves or produce a recognitional self-identification (Schegloff, 2007a). In both cases, they treat receptionists as temporary interlocutors and provide identity information for them to pass on to the prospects. In designing their switchboard requests, salespeople orient to practical contingencies that preclude their fulfilment, and not to lack of entitlement to speak to the prospects. They usually refer to the “relevant” persons by first name. On the rare occasion when they use prospects’ full names, they do so to indicate incipient acquaintanceship or to deal with locally occasioned issues in intersubjectivity.

Three other features of third-party acquaintanceship were also discussed. First, acquaintanceship displays are not explicitly oriented to by participants and are produced by salespeople who simultaneously engage in other interactional tasks such as asking to speak to the prospect. Second, even though salespeople and receptionists were strangers to each other, the latter had to collaborate with the former by ratifying or challenging their acquaintanceship performance. Third, exposing a fake acquaintanceship claim is itself a joint accomplishment, that unfolds methodically over several sequences.

The chapter contributes to the extant body of conversation analytic studies on institutional call openings (Danby et al., 2005; Maynard & Schaeffer, 1997; Wakin & Zimmerman, 1999) that have documented how the adaptations of the “canonical” opening (Schegloff, 1986) exhibit participants’ orientations to local interaction contingencies. In “cold” calls, the “canonical” opening sequence is adapted through (1) specialisation, (2) reduction, and (3) compactness. I found that an opening’s specialisation is extended to include not only the call-taker’s but also the caller’s utterances: recurrently, in their first turn, salespeople produce recognitional self-identifications comprised of their names and the companies they work for. This is an indication that both callers and call-takers interact as

professionals. Further adaptation of “cold” call openings are exhibited through the omission of reciprocal greetings and how-are-yous which reduce the length of the opening. In the same vein, “cold” call openings exhibit compactness through participants’ turns that feature interlocked sequences. (Schegloff, 1986). Specifically, in their first turn, salespeople receipt receptionists’ self-identification (the second pair part of the first adjacency pair) and then go on to introduce themselves (the first pair part of the second adjacency pair).

Finally, the chapter also adds to the vast literature on request formats (Curl & Drew, 2008; Fox & Heinemann, 2016; Zinken, 2015) by exploring the design options for switchboard requests. I identified three different formats that range from low to high entitlement, and from vague to specific contingencies: (1) “Would it be possible to speak to X”, (2) “Can I speak to X”, (3) “Is X there/free/available”. These formats were associated with speakers’ options for self-identification and for referring to the “relevant” person. Together, these arrays of practices contributed to the production of presumptive vs. cautious call openings (*cf.* Maynard et al., 2010; Maynard & Hollander, 2014) through which salespeople displayed their rights or lack thereof to ask to speak to the prospect.

7.1.3 Chapter 5: Getting appointments in business-to-business “cold” calls

The third analytic chapter examined how salespeople secure appointments with prospective customers. I found that appointment-making occurred preponderantly in “lukewarm” calls and only occasionally in “freezing” calls. In both settings, appointment-making was accomplished via a two-part structure comprised of a preamble and a meeting request sequence. Preambles consisted of accounts and reports that constructed a conducive environment for the request’s acceptance. Meeting requests were accomplished via low entitlement formats, in “freezing” calls, and via high entitlement formats in “lukewarm” calls. Once an agreement about having the meeting was reached, participants proceeded to the scheduling of the meeting.

In unsolicited sales calls, it is very likely that prospects will not accept to meet with salespeople. The latter pre-empt potential resistance through accounts that preface the requests and frame the meetings as relevant and beneficial. Through the design of the preamble, salespeople encourage prospects to align to the unfolding course of action before revealing it leads to a meeting request. Thus, prospects show their support for the salesperson’s not-yet-disclosed project, which makes it more difficult to reject the request once it is uttered (Huma, Stokoe, & Sikveland, 2018). Furthermore, this chapter has exposed

that and how salespeople can manipulate turn taking and sequence organisation mechanisms to hinder prospects from rejecting a meeting request. Specifically, they design the appointment-making sequence to imply that the prospect has already agreed to meet. They refrain from producing an explicit meeting request and, instead, initiate the scheduling of the meeting which presumes that both parties are on board with the appointment. Thus, the analysis in this chapter makes a compelling argument for the key role that communicative practices play in effecting social influence via the manipulation of conversational structures.

