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Abstract

Social psychology has theorized the cognitive processes underlying persuasion, without considering its interactional infrastructure – the discursive actions through which persuasion is accomplished interactionally. Our paper aims to fill this gap, by using Discursive Psychology and Conversation Analysis to examine 153 ‘cold’ calls, in which salespeople seek to secure meetings with prospective clients. We identify two sets of communicative practices that comprise persuasive conduct: (1) pre-expanding the meeting request with accounts that secure prospects’ alignment to this course of action without disclosing its end-result and (2) minimizing the imposition of the meeting to reduce the prospect’s opportunities for refusal. We conclude that persuasive conduct consists in managing the recipiency of the meeting requests by promoting alignment and hampering resistance. Overall, this paper contributes to the wider discursive psychological project of ‘respecifying’ psychological phenomena like attitudes, memory, and emotion from the realm of social cognition to the realm of social interaction

Persuasive Conduct: Alignment and Resistance in Prospecting 'Cold' Calls

In the last 40 years, persuasion has been in the limelight of social psychological research having animated myriad empirical investigations and theoretical conceptualizations of the psychological processes that are mobilized in and through persuasive attempts. The focus on the cognitive mechanisms that underlie persuasion has obscured other aspects of interpersonal influence episodes such as the communicative and interactional processes that make up the social infrastructure of persuasion as an interpersonal undertaking. Therefore, while there is a wealth of knowledge about the presumed cognitive processes that are set in motion by persuasive messages, little is known about *persuasive conduct in interaction*; that is, the communicative actions and reactions of individuals engaged in persuasive attempts.

Our paper addresses this gap in social psychological research by exploring the organization of persuasive conduct in recordings of real-life 'cold' calls between salespeople and prospective customers (prospects). We examine stretches of conversation in which the former try to make appointments to meet with the latter face-to-face. Our study is informed theoretically and methodologically by Discursive Psychology (Tileagă & Stokoe, 2015; Wiggins, 2017), which treats talk-in-interaction as the site where psychological phenomena come to life and play out. In accord with DP, we take an inductive approach and, instead of setting out with a definition or conceptual model of persuasion, we scrutinize each 'cold' call in search for practices through which salespeople influence their interlocutors' responses towards accepting to meet with them. Conversation Analysis provides the appropriate methodological and conceptual apparatus to describe the organization of talk in terms of the sequences that comprise the conversation, the turns that make up the sequences, and the actions that they accomplish (Sacks, 1992a, b). We identified two recurrent practices that are used by salespeople in pursuit of prospects' acceptance of face-to-face meetings. First, the sequence of talk through which the salesperson asks for a meeting is pre-expanded with accounts which

require prospects to align to the unfolding course of action. Second, salespeople minimize potential impositions of the requested meeting, thus limiting prospects' grounds for refusing it. We discuss our findings of the interactive and emergent organization of persuasion in 'cold' calls in terms of practices for *recipiency management* that both promote a prospect's alignment as well as impede their resistance to the courses of action launched by the salesperson.

The paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we first review prior conceptualizations of persuasion as attitude change, highlighting some of the extant tensions. Thereafter, we develop an alternative: persuasive conduct as recipiency management. Next, we describe our data and method, and, in the subsequent section, we present our analysis and findings. We conclude the paper by discussing our findings and how persuasive conduct fits within the broader landscape of social influence.

Persuasion: From Changing Minds to Constraining Responses

The conceptualization of persuasion has evolved and diversified over the last 40 years. Looking at more than 20 definitions of persuasion. spanning over two decades (1982 to 2003) (Gass & Seiter, 2004), we notice that most of them focus on the projected end-result of persuasive communication, most often referred to as influencing or changing the persuadee's behavior, attitude, or mind. Other accounts distinguish between persuasion as attitudinal change and social influence as behavioral change (Cialdini, 2012). Yet again, from a methodological standpoint, persuasion research focuses on the cognitive mechanisms that underpin attitude change, while social influence studies take into consideration the role that social and relational contexts play in changing somebody's mind or opinion (Wood, 2000). Methodological as well as conceptual considerations also underpin the distinction between persuasion and compliance-gaining. Persuasion scholars strive to map out the cognitive processes that underpin successful attitude change. Meanwhile, research on compliance-gaining looks at the factors that determine an individual's selection