The (in)authenticity of simulated talk: Comparing role-played and actual interaction and the implications for communication training

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Abstract: How authentic is simulated, role-played, interaction, of the kind produced in communication training contexts? The paper addresses this question by comparing actual and role-played police investigative interviews. Both types of interviews were recorded by the police; real ones to fulfil British legal requirements and training ones to maximize the authenticity of the training experience. Interview openings were examined using conversation analysis. Officers must adhere to Police And Criminal Evidence Act (2008) guidelines, turning them into spoken actions. The analyses revealed that while, in gross terms, officers in real and simulated interviews opened interviews by formulating the same actions (e.g., identifying co-present parties) differences were observable in their design and organization. In simulations, actions were more elaborate or exaggerated; that is, they were made interactionally visible and 'assessable'. Furthermore, some actions were only present in simulations. Implications for the efficacy of role-play methods for training and assessing communication are discussed.

Keywords: Simulation, role-play, conversation analysis, police interviews, communication skills, training

INTRODUCTION

How authentic is simulated, or role-played, interaction? How much does the construction and organization of communication training mimic actual events? Such questions have received little empirical attention. Yet simulations are used to train and assess communication skills and related competences in institutional settings of all kinds. Simulation methods involve people-in-training, from call-centre workers and corporate business managers to doctors and police officers, interacting with actors or other simulated interlocutors, using "narrative adaptations" of hypothetical or actual scenarios as the basis for the encounter (Van Hasselt, Romano & Vecchi, 2008: 254). The guiding assumption of such encounters is that they mimic sufficiently 'real life' interactional events to be effective in two ways: to *practice* the conversational moves that would comprise an actual encounter, and to *assess* what participants do in an actual encounter. Role-play is, therefore, a 'first-order simulation' whose success is measured against the 'real' (Baudrillard, 1983). This is in contrast to 'third-order simulations', such as computer-gaming, whereby the hyper-real fantasy worlds are not designed to mimic 'real life'.

In the training world, an industry in which role-play is ubiquitous, its authenticity is mostly a non-issue. Role-play is simply assumed to be authentic, or 'authentic enough', to train people to have better interactions and assess how they communicate, extrapolating from the training room to the workplace. From the wealth of material written by training organizations, the following descriptions of role-play's realism are typical. However, the basis of such descriptions is unclear.

> The Role Play Toolkit provides Trainers and Facilitators with practical role play scenarios for interpersonal and managerial skills training. The role plays encourage

> participants to *practice 'real life'* business situations and receive detailed feedback from their colleagues (ABC Training Solutions, emphasis added).
>
> Our diverse team of role players can play a wide range of characters and types to *create realistic scenarios* and personnel reflecting your company profile … The skill of our professional role players allows any workplace scenario or personality *to be convincingly replicated* (Role Plays For Training, emphasis added).

Meanwhile, in the research world, the issue of authenticity plays out in two main types of study: those which focus on which category of 'role-player' makes for the most realistic experience (comparing, say, actors with other trainees or, in medical training, 'standardized patients', e.g., Mounsey, Bovbjerg, White & Gazewood, 2006), and those which ask participants to report, post-hoc, on the perceived authenticity of training encounters (e.g., Bokken, Rethans, van Heurn et al, 2009). One study reports steps taken to make the role-play encounter as "similar to real-life encounters" as possible (Van Hasselt et al, 2008: 254). In their evaluation of training for hostage negotiators, Van Hasselt et al used real-life cases as the basis for simulations. They describe a 'family domestic' scenario in which a man abducts his wife and child and holds them hostage in an unoccupied farmhouse. Trainee negotiators are asked to respond to an invented initiating turn: "I'm not letting her take my son away from me".

There are two related problems with Van Hasselt's method and with role-play in general. The first is the presumption that authentic turns of talk can be invented on the basis of normative understandings of interaction. A common objection to conversation analysis as a field of inquiry that 'we', as native speakers, already know how talk works because we use it every day: talk 'just' is (Schegloff, 1996). Indeed, much of linguistics uses invented talk

unproblematically as the basis for generalizing about language use. In response to both anecdotal complaints about CA's topic, and in more formal debate with linguists (e.g., Searle, 1986), conversation analysts have undermined arguments about the "vernacular familiarity" people have about interaction, and shown how CA "can yield empirically grounded results at variance with our common-sense intuitions about how some action is accomplished" (Schegloff, 1996: 166-169). So it is impossible to know *if*, never mind *how*, Van Hasselt et al's invented role-play prompt ("I'm not letting her take my son away from me") might be uttered in an actual, sequentially-unfolding, interaction. The second problem is that what is at *stake* in simulation is different from what is at stake in real encounters, because there are no "real-world consequences" (Félix-Brasdefer, 2007: 178-181). For those having their communication skills evaluated, it is their performance and 'score' as trainees that are at stake rather than, as in Van Hasselt et al's example, the safety of real people in a live hostage situation. As De la Croix and Skelton (2009: 701) conclude, from their study of simulated medical interaction, "the game of teaching … overrides the game of medicine".

There have been some attempts to interrogate "the linguistic dynamics of simulated encounters", an area of study which is "long overdue" (Seale, Butler, Hutchby et al 2007: 178). Two small bodies of work exist: studies that analyze the dynamics of role-played encounters themselves, and studies that attempt to compare real and role-played interactions. Let us take each in turn. First, for example, in Linell and Thunqvist's (2003) analysis of role-play training for job interviews with unemployed teenagers, they found that the participants shifted between roles as, say, the tutor switched between being the 'tutor' to make pedagogic points and role-playing the 'employer' to conduct the simulated interview (see also Sharrock & Watson, 1985). Seale et al (2007) take such findings about the different category incumbencies operating in role-play to raise "the issue of the degree to which the experience of participants is comparable with that of the 'real' events for which they are being trained"

(p. 179). However, answering this question is complex. On the one hand, "one can ask whether the surface appearance of staying in the role-playing frame denotes 'authenticity' if this involves a different inner psychological experience from that experienced by participants in the 'real' situations for which they are being prepared" (ibid. 179). On the other, Seale et al suggest that being able to cope with "the particular linguistic demands of simulations, which is probably related to a general facility with language in interaction, is the major factor in determining participants' capacity for learning new communication skills, quite aside from the degree to which simulations successfully mimic real clinical situations" (p. 179).