The preamble described in this chapter constitutes a type of pre-sequence which has not been documented yet. Like a pre-pre (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1990; Schegloff, 1980), it is a generic sequence, that does not foretell the action it precedes. Unlike other pre-sequences, that check whether preconditions conducive to a preferred reply are met (Schegloff, 2007b), this pre-sequence furnishes these preconditions. Consequently, it consists of declarative utterances, while other pre-sequences are frequently employing interrogatives that make a response relevant.

It is worth comparing the findings in this chapter with recent work by De Stefani (2018) who examined invitations in telephone calls between bank agents and clients. He showed that invitations in anchor position were accomplished through declarative “formulations” (such as “I was calling you for this. we have the pleasure to invite you to the bank,” (De Stefani, 2018, p. 181)) and were designed to be heard as the reason for the call. By contrast, here, we saw appointment-making sequences, in the same overall structural position, accomplished via interrogative-formatted requests (for example “Can we come and have a chat about u:hm your phone systems” in Extract 5.1). Moreover, they were preceded by preambles which delayed the disclosure of the reason for the call, thus attempting to cover up that salespeople are calling to ask for a meeting. These seemingly subtle variations in sequence and action design point towards a difference between unsolicited calls made to current clients and those made to prospects. Moreover, they demonstrate how participants mobilise linguistic resources to deal with practical interactional concerns such as concealing the purpose or aim of a telephone call.

7.1.4 Chapter 6: Dealing with resistance in business-to-business “cold” calls

The last analytic chapter continued the respecification of social influence by looking into the interactional accomplishment of prospecting resistance. A “cold” call, as the early stage of a longer sales process, does not foster any commercial transactions, only actions and outcomes

that keep prospects implicated in the sales process, moving them closer to a commercial agreement. Thus, I found that prospects exhibited resistance not in response to explicit commercial offers, but to seemingly trivial, but still commercially-oriented actions such as inquiries. The chapter documented two practices for enacting resistance in “cold” calls, sales blocks and stalls, and outlined a range of methods salespeople use for dealing with them. Resistance, then, was found to be oriented towards halting or slowing down the sales process, by closing down or altering the courses of action through which the sale was (presumably) implemented.

Prospects produce what I have called “sales blocks” in response to a salesperson commercially-oriented initiating action (such as a question or an offer). The block treats the salesperson’s action as implicating a future commercial transaction which is framed as undesired or unnecessary. The block suspends the ongoing course of action as well as the larger sales process and moves towards conversational pre-closure. I found that salespeople have four methods for dealing with sales blocks. Two of them, challenging and countering the block, are enacted via sequence post-expansion and require the salesperson to engage with the prospect’s turn, thus escalating disaffiliation. They never lead to a successful turnaround. In fact, two of the calls that feature challenges end abruptly with the prospects hanging up. The other two methods, circumventing the block and redoing the initiating action, are less disaffiliative and prove to be more successful for dealing with blocks.

Prospects also resist the progress of a sale by proposing alternative trajectories which slow down the sale and minimise their commitment to it. For instance, instead of accepting a face-to-face meeting with the salesperson, prospects would ask to be contacted via email. Seemingly, their proposals were not closing down the sale; however, salespeople still treated them as problematic. They responded either by providing additional support for the initial courses of action or by impromptu proposing more conducive sale trajectories. All stalls in the data were successfully turned around by salespeople using one of these two methods.