In a recent study, Okada (2010) examined role-play in oral proficiency interviews (OPIs) that test employees' second language competence. He notes that previous studies of OPIs find that, when compared to ordinary conversation, one party – perhaps unsurprisingly, the interviewer – determines turn-taking and the topic of talk. In contrast, Okada studied OPIs that were designed to mimic everyday conversation, role-playing a variety of domestic and consumer encounters. However, Okada's analysis did not focus on whether or not the role-play looked more like ordinary talk than traditional OPI interviews, but on candidates' abilities to engage in role-play in the first place. Of course, in role-play, like in any interaction, participants necessarily display their competencies in the basic machinery of talk-in-interaction. Whether or not the design of turns, formation of actions, or organization of sequences, are the same in a simulated encounter as they are in its real-life counterpart is the topic for the second small body of work, but direct comparisons remain elusive.

In De la Croix and Skelton's (2009) study of simulated versus real doctor-patient consultations, they focused on features of 'conversational dominance' in both settings. They found that, in contrast to other studies of real doctor-patient interaction, which found that doctors interrupted more than patients did, their analysis of simulations found the opposite pattern. They concluded that role-play interaction is at "a similar distance from 'reality' as a

script to a play … [and] is not, and should not seek to provide, a mirror to nature" (p. 701). However, the authors based their comparison on previously published studies of interruption in real doctor-patient interaction, rather than in two comparable datasets. Demeter (2007) compared real and simulated 'apologies', but by comparing two forms of *research*-elicited data. Neimants's (frth.) analysis of medical role-play, in the context of interpreter-mediated interactions, compared role-played talk to a training template, and Waer's (2009) examination of authenticity in 'task-based' interaction analyzed the way teachers attempted to get students to engage in a role-play training class. In Ewald's (2012) comparison of direction-giving in real and simulated settings, the data were experimentally produced and the analysis attended to gender and cognitive factors. While Ewald found that "the role-play participants exhibited several significantly different linguistic behaviors in terms of their use of verbal devices (e.g., landmarks, mileage estimates, stoplight estimates) throughout the interactional phases" (p.79), no interactional data were provided; statistical differences formed the basis of reported findings. The current paper, then, to the best of my knowledge, is the first to investigate the authenticity of simulated interaction by directly comparing such talk with its naturally-occurring counterpart.

DATA AND METHOD

Two datasets were used for comparison: (1) 120 audio-recordings of interviews between police officers and suspects, recorded in situ in British police stations. When suspects are arrested, their interviews are recorded on cassette tape. Tapes are stored securely until and after the case is resolved; it was 'resolved' cases that the police provided for analysis, handling matters of consent and confidentiality via their Data Protection and research office; (2) 100 role-play tapes produced as part of investigative interview training,

using actors as suspects and supplied via the same procedures. Because training is an on-going part of a police officer's career, officers had a range of levels of experience in both actual and simulated tapes. All data were anonymized and then transcribed, using Jefferson's (2004) system for conversation analysis. In the data extracts, real interviews are headed with a 'PN' prefix and role-played interviews with a 'RP' prefix.

The two sets of tapes were particularly good for comparative analysis, because both sets were recorded as part of the daily life of the police service and not for research purposes. Furthermore, simulated encounters were designed for maximum authenticity. To this end, officers used the same equipment (e.g., tape machines, audio cassettes) and procedures (e.g., trainers play the part of lawyers) that were used in actual interviews.

ANALYSIS

The analysis focuses on the openings of actual and simulated police-suspect encounters. Openings comprise a series of activities (e.g., identifying co-present parties), that are prescribed by the UK Police And Criminal Evidence Act (PACE, 1984). Although there is a body of conversation analytic and linguistic work on police interviewing (e.g., Johnson, 2008; Kidwell & González-Martínez, 2010; Komter, 2003; LeBaron & Streek, 1997; Watson, 1978), little of this work attends to parts of the interview before suspects formulate their testimony and officers ask questions. Here, police officers must, by law, meet criteria set out in PACE 'Code E' (2008: 202). Because the simulations were designed to mimic actual interviews, training interactions adhered to the same legal requirements.

1. The interviewer should tell the suspect about the recording process. The interviewer shall say the interview is being audibly recorded.

2. The interviewer shall give their name and rank and that of any other interviewer present.
3. The interviewer shall ask the suspect and any other party present, e.g. a solicitor, to identify themselves.
4. The interviewer shall state the date, time of commencement and place of the interview.
5. The interviewer shall state the suspect will be given a notice about what will happen to the copies of the recording.
6. The interviewer shall … remind the suspect of their entitlement to free legal advice.

Across both datasets, openings were, therefore, highly structured: how similar or different *could* PACE Items be formulated or organized? Each section of the analysis reports on a different Item, with this question in mind. However, the first observable difference occurred even *before* the formulation of prescribed PACE Items.

Pre-Item 1 talk

All recorded interviews, both real and simulated, started with a 'tape squeal' made by the audio cassette which continued until the magnetic, recordable part of the tape spooled into place. Extract 1 comes from an actual interview; Extract 2 from a simulation.

Extract 1: PN-65

```
1            ((Tape squeal))
2                  (0.7)
3      P1:   >.HHH This is a< tape recorded interview in interview
4            room two at Boroughtown p'lice sta:tion?
```

Extract 2: RP-1

```
1     P1:   [((clears throat))
2           [((Tape squeal        [                                    ))]=
3     P2:                         [(We're in.)=okay, cooking on gas now,]
4           =((tape squeal))
5                 (1.0)
6     P1:   Right, (.) a(h)s y(h)o(h)u can see £eventually:£
7           ↑everythin' we say is now bein' recorded,
```

In Extract 1, a PACE-oriented statement about the recording process is formulated after the tape squeal ends. However, in Extract 2, P2 talks *before* P1's formulation of Item 1. In overlap with the tape squeal, P1 clears her throat (line 1), and P2 states that "(We're in.)=okay, cooking on gas now," (lines 3-4). It becomes apparent that the officers have had some trouble operating the recording equipment, which is made accountable, humorously, by P1: "a(h)s y(h)o(h)u can see £eventually:£" (lines 6-7). Trawling the two datasets, talk prior to formulating the first PACE Item happened only in simulated interviews; not every time, but when such talk occurred, it occurred in training and not in real interviews. Here are further examples from real interviews:

Extract 3: PN-21

```
1           ((Tape squeal))
2                 (0.9)
3     P1:   .pt this interview is being tape recorded.
```

Extract 4: PN-4

```
1           ((Tape squeal))
2     P:    This interview is being tape recorded:
```

And, for contrast, further examples from simulations:

Extract 5: RP-5a

```
1           ((Tape squeal))
2                 (8.0)
3     P:    I'm quite low do:wn in this £chair,£
```

```
4                   (1.2)
5     P:    Ri:ght.
```

Extract 6: RP-6a

```
1           ((Tape squeal[))
2     P1:                [.pt oka:y. think we're ready.
3     P2:   .hhh ri:ght.
```

Extract 7: RP-15a

```
1           ((tape squeal))
2     P1:   <Sorry about that uh- slight delay?
3     P2:   That's it. We're rollin'. Hh
4                 (1.8)
5     P2:   >Shoulda' been a< dinosaur h
6                 (1.3)
7     P2:   Right.
```

In Extract 5, there is an unusually long, 8-second gap before P starts talking. Gaps of up to a second were common between the end of the tape squeal and the start of talk; P's subsequent formulation of his body position, "I'm quite low do:wn in this £chair,£ " accounts for not starting sooner. Like P1's account in Extract 2, it is delivered with a smile-voice. In Extract 6, as the tape squeal finishes, P1 announces that, "oka:y. think we're ready." (line 2). In Extract 7, there is another humorous orientation to the recording equipment (lines 2-5), with P1 and P2 treating themselves as accountable for its correct use. Note that in each of the four simulated interviews, the word 'right' marks (and makes) a boundary between this prefatory material and the interview, and institutional business, 'proper' (Extract 2, line 6; Extract 5, line 5; Extract 6, line 3; Extract 7, line 7; see Walker, 1995).

A first observation, then, is that in contrast to actual interviews which started with the formulation of PACE Item 1, simulated interviews often started with delays, orientations to the tape recorder, accounts, humour, and boundary markers to separate out such talk from the start of the interview 'proper'. As such, pre-PACE interaction was one place in which the simulated nature of the 'activity context' possibly revealed itself (see Linell & Thunqvist, 2003). As we will discuss later, once the role-play started, officers did not step outside their

role (e.g., to ask the trainer a procedural question). However, pre-PACE talk was, in each case, meta-discourse *about* the activity and, as noted above, marked as detached from the interview 'proper'.

Let us now consider the formulation of PACE Item 1 itself.

Item (1): The interviewer should tell the suspect about the recording process. The interviewer shall say the interview is being audibly recorded.

Extract 8 is a continuation of Extract 1, from an actual interview.

Extract 8: PN-65 (contd.)

```
3     P1:   >.HHH This is a< tape recorded interview in interview
4           room two at Boroughtown p'lice sta:tion?
5                 (0.6)
6     P1:   The time is: (0.3) ten past (.) two, on the
7           fourteenth of July two thousan' an' four.
```

P1 formulates PACE Item 1, which is to "tell the suspect about the recording process". P1 informs S that 'this' is a 'tape recorded interview', referring indexically to the activities underway but not formulating them explicitly. Neither does P1 mention that it is "audibly recorded". Next, P1 completes PACE Item 4 ("state the date, time of commencement and place of the interview") between lines 4-7, but note that 'place' is formulated within the same turn (and 'turn construction unit': TCU) as her announcement that the interview is tape-recorded. This collapsing of Items 1 and 4 was typical in real interviews, as two further examples show.

Extract 9: PN-21

```
1           ((Tape squeal))
2                 (0.9)
```

```
3     P1:   .pt this interview is being tape recorded.
4                 (0.3)
5     P1:   .hh We are in an interview room at Anytown p'lice
6           station.
7                 (0.8)
8     P1:   It is seventeen twenty eight hours on: (0.5) Wednesday
9           the second of June two thousand an' four.
```

Extract 10: PN-4

```
1           ((Tape squeal))
2     P:    This interview is being tape recorded: we're
3           in interview room one at William Street police
4           station,
5                 (0.8)
6     P:    Uh: the ti:me is: (0.2) <twenty twenty four:>
7           (0.3) by my watch,
8                 (0.2)
9     P:    On thē fifth of January two thousand and four:
```

Note that there are some differences in the precise wording of each Item, but, together, Extracts 8-10 are typical of actual interviews. In simulated interviews, both the formulation of Item 1 and the adjacent next PACE Item were different.

Extract 11: RP-1 (contd.)

```
6     P1:   Right, (.) a(h)s y(h)o(h)u can see £eventually:£
7           ↑everythin' we say is now bein' recorded, .hhh an' at
8           the end I'll give you a notice explainin:: where the
9           tapes will be goin' an' what w'll be happenin' to
10          the:m?
```

P1 tells S that "↑everythin' we say is now bein' recorded," and, within her turn, formulates Item 5 about "what will happen to the copies of the recording." Extracts 12 and 13 are further examples of such formulations and adjacent Items in simulated interviews.

Extract 12: RP-6a (contd.)

```
3     P2:   .hhh ri:ght.
4                 (0.5)
5     P2:   ((clears throat)) jus' t'let y'know that everything
6           (0.3) we now say is bein' tape recorded.
7                 (0.6)
8     P2:   At the end I'll give y'a'notice explainin' what
```

```
9           w'ha:ppen w'th'tapes.
```

Extract 13: RP-15a (contd.)

```
7     P2:   Right.=jus' f'the purpose o'this (then) I'll need
8           t'inform you .hh that uh: everything we now say is going
9           to be tape recorded.
10                (0.9)
11    P2:   At the end of this I'll give you a notice explainin'
12          what will happen to the tapes.
```

Like Extract 11, P2 starts with Item 1, an announcement that "everything we now say" is being recorded, and them completes Item 5, a further announcement about "what will happen to the tapes". However, in contrast to Extracts 8-10, in which real officers made an announcement that formulated information ('this interview is being tape recorded', or a variant), officers in simulations formulated this information differently: 'everything we say is now being tape-recorded' (or a variant). This is still an announcement, but is oriented to the suspects' *understanding* that they are participating in the recording of an entire conversation; in a collaborative activity with co-present parties. Furthermore, between the pre-PACE talk and Item 1, officers supply an institutional account for the observable activity of unpacking cassette tapes, turning tape machines on, and so on (e.g., "jus' t'let y'know"; "jus' f'the purpose o'this (then) I'll need t'inform you").