7.2 Limitations and directions for future research

For some scholars, the research presented in this thesis may seem limited by the access to empirical data. Even though the thesis is based on a large corpus of 150 recordings (at least for conversation analytic or other qualitative work) the calls originate from three companies operating in the same industry. Thus, it could be argued that findings presented in this thesis may be specific to selling printers and telecommunication systems. In response, I would first

like to suggest, following social scientists such as Harvey Sacks (1984) and Ervin Goffman (1983) that the in-depth examination of single institutions constitutes an important undertaking as it provides a glimpse into the social organisation of everyday settings. Second, the examination of these calls has provided new insight into key social phenomena such as business relationships, and social influence, thus expanding our prior knowledge of these topics based on research conducted in other settings. Third, by examining social practices as the basic building blocks of social interaction, the relevance of the findings in this thesis extend beyond the scrutinised setting. Finally, CA datasets like mine, contain myriad instances of the phenomena under investigation: turns, actions, and sequences. The unit of analysis in CA is not the organisation itself, but the actions that comprise the encounters under investigation. For a CA investigation, then, the dataset was more than adequate.

It could be further argued that the examined data limit the scope of the research by restricting the insights into “cold” calling to only the telephone conversations with prospects. Indeed, a salesperson’s role consists of a range of different tasks and activities, for instance pre-call research, post-call data management, preparation and delivery of sales presentation (Moncrief, 1986). The lack of access to these activities potentially narrows down the insights this research has generated into call centre work. Nevertheless, I tried to address potential criticisms about scope by examining both “freezing” and “lukewarm” calls, thus providing more insight into the breadth of a “cold” caller’s job. In the same vein, having relied on audio recording of telephone conversations, I had no access to salespeople’s embodied conduct during those interactions – but neither did the interlocutors. In that sense, my access to their encounter was the same access each party had to progress their conversation. Furthermore, ethnomethodological research has already addressed these questions (Szymanski et al., 2012; Whalen et al., 2002).

Regrettably, I also did not have access to training materials or scripts that the salespeople may or may not have been using. Therefore, I am not able to make any inferences about the scriptedness of recurrent phrases or practices identified in the data (see, however, Hultgren, 2011; Rothe, 2011 for this kind of work), or make specific recommendations on how to modify scripts to increase their effectiveness. Nonetheless, taking an EM/CA approach in this thesis, I argue that resources that are exogenous to the interaction are relevant in as much as they are oriented to by participants in that interaction. Last, the thesis did not have access to the post-call, exogenous outcomes of the sales activities initiated through the examined “cold” calls. I do not know which conversations eventually led to actual face-to-face meetings or resulted in commercial agreements. However, it is debatable

whether the initial “cold” calls can have a clear straightforward effect on the final outcome of a commercial transaction that occurs several months apart, and that involves several different people. By contrast, this thesis has identified communicative practices through which salespeople effect local outcomes with important consequences for the progress of the sale.

Starting from this thesis, two major directions for future research can be identified. First, there is a continued need for expanding the empirical exploration of prospecting through “cold” calling, in both business-to-business and business-to-consumer settings. This research should be connected with both the business/sales and EM/CA literatures. I plan to continue the examination of business to business “cold” calls by focusing on key such as: (1) small talk in “cold” calls, (2) displays of business relationships, and (3) epistemic and deontic stance in information-gathering sequences. The corpus examined in this thesis will be supplemented with more recordings from the Fine Bar Windows dataset consisting of “cold” calls for advertising services. More ambitiously, a second direction for future research would combine conversation analysis with quasi-experimental methods in order to test the effectiveness of communicative practices (Heritage & Robinson, 2011; Koole & Verberg, 2017). This line of work can take advantage of the high volume of call centre telephone interactions to measure the effects of different communicative practices in real-life telephone calls, thus producing reliable evidence that can inform changes to sales scripts and, ultimately, improve “cold” call interactions.

7.3 Improving “cold” calling through communication training

CA research has been used to inform communication training in a wide variety of institutional settings such as medical interactions (Heritage, Robinson, Elliott, Beckett, & Wilkes, 2007; Pino et al., 2016), police interviews (Fogarty et al., 2013; Stokoe, 2013b), and helpline interactions (Baker, Emmison, & Firth, 2005; Hepburn & Potter, 2007) where professionals conduct their work in and through talk-in-interaction. CA insights have also informed changes to script-based conversations such as telephone interviews (Maynard, Schaeffer, & Freese, 2011).