Let us summarize observed similarities and differences so far. First, actual interviews started with Item 1 immediately after the tape squeal finished. However, simulated interviews often started with pre-PACE talk, including orientations to the recording device, and other, often humorous, prefatory material. This was bounded off from the role-play interview 'proper'. Second, in real interviews, Item 1 was designed as an *announcement* which formulated the activities in the room but did not refer to co-present parties ("This is a< tape recorded interview"; ".pt this interview is being tape recorded."; "This interview is being tape recorded:"). In simulations, Item 1 was also delivered as an *announcement*, but formulated by indexical reference to the co-present parties and their actions ('*everything we say* is now

being tape-recorded'). In this way, the delivery of Item 1 was more 'suspect-oriented'. Finally, in actual interviews, Item 1 was followed by, or collapsed with, Item 4 (the time and location of interview). However, in simulations Item 1 was formulated with a different adjacent action (Item 5: information about tapes).

While PACE is pres*cript*ive, with regards to the information to be delivered to suspects, it is not a *script* to be read out (see Rock, 2007). Thus written text had to be translated into spoken talk (see Maynard & Schaeffer, 2006). It was typical to observe, within each dataset, some *intra*-group variation in the design, formulation and order in which PACE components were delivered. However, the *inter*-group variation was marked: officers verbalized the same written guidelines in different ways, with different norms emerging for formulating action in simulated and actual interviews.

Item (2): The interviewer shall give their name and rank and that of any other interviewer present.

PACE Item 2 focuses on the identification of interviewers.

Extract 14: PN-65 (contd.)

```
8           .hh ↑I'm pee cee ↓treble six eight Smith
9           attached to Boroughtown p'lice station,
10                (0.4)
11    P1:   Also present is my collea:gue,
12                (0.2)
13    P2:   .pt Pee cee four two four Torball: also attached to:
14          Boroughtown police station.
```

In real interviews, Item 2 typically followed Item 4. P1 *announces* his rank and (sur)name as one package "pee cee ↓treble six eight Smith". Within the same TCU, he also formulates his 'badge number' and affiliation, "Boroughtown p'lice station,", neither of which are specified

by PACE. While the guidelines state that "the interviewer" should supply the "name and rank and that of any other interviewer present", P1 and P2 accomplish this action individually, but collaboratively. At line 11, P1 formulates the start of a TCU: "Also present is my collea:gue,". However, it is P2 who completes it grammatically and prosodically (".pt Pee cee four two four Torball:"), building a single syntactic unit, or a 'compound turn construction unit' (Lerner, 1991). Here is another example.

Extract 15: PN-29

```
1     P1:   I am pee cee eighteen twenty-two Rickman?
2                 (.)
3     P1:   The other officer present is:
4                 (0.4)
5     P2:   Pee cee nineteen forty-three Johnson from Bowtown
6           Marsh p'lice station.
```

Note again the way P1 and P2 introduce themselves collaboratively by building a compound TCU, across lines 3-6, using the same component features of rank, badge, and surname.

Item 2 was delivered after Item 5 in simulated interviews, using a different turn design.

Extract 16: RP-1 (contd.)

```
15    P1:   Um: (0.3) my name is pee cee Hargreaves, as we've
16          >already discussed< please call me Linda?
17    P2:   .pt my name's uh- pee cee two three seven: .hh Tim
18          Jensen: but- feel free to call me Tim,
19                (0.3)
20    P2:   [All the way through,
21    P1:   [(An:'/um:)
```

The same action is underway – an *announcement* in which police officers identify themselves – but it is designed differently. So, rather than stating "I am…" and building a compound TCU, as in Extracts 14-15, P1 and P2 state in individual TCUs that "my name is…". They

each supply their first names as well as surnames. P2 gives his badge number but P1 does not; neither supplies their affiliation. Of particular interest is that both officers also include invitations to S to call them by their first names (lines 16, 18). P1 formulates earlier talk ("as we've >already discussed<"), reminding S to 'call her Linda'. In so doing, P1 makes relevant that she has already done some 'rapport-building' work with S, off-tape, to establish an informal footing for the interview. Furthermore, she ensures that this work is visible, now, to the examiners.P2 does not refer to earlier talk, but makes a similar offer to S to also use of his first name ("feel free to call me Tim,"). Finally, note that in contrast to the practiced way that officers in real interviews built compound TCUs to identify themselves, in Extract 16 there is a glitch at lines 20-21, as P2 adds an increment to his invitation to "call me Tim, … all the way through,". This was not projectable by P1 who simultaneously starts the next action (which is to ask the suspect to 'introduce' themselves).

Here is another example from a simulation.

Extract 17: RP-6a (contd.)

```
21    P2:   <Like I'said before I'm pee cee two four six eight
22          Jim O'Dowd?
23                (0.5)
24    P2:   Others present are,
25                (1.0)
26    P1:   Uh- my name's (0.3) Brian Smith, pee cee one two three
27          zero?
.           ((9 lines - P1 elicits the suspect's name))
36    P2:   ↑Right.=like I said my- (0.2) name is pee cee::
37          (0.6) Jim O'Dowd, but- please jus'- refer to me
38          as Jim if that's okay with you,=it's more- (0.8)
39          it's what I prefer really,
```

P2's method for giving his name is similar to officers in actual interviews (lines 21-22). He also initiates the first part of a compound TCU ("Others present are,") but, after a long delay, P1 fails to formulate the second part. Instead, he uses the same formulation as seen in Extract

16 (“my name’s …”). The lack of ‘fit’ between first and second pair parts is marked with the turn-initial “Uh-”.

As noted in the analysis of Extract 16, the officers invoke previous, off-tape material that formulates, for the record, the fact that they have already introduced themselves to the suspects (“as we’ve >already discussed<” [Extract 16], “<Like I’said before” [Extract 17]). Together with their subsequent use of, and invitations for suspects to use, their first names, it is interesting that these ‘rapport-building’ practices appear explicitly in training interviews, where such skills are being assessed. In Extract 18 below, which comes from a real interview, we will see an officer use the suspect’s first name without asking permission. If such permissions have been done off-tape, officers in actual interviews do not appear concerned to ask again on-tape, perhaps because there is no overhearing assessor!

Even stronger evidence for the interpretation that permission sequences are oriented to training and assessment comes from the fact that, in Extract 17, P2’s invitation to S to call him by his first name (lines 36-39) is dislocated from the announcement of his name (lines 21-22). P2 has already moved into the next PACE Item at line 27. Repeating “like I said” (line 36) reinstates the earlier sequence but also suggests P2 ‘forgot’ to do the invitation earlier and is now, with the assessors in mind, ensuring the invitation is formulated explicitly. However, P2 does not ask S if he would like to use P2’s first name, but instructs him to do so: “please jus’- refer to me as Jim”. An *instruction* to be followed is arguably less rapport-building than an *invitation*: P2’s addition of “if that’s okay with you” modifies the action in the direction of S’s choice. Note also that P2’s account for inviting S to call him ‘Jim’ contains a self-repair, from “it’s more-” to “it’s what I prefer really,”. This repair may also reveal P2’s orientation to the assessability of his actions. Inviting S to use P2’s first name because it is “more informal” would give an institutional account for an action which is designed to lessen institutionality. The repair changes P2s account from an institutional one

to reasons of personal preference; to establish an informal and first-name terms basis for what is, nevertheless, an investigative interview. P2's self-repair therefore makes the account (personal preference) better fit the activity (establishing rapport).

Item (3): The interviewer shall ask the suspect and any other party present, e.g. a solicitor, to identify themselves.

After P1 and P2 have identified themselves, Item 3 requires officers to "ask the suspect … to identify themselves". What comprises 'identification' for suspects, and other parties (e.g., solicitors) is not specified; again, officers must turn written text into spoken requests. In Extract 18, there is no solicitor present.

Extract 18: PN-65 (contd.)

```
15    P1:   F'the benefit of the tape can you please s- um:: say
16          your full name an' date o'bi:rth for me please.
17                (0.4)
18    S:    Wayne Tom Barker: twenty-first of the eighth eighty:
19                (1.0)
20    P1:   .hhh (0.4) right Wayne.
```

P1's request is prefaced with an account, "F'the benefit of the tape", which is common in this position and attends to the institutional – for PACE – reason for asking someone to "say" their presumably already-known name out loud (Stokoe, 2009). After S supplies the requested information, P1 begins to move onto PACE Item 6, which will be to "remind the suspect of their entitlement to free legal advice". The word 'right' marks the boundary between this and the next action. As noted earlier, P1 uses S's first name to initiate the next action; she has not asked to do so. Here is another example.

Extract 19: PN-45

```
1     P:    .hhh Jack f'the benefit of the ta:pe c'n y'give
2           me y'↑fu:ll name, .hh date of bi:rth an' home
3           address ↓please.
4     S:    .pt it's- Jack Andrew Bainbridge, (0.3) nineteen
5           Bridgefields Cawston, (0.3) an' fourth o'the
6           eighth fifty seven.
7     P:    Thank you.
```

Again, P uses S's first name without asking. Here, it initiates the turn which requests S, again "f'the benefit of the ta:pe", to give his name and other details. The fact that P uses S's name constructs the participants as, *of course*, already knowing each other's names; the request is for institutional reasons. P closes the sequence by thanking S for supplying the requested information. Compare Extracts 18 and 19 to two role-played examples.

Extract 20: RP-1 (contd.)

```
23    P1:   Would you mind introducing yourself,
24                (0.7)
25    S:    Uh: Daniel James Grey.
26    P1:   Daniel James Grey.=thank you.
```

Extract 21: RP-6a (contd.)

```
29    P2:   A:nd for the benefit of the tape c'n I ask you
30          to:: (.) introduce y'self please.
31                (0.4)
32    S:    Uh: Daniel James Brown.
33    P2:   Thank you.
```

Like in Extracts 18-19, Extracts 20-21 involve a *request* for information ("Would you mind introducing yourself,"; "c'n I ask you to:: (.) introduce y'self"), so, grossly, the action is the same. Comparing Extract 20 ("Would you mind…") to Extracts 18-19 ("can you please s-um:: say… please"; ""c'n y'give … please"), while both requests are formulated with modal verbs ('would' and 'can'), the inclusion of 'mind' mitigates P1's request, lessening her entitlement to make it (see Curl & Drew, 2008). Furthermore, in both extracts, the verb 'introduce' provides for a different response than specifying the information requested (e.g.,

"your full name an' date o'bi:rth"). In Extracts 18-19, suspects provide the exact information specified in the request. In Extract 20, S just provides his name. However, this is treated as sufficient by P1 in the repeat of S's name and sequence-closing "thank you" (line 26). In Extract 21, the design of P2's request is more similar to actual ones, starting with an institutional account for the request ("for the benefit of the tape") and using the 'can' rather than 'would' modal form. But he also asks S to 'introduce' himself; S states his name with no further information, and P1 closes the sequence with a third-turn receipt "thank you".

Role-playing examples also include an expansion in which, echoing police officers' invitations to suspects to use officers' first names, officers ask suspects if they can use suspects' first names. Extracts 22 and 23 are examples.