The data presented in this thesis were already used in the development of four CARM workshops for sales professionals (see Chapter 2, footnote 6 and Appendix A). CARM is a training programme that incorporates conversation analytic insights and that exposes trainees to authentic interactions (data extracts) in order to illustrate how different practices produce different outcomes (Stokoe, 2011; Stokoe & Sikveland, 2015). Feedback included a report

that sales appointments doubled following our CARM course. Further workshops based on the research undertaken in this thesis (see Appendix D), have been commissioned by Electec and are scheduled for the autumn of 2018.

The research presented in this thesis can underpin further communication training for sales professionals; not only “cold” callers, but also business buyers who are involved in purchasing decisions in their companies. Additionally, insights from this thesis can inform the work of receptionists who deal with incoming “cold” calls on a daily basis.

“Cold” calling is a widespread practice with a plethora of training courses and sales handbooks. However, the recommendations featured in these materials are not based on the examination of real-life telephone calls. The fact that only a small fraction of “cold” calls have successful outcomes demonstrates the need to improve “cold” calling practices. Moreover, most call-takers treat unsolicited sales calls as a nuisance and often these conversations end with both interactants experiencing distress and annoyance. Salespeople require more training focused on pre-empting and dealing with these issues in order to improve “cold” calling experience.

Habitually, in settings where we are being sold to, we expect to be persuaded, or even tricked into buying. We imagine that salespeople, especially “cold” callers, will try to manipulate us, stopping at nothing, not even lying, to make a sale. However, this picture *can* be amended. By changing their communicative practices, salespeople can get rid of their infamous reputation, and regain buyers’ trust, thus redeeming selling as a reputable enterprise, and restoring the integrity of their professional identity.

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Appendix A: CARM training brochure



CARM training for early sales encounters

March 18th 2016, Burleigh Court, Loughborough University

CARM is a research-based approach to communication training

Aim of workshop

What communication practices best engage prospective sales clients, and keep existing contacts satisfied, in early telephone encounters? This workshop is built from research that has identified effective and less effective practices from the analysis of actual sales 'cold' calls. The recordings have been analysed using a method called 'conversation analysis'. You will listen to collections of anonymized calls in real-time, with each set focusing on a particular point in the interaction that goes well, or goes wrong. You will learn the following:

1. How to open a call
2. How to use your name and the other party's names effectively
3. Why 'rapport' fails and how to get it right
4. How to get from no to yes
5. When to stop pushing
6. How to make shorter more effective calls
7. How to really listen and why it matters

Many of our findings contradict classic communication training. Our examples of communication fails come from actual salespeople seemingly following such training. However, our examples of what works also come from actual salespeople doing things a bit differently.

Who we are

The day is led by Professor Elizabeth Stokoe, Dr Rein Sikveland and Dr Bogdana Huma. Elizabeth developed CARM, and her work has won an award from the British Psychological Society, a WIRED Innovation Fellowship, and attracted audiences from TED to the Royal Institution and BBC Radio 4's 'The Life Scientific'. Rein is a Research Associate with expertise in call centre research. Bogdana is conducting research on sales calls at Loughborough.

Together, we have a track record of working with and on the communication practices of commercial organizations, public and third sector organizations including the police, Ministry of Justice, mediation, and health and medical care services.

What is unique about our training is that it is underpinned by research about what actually works in real communication, rather than basing training on simulation, role-play, or 'in theory' / anecdotal evidence in training manuals.