Extract 22: RP-1 (contd.)

```
26    P1:   Daniel James Grey.=thank you. =an': (.) ↑would it be
27          okay if I: address you as Daniel,
28    S:    *Yeh.*
29    P1:   °Lovely,°
```

Extract 23: RP-6a (contd.)

```
33    P2:   Thank you.
.           ((7 lines – P2 and P1 introduce themselves))
41    P2:   C'n I- (0.2) ref- (0.3) any preference on your name
42          at all?
43    S:    Jus' Daniel yeh.
44    P2:   Jus' Daniel that's-=
45    S:    =Yeh.=
46    P2:   =That's cool?
47                (0.4)
48    P2:   Okay,
```

In Extract 22, P1 moves from requesting S to 'introduce' himself, to asking if it "↑would it be okay if I: address you as Daniel,"; S grants the request. In Extract 23, this request is dislocated, like P2's dislocated invitation in Extract 17 for S to call P2 by his first name. At line 41, after introducing himself, P2 starts to ask S if he 'can' 'refer' to him by his

first name before he cuts this off and restarts with a different question: "any preference on your name at all?" (lines 41-2). Like in Extract 17, P2's repairs are oriented to assessability and rapport. Asking permission to call someone by their first name makes explicit the fact that the situation is formal and such a request is necessary, precisely at the moment when an informal footing is being pursued. After S replies, P2 completes the sequence with "that's cool?" (line 46), similar to P1's "°Lovely,°" in Extract 22 . The presence of identification and naming sequences in officers' formulations of PACE Items 2 and 3, and, in particular, *orientations* to those sequences through their dislocation and repair, makes explicit officers' attentiveness to the assessability of their actions. In contrast, in real interviews officers often bracket off identification requests as institutional ('for the tape') and use suspects' names without asking. One might speculate that the latter practice demonstrates an already-established rapport, while asking suspects explicitly is rather clunky, and stereotypical of what one might expect in training.

As well as eliciting identifications from suspects, PACE Item 3 requires that "the interviewer shall ask *any other party present, e.g. a solicitor,* to identify themselves". In real interviews, such identifications, like in Item 2, are accomplished via compound TCUs (Edwards & Stokoe, 2011). Here are two examples.

Extract 24: PN-23

```
1     P:    <Also present with me>
2                 (1.3)
3     P:    Are:
4                 (0.6)
5     L:    Terry He:pburn duty solicitor:
```

Extract 25: PN-4

```
19    P:    Okay.=Also present is your solicitor.
20                (0.4)
21    L:    Jenny Carter ↓Miller Jones.
```

In each case, P formulates the first part of a compound TCU (Extract 24: lines 1-3; Extract 25: line 19); the solicitor (L) supplies the second part (Extract 24: line5; Extract 25: line 21). In Extract 26, which comes from a simulation, the trainer role-plays the part of a solicitor.

Extract 26: RP-5a

```
1     P1:   A::nd th- the fourth person present is?
2     L:    .pt hh Uh- my name is Gill Chance from Norfolk an' Chance,
```

Extract 26 is structurally similar to Extract 17, in which P2 initiates a compound TCU that is not completed by P1. In Extract 26, P proffers a compound activity to L, who rejects it and instead introduces herself almost identically to P1 in Extract 17, including orientations to the lack of 'fit' between first and second pair parts (".pt hh Uh-"). Like earlier examples, it seems that role-plays are not as 'slick' as their real-life counterparts.

However, what is particularly interesting is the trainer's choice of pseudonyms for the name of the solicitor she is role-playing and the firm's name: "Gill Chance from Norfolk an' Chance,". It is a joke; perhaps an in-house police joke about solicitors: 'Norfolk and Chance' is to be understood as 'No Fucking Chance'. However, no-one laughs or otherwise orients to this. Perhaps it is designed as a test. But it was a notable that, across the entire role-play corpus, participants did not step outside their role once the interview was underway: they did not, say, break to ask trainers "What should I do now?", or talk to the actors as if they were not suspects. This is in contrast to the handful of role-play studies described in the introduction, whose focus was on moments in which participants oriented to, or stepped out of, their roles. Indeed, the *ethno*-analysability of simulation in these studies is in members' orientations to their 'role'. In the police simulations, officers did not make relevant the fact that they were engaged in a simulation for assessment purposes; there were no endogenous orientations to it as 'simulation'. In this sense, 'role-play', 'simulation', 'actual' and 'real'

remain *analysts'* categories, imposed onto the data. However, as we have seen, the presence of particular, 'assessable' features of turn design and sequence in simulations only, and officers' orientations to these features, provides some analytic purchase on the features of a training 'activity context' or 'frame' (see Linell & Thunqvist, 2003).

Items (4): The interviewer shall state the date, time of commencement and place of the interview, and (5): The interviewer shall state the suspect will be given a notice about what will happen to the copies of the recording.

We have already seen in the analysis of Item 1 that, in actual interviews, Item 4 was delivered typically as part of the same turn as Item 1, or adjacent to it. Item 5 was typically delivered much further into the interview opening; in Extract 27, after Item 6 (the right to legal representation, which we return to shortly).

Extract 27: PN-65 (contd.)

```
3     P1:   >.HHH This is a< tape recorded interview in interview
4           room two at Boroughtown p'lice sta:tion?
5                 (0.6)
6     P1:   The time is: (0.3) ten past (.) two, on the
7           fourteenth of July two thousan' an' four.
.           ((23 lines: identifications and right to representation))
30    P1:   Yeh. .hhh Right.=A'the end o'the interview Wa:yne,
31          you're entitled to a copy o'the tape, okay, .hh (.)
32          what we'll do is we'll give you a form so that you can:
33          (0.5) 'ave all the reference numbers should you want
34          one of them.
35                (0.2)
36    P1:   .phhh ↑Rhight?
37                (0.5)
38    S:    Ri:gh'.
```

However, in simulations, Item 1 was adjacent to Item 5 (the notice of recording), with Item 4 being dealt with immediately afterwards.

Extract 28: RP-1(contd.)

```
6     P1:   Right, (.) a(h)s y(h)o(h)u can see £eventually:£
7           ↑everythin' we say is now bein' recorded, .hhh an' at
8           the end I'll give you a notice explainin:: where the
9           tapes will be goin' an' what w'll be happenin' to
10          the:m?
11                (0.4)
12    P1:   .h We are ↑in a'interview room at (.) force
13          headquarter:s::? .hh <it is::> <one thirty eight> on
14          the seventeenth of September two thousand an' ni:ne?
```

Here is a second example.