Find out more at www.carmtraining.org and @LizStokoe



CARM training for early sales encounters

March 18th 2016, Burleigh Court, Loughborough University

Schedule

9.30-10.00	Arrival and tea/coffee
10.00-11.15	Introductions, overview and workshop begins
11.15-11.30	Tea/coffee
11.30-12.30	Workshop continues...
12.30-1.30	Lunch
1.30-14.45	Workshop continues...
2.45-3.00	Tea/coffee
3.00-4.00	Workshop continues...
3.45-4.00	Final wrap-up and Q&A

CARM MEDIA



The Life Scientific [↗](#)

The science of analyzing conversations, second by second

Talk at the Royal Institution



Wired: How to control a conversation with a single word

Appendix B: Jefferson transcription system

R: with [the contracts	Square brackets mark overlapping speech by two or
S: [All right.]	more participants
↑Oh hello.	Vertical arrows mark a rise or a fall in pitch
#it's ↓Britney	
I'm just <u>right</u> in the middle	Underlining indicates emphasis
GOOD. LOVELY.	Capitalisation marks an increase in volume
°.h a:h°	Degree signs mark a decrease in volume
with the (0.2) <u>re</u> levant	The number enclosed between parenthesis indicates the
person;	length of a pause, in tenths of a second
(.)	Micropause, shorter than a tenth of a second
((addressing colleague))	Double parentheses mark transcriber's comments
()	Empty parentheses indicate inaudible talk
(Right.)	Text within parenthesis marks transcriber's guess
u:hm	Colon indicates sound elongation
your preferred suppli:er	Colon after underlining indicates falling intonation
u:h:m,	contour
hh	An underlined colon indicates rising intonation contour
huh huh hah	The letter 'h' marks out-breath; interpolated with
.hhh Uhm	vocals it indicates laughter
°(h)Yeah.°	Full stop before the letter 'h' marks in-breath
Hello Saint Peter's School,	Letter h between parentheses indicates aspiration
#it's ↓Britney from <u>Elect</u> ec	particles within words
calling.	Comma marks continuing intonation
can I help ↑you?	Full stop marks falling intonation
<u>re</u> levant person;	Question mark indicates rising intonation
it j's- is possible	Inverted question mark indicates a weaker rise in
It looks >as though< he's	intonation than a question mark, but stronger than a
from <Elect#e:c#;>	comma
Good afternoon to <u>you</u> ,=#it's	Hyphen marks abrupt cut-off
↓Britney	Inward-oriented angle brackets indicate speedy delivery
the middle of doing £cash£.	of talk
#it's ↓Britney	Outward-oriented angle brackets indicate slow delivery
	of talk
	Equal sign indicates latched delivery, with no pause
	Pound signs mark smiley voice
	Hashtag sign marks creaky voice

Appendix C: Ethical clearance checklist

Ethics Approvals (Human
Participants) Sub-Committee



Ethical Clearance Checklist

Has the Investigator read the 'Guidance for completion of Ethical Clearance Checklist' before starting this form?	Yes
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Project Details

1. Project Title: CARM analysis - Commercial sales calls

Applicant(s) Details

2. Name of Applicant 1: Liz Stokoe	10. Name of Applicant 2: Bogdana Huma
3. Status: Staff	11. Status: PGR Student
4. School/Department: SSPGS.	12. School/Department: SSPGS
5. Programme (if applicable): Click here to enter text.	13. Programme (if applicable): PhD
6. Email address: e.h.stokoe@lboro.ac.uk	14. Email address: b.huma@lboro.ac.uk
7a. Contact address: SSPGS	15a. Contact address: SSPGS
7b. Telephone number: 223360	15b. Telephone number: -
8. Supervisor: Yes	16. Supervisor: No
9. Responsible Investigator: Yes	17. Responsible Investigator: No

Participants

Positions of Authority

18. Are researchers in a position of direct authority with regard to participants (e.g. academic staff using student participants, sports coaches using his/her athletes in training)?	No
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Vulnerable groups

19. Will participants be knowingly recruited from one or more of the following vulnerable groups?	
Children under 18 years of age	No
Persons incapable of making an informed decision for themselves	No
Pregnant women	No
Prisoners/Detained persons	No
Other vulnerable group Please specify: Click here to enter text	No
If you have selected No to all of Question 19, please go to Question 23.	
20. Will participants be chaperoned by more than one investigator at all times?	N/A†
21. Will at least one investigator of the same sex as the participant(s) be present throughout the investigation?	N/A†
22. Will participants be visited at home?	N/A†