Extract 29: RP-6a (contd.)

```
5     P2:   ((clears throat)) jus' t'let y'know that everything
6           (0.3) we now say is bein' tape recorded.
7                 (0.6)
8     P2:   At the end I'll give y'a'notice explainin' what
9           w'ha:ppen w'th'tapes.
10                (0.3)
11    P2:   .pt
12                (0.6)
13    P2:   Uh- we're in interview- (0.3) interview room ↑one at
14          force headquarters Anytown?
15                (0.9)
16    P2:   And it is now, (0.7) quarter to nine: (0.3) on the
17          eighteenth- (0.3) >Friday th'eighteenth< of September.
```

Across both datasets, Items 4 and 5 were formulated in comparable ways; concisely, with no sequence expansions. In Extracts 27-29, officers announce location, date and time, as required for Item 4. However, there is a difference in the delivery of Item 5. In the real example (Extract 27), P1 formulates it in terms of S's *entitlement* and notifies him that he will be given 'a form'. S does not treat this as information to be receipted (line 35), but P1 pursues a receipt (lines 36-38). In contrast, in Extracts 28-29 the officers *inform* the suspects that they will be given 'a notice'. Suspects do not respond to this information (Extract 28, line 11; Extract 29, lines 10-12) and officers do not pursue a response. This difference is, perhaps, counter to what one might expect: 'assessable' sorts of things happen in the real interview (orientation to suspects' entitlement; pursuit of a receipt) that do not happen in the

simulations. This might be a product of training, in which the focus for rapport-building and other assessable practices is on other PACE Items.

Item (6): The interviewer shall … remind the suspect of their entitlement to free legal advice.

The final section of analysis starts with a real interview. In Extract 30, P1 launches Item 6, after eliciting the suspect's name.

Extract 30: PN-65 (contd.)

```
20    P1:   .hhh (0.4) right Wayne.
21               (0.2)
22    P1:   ↑Whilst at the police station you are entitled to
23          free independent legal advi:ce?
24               (.)
25    P1:   >Mkay,< .hhh are you ↑happy to have this in- (.) uh-
26          carry on ↑w'this interview without being legally
27          represented.
28               (0.2)
29    S:    I am yeh.h
30    P1:   Yeh.
```

The suspect does not have a lawyer present (which is typical: see Edwards & Stokoe, 2011). At line 22, P1 formulates Item 6, which, in addition to the words 'entitled', 'free' and 'legal advice', constructs this advice as 'independent' and as constrained to the time 'whilst at the police station'. In a second TCU, P1 checks whether S is "↑happy to have this in- (.) uh-carry on ↑w'this interview without being legally represented.", and S confirms he is (line 29). Item 6 is, then, delivered across four turns, with a focus on delivering information and confirming the suspect's position with regards to legal representation. Compare, now, the delivery of the same Item in a simulated encounter.

Extract 31: RP-1 (contd.).

```
29    P1:   °Lovely,
30    P1:   .hh um: (1.5) hh .pt ri:gh'.=Um if (.) firstly
31          it's important you understand.
32                (0.2)
33    P1:   .hh that you are entitled to: (0.3) um: free an'
34          independent legal advi:ce? .hh this advice is
35          independent of the p'lice but we can arrange it for yo:u?
36                (.)
37    P1:   .hh Um: if: (0.3) (at) any point you decide
38          y'need.=legal advice, feel free t'tell us [an' we'll]=
39    S?:                                             [ (Okay)  ]
40    P1:   =stop the interview (an' you-) <that right is yours
41          throughout.> this period.
42                (1.2)
43    S?:   °(Right)°
44    P1:   Um:, hh (0.6) and as I said (0.6) you can:: access that
45          (0.2) in person or by telephone an' we can stop the
46          interview at any point for tha:t,
47                (0.5)
48    P1:   .pt .hh do- do you understand that.
49                (0.2)
50    P1:   D's that make sense.
51                (.)
52    S:    Yeh.=
```

The first striking observation is that Item 6 is longer than Extract 30. Short sequences were common in real interviews with adults, although more expansive ones occurred when the suspects were children. In Extract 31, P1's explanation of S's rights is delivered across several TCUs and, whilst it includes a similar wording and closing intonation to P1 in Extract 30 ("you are entitled to free independent legal advi:ce? " [Extract 30]; "you are entitled to: (0.3) um: free an' independent legal advi:ce?" [Extract 31]), it is prefaced and unpacked differently. P1's question to S is about his *understanding* of his rights (lines 48-50) whereas in Extract 30 S is only asked to *confirm* that he is happy to be interviewed without legal representation.

One might argue that Item 6 is 'better' formulated in the simulation, because of the amount of detail provided and the pursuit of S's understanding, neither of which are present in Extract 30. However, it is not helpful to make such evaluations, because differences can be accounted for in non-evaluative ways. First, training interviews as a whole were typically

longer than actual interviews – because they can be. As Powell, Hughes-Scholes, Carvazza et al (2010) argued, one 'advantage' of simulated encounters is that they provide for flexibility in timing and timetabling. Second, as we have seen elsewhere, when actions are to be assessed, they are done elaborately such that an examiner can be sure not to 'miss' an officer's skill or, perhaps more simply, adherence to the practice taught in training.

DISCUSSION

> The role play section is designed to … see how you would perform against *a typical day to day scenario* that a police officer would come up against (HowToBecome.com)

> The role play exercises are designed to test your ability to handle *situations in front of you* (PoliceUK.com)

Given the ubiquitous and largely unchallenged use of role-play in the training and assessment of communication skills of all kinds, in occupational settings of all kinds, it is a serious omission in the research literature that we know nothing of the authenticity of simulated encounters. Instead, it is implicit in materials produced by training companies that sell role-play, and by organizations that use it, that simulations are sufficiently authentic to train for and assess people's actual workplace practices. To address this omission, the current paper asked whether or not training interactions accurately mimic real encounters, using recordings of actual and simulated police investigative interviews. Both sets of interviews were recorded in the same way and were governed by the same legal regulations; the simulations were designed by interview trainers to be authentic. The analysis focused on the openings of interviews in which six legally-prescribed Items from the Police And Criminal Evidence Act

(PACE, 1984; 2008) were formulated, including identifying co-present parties and informing suspects of their legal rights.

A number of differences emerged between the two datasets, in terms of the way actions were accomplished (i.e., empirical descriptions of differences) and the likely interactional affordances of particular design features (i.e., interpretations of observed differences). Let us start by summarizing the differences in the way PACE Items were formulated. For example, in real interviews, officers announced to suspects that 'this interview is being tape-recorded'; in simulations officers announced that 'everything we say is now being tape-recorded' (PACE Item 1). In real interviews, officers identified themselves collaboratively, using compound turns; in simulations each officer formulated a separate TCU to do self-identification (PACE Item 2). In real interviews, officers asked suspects to give specific identification information 'for the tape', whereas in simulations they made lower-entitlement requests for suspects to 'introduce' themselves (PACE Item 3). Furthermore, officer and suspect identification sequences were expanded in simulations but not in real interviews. Officers invited actor-suspects to call them by their first names, and also asked if they could use their first names. Actions therefore took longer to complete in simulations, particularly in identification sequences as well as in explanations of suspects' rights to legal representation (PACE Item 6).

The observed differences may be accounted for in terms of the different interactional contingencies and matters of stake that are in play in each setting. In particular, officers in simulations displayed, in various ways, orientations to the fact that their actions were being assessed, and that rapport-building features must be present and would be assessed positively. An everyday comparison might be with taking a driving test and showing the examiner that 'I am looking in the rear-view mirror' by gesturing one's head unambiguously towards it. For example, with regards to PACE Item 1, announcing that 'everything we say is now being

tape-recorded' orients to suspects' *understanding* that they are participating in the recording of an entire conversation in a collective activity with co-present officers. In simulations, officers invited suspects to call them by their first names. The fact that invitations were additional to, and sometimes disconnected from, officer identifications (PACE Item 2), and were repaired in ways that attended to personal rather than institutional concerns, displayed officers' orientations to the relevance of such invitations to the overhearing examiner. Similarly, in simulations, officers asked if they could use suspects' first names, with comparable repair segments and disconnections from suspect identification sequences (PACE Item 3). Finally, in formulating information about suspects' rights to legal representation, officers in simulations framed their action in terms of the suspects' *understanding* of their rights over an extended series of turns; in real interviews officers focused on the delivery and receipt of *information*.

While many of the actions accomplished in actual and simulated interviews were, then, grossly the same (e.g., announcements, identifications), in simulations they were often unpacked more elaborately, exaggeratedly, or explicitly. In other words, officers ensured that particular actions were made interactionally visible. But this raises questions about the reliability of assessing a person's communication skills based on what they do in a simulated encounter. If simulations contain actions that are *not present* in actual encounters, or if actions are *formulated differently* in them, then, a person may receive a high score for, say, the presence of 'rapport-building' features in training when such features may not appear in their actual workplace interactions.

Two other observations were particularly interesting. First, as noted earlier, while PACE guidelines are prescriptive, they do not supply a script. In both datasets, officers translated written instructions into talk by excluding and/or adding details that were/not required by PACE (see Gibson, 2011). However, across the two datasets, different norms for

formulating actions were observed. For example, in real interviews officers used suspects' first names without asking; in simulations officers asked suspects directly. One could also identify 'norms in evolution'. So, in actual interviews, identification sequences were built with compound turn constructional units, something that was attempted but often failed in training interviews. Second, unlike other studies of role-play (e.g., Linell & Thunqvist, 2003), officers did not step outside the simulation once it had started. There were, however, two candidate places in which participants oriented to the context of the interaction, albeit in less explicit ways than in those other studies. The context was hinted at in pre-PACE talk, in officers' humorous meta-comments about the material environment of the interview, and in the construction of a boundary between this and the interview 'proper'. The 'simulated-ness' of the setting was also exposed in the choice of pseudonym for the trainer-lawyer ('Norfolk and Chance'; i.e., 'no fucking chance'). However, 'getting the joke' came from ethnographic knowledge rather than from endogenous orientations to it *as a joke* by participants.

The findings have four implications. First, that simulations differ from actual interviews in systematic ways raises questions about the taken-for-grantedness of simulation as a training tool and its implied authenticity. The fact that, in role-play, some actions are performed in more elaborate ways may not be instantly problematic for training, but the current paper has explored only the opening of just one setting. Elsewhere, I have also shown how actor-suspects formulate responses, accounts and other actions in ways that, at least in my data, real suspects do not (Stokoe, 2012). This means that actor-suspects may present officers with scenarios that they are unlikely to encounter in real interviews. More generally, I suggest that it is important to establish whether or not assumptions about the authenticity of role-play are warranted. More work needs to be done to compare training and actual interactions, particularly in the training of medical and healthcare professionals where role-play is used pervasively but where studies focus almost exclusively on establishing what

category of interlocutor (e.g., ‘standardized patients’, ‘actors’, ‘other medics’) provides for a more authentic role-playing experience (e.g., Bokken et al, 2009).

Second, I have developed, and used extensively, a radically different approach to training called the ‘conversation analytic role-play method’ (CARM). CARM uses actual interactions as a basis for training communication skills in various institutional settings (see Stokoe, 2011). The current paper provides an empirical and rhetorical warrant for CARM and, more broadly, the use of recorded interaction as the basis for training (see Antaki, 2011). Third, the findings provide further evidence for undermining people’s “vernacular familiarity” with interaction. While the simulated interactions might not look like caricatures, nevertheless they did not match their actual counterparts in several important ways. Finally, the paper provides an evidential basis for discussions about research methods, both experimental simulations of social actions, as well as qualitative interviews in which accounts are solicited and analysed. For example, role-played and simulated behaviour, often located in laboratory or other research settings, are used as substitutes for the ‘real’ behaviour of interest and its ‘home’ setting (e.g., Webster, Brunell & Pilkington, 2009). The validity of such research has long been called into question, with objections-in-principle to its ‘artificiality’. Some have suggested that particular types of ‘active’ role-play offer a solution to the ‘passive’ role-play of experiments (e.g., Greenwood, 1983). However, this paper provides evidence that people do different things according to the particular contingencies of the setting: what at stake in the interaction? As a student, as a professional, as research participant? Furthermore, we have seen that actions are formulated and responded to differently in actual and simulated settings, which has implications not just for interviews, where questions are so often neglected from the analysis, but also for the sorts of things interviewees do in response (e.g., see AUTHOR). When analyzing actual and simulated

encounters, then, the different consequences for the parties to those encounters translates into observable differences in the way those encounters are built and unfold.

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