Researcher Safety

23. Will the researcher be alone with participants at any time?	No
If Yes, please answer the following questions:	
23a. Will the researcher inform anyone else of when they will be alone with participants?	No*
23b. Has the researcher read the 'guidelines for lone working' and will abide by the recommendations within?	No*

Methodology and Procedures

24. Please indicate whether the proposed study:

Involves taking bodily samples (please refer to published guidelines)	No
Involves using samples previously collected with consent for further research	No
Involves procedures which are likely to cause physical, psychological, social or emotional distress to participants	No
Is designed to be challenging physically or psychologically in any way (includes any study involving physical exercise)	No
Exposes participants to risks or distress greater than those encountered in their normal lifestyle	No
Involves collection of body secretions by invasive methods	No
Prescribes intake of compounds additional to daily diet or other dietary manipulation/supplementation	No
Involves pharmaceutical drugs	No
Involves use of radiation	No

Involves use of hazardous materials	No
Assists/alters the process of conception in any way	No
Involves methods of contraception	No
Involves genetic engineering	No

Involves testing new equipment	No
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Observation/Recording

25a. Does the study involve observation and/or recording of participants?	Yes
If Yes:	
25b. Will those being observed and/or recorded be informed that the observation and/or recording will take place?	Yes

Consent and Deception

26. Will participants give informed consent freely?	Yes
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Informed consent

27. Will participants be fully informed of the objectives of the study and all details disclosed (preferably at the start of the study but, where this would interfere with the study, at the end)?	No†
28. Will participants be fully informed of the use of the data collected (including, where applicable, any intellectual property arising from the research)?	No†

29. Will participants be children under the age of 18 or participants who are incapable of making an informed decision for themselves? If you have selected No, please go to Question 30. If you have selected Yes, please answer the following:	No
a. Will consent be obtained (either in writing or by some other means)?	N/A
b. Will consent be obtained from parents or other suitable person?	N/A
c. Will they be informed that they have the right to withdraw regardless of parental/guardian consent?	N/A
d. For studies conducted in schools, will approval be gained in advance from the Head-teacher and/or the Director of Education of the appropriate Local Education Authority?	N/A
e. For detained persons, members of the armed forces, employees, students and other persons judged to be under duress, will care be taken over gaining freely informed consent?	N/A

Deception

30. Does the study involve deception of participants (i.e. withholding of information or the misleading of participants) which could potentially harm or exploit participants?	No
If Yes:	
31. Is deception an unavoidable part of the study?	Choose an item
32. Will participants be de-briefed and the true object of the research revealed at the earliest stage upon completion of the study?	Choose an item
33. Has consideration been given on the way that participants will react to the withholding of information or deliberate deception?	Choose an item

Withdrawal

34. Will participants be informed of their right to withdraw from the investigation at any time and to require their own data to be destroyed?	No*
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Storage of Data and Confidentiality

35. Will all information on participants be treated as confidential and not identifiable unless agreed otherwise in advance, and subject to the requirements of law?	Yes
36. Will storage of data comply with the Data Protection Act 1998?	Yes
37. Will any video/audio recording of participants be kept in a secure place and not released for any use by third parties?	Yes
38. Will video/audio recordings be destroyed within ten years of the completion of the investigation?	N/A
39. Will full details regarding the storage and disposal of any human tissue samples be communicated to the participants?	N/A
40. Will research involve the sharing of data or confidential information beyond the initial consent given?	Yes*
41. Will the research involve administrative or secure data that requires permission from the appropriate authorities before use?	Yes*

Incentives

42. Will incentives be offered to the investigator to conduct the study?	No
43. Will incentives be offered to potential participants as an inducement to participate in the study?	No

Work Outside of the United Kingdom

44. Is your research being conducted outside of the United Kingdom?	No
If Yes:	
45. Has a risk assessment been carried out to ensure the safety of the researcher whilst working outside of the United Kingdom?	Choose an item
46. Have you considered the appropriateness of your research in the country you are travelling to?	Choose an item
47. Is there an increased risk to yourself or the participants in your research study?	Choose an item
48. Have you obtained any necessary ethical permission needed in the country you are travelling to?	Choose an item

Risk Assessment

49. Has a risk assessment been carried out to ensure the safety of the researcher and participants involved in the study?	No†
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Information and Declarations**Checklist Application Only:**

If you have completed the checklist to the best of your knowledge, and not selected any answers marked with an * or †, your investigation is deemed to conform with the ethical checkpoints. Please sign the declaration and lodge the completed checklist with your Head of Department/School or his/her nominee.

Checklist with Additional Information to the Secretary:

If you have completed the checklist and have only selected answers which require additional information to be submitted with the checklist (indicated by a †), please ensure that all the information is provided in detail below and send this signed checklist to the Secretary of the Sub-Committee.

Checklist with Generic Protocols Included:

If you have completed the checklist and you have selected one or more answers in which you wish to use a Generic Protocol (indicated by #), please include the Generic Protocol reference number in the space below, along with a brief summary of how it will be used. Please ensure you are on the list of approved investigators for the Generic Protocol before including it on the checklist. The completed checklist should be lodged with your Head of Department/School or his/her nominee.

Full Application needed:

If on completion of the checklist you have selected one or more answers which require the submission of a full proposal (indicated by a *), please download the relevant form from the Sub-Committee's web page. **A signed copy of this Checklist should accompany the full submission to the Sub-Committee.**

Space for Information on Generic Proposals and/or Additional Information as requested:

These data complement existing recordings made by commercial sales companies in which callers are informed that their call will be recorded for training and quality purposes. They are then supplied by the commercial organization. All data are stored securely and anonymised, in terms of both audio and video, so that all participants will be unidentifiable in publications and presentations. In this specific case (calls supplied by Toshiba) the caller (the main participant) who is recording gives consent (they have agreed to do so in the first place) but the called party doesn't. However, the called party is generally working for companies who themselves already have their calls recorded automatically – so the caller comes through the switchboard and is told her call may be recorded. It's a fuzzy area because of the ubiquitous recording of all commercial and service-oriented calls these days.

For completion by Supervisor

Please tick the appropriate boxes. The study should not begin until all boxes are ticked.

- The student has read the University's Code of Practice on investigations involving human participants
- The topic merits further research
- The student has the skills to carry out the research or are being trained in the requires skills by the Supervisor
- The participant information sheet or leaflet is appropriate
- The procedures for recruitment and obtaining informed consent are appropriate

Comments from supervisor:

Bogdana is working on a dataset already given ethical clearance for working with commercial datasets (and who are funding the research) - this form is to add her name to the project, as per the advice of the research office.

Signature of Applicant: B Huma

Signature of Supervisor (if applicable): E Stokoe

Signature of Head of School/Department or his/her nominee: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Date: December 3rd 2014

David Deacon
DAVID DEACON

Appendix D: Proposed “cold” calling training outline

CARM (Conversation Analytic Role-play Method) is a pioneering approach to communication training. It is grounded in the detailed examination of hundreds of real-life conversations using the scientific methodology of Conversation Analysis. Applied to business-to-business telesales, CARM uncovers the strategies and techniques that experienced salespeople use to successfully deal with the main challenges encountered in “cold” calling prospective clients. In this workshop, we will cover:

- (1) How to introduce yourself to the call-taker
- (2) How to identify the “relevant” person within the company
- (3) Dealing with “gatekeepers”
- (4) Providing a “reason” for calling
- (5) Gathering relevant information about the company
- (6) Speaking the prospect’s “language”
- (7) Making provisions for future contact
- (8) Getting a face-to-face appointment
- (9) Overcoming initial resistance
- (10) Getting the prospect’s contact details
- (11) Building a relationship with the prospect

CARM insights regularly contradict advice given in “traditional” sales training and handbooks. The latter often use fictional examples and draw on outdated psychological theories. All the examples we use in our workshops come from real-life conversations between salespeople and prospective customers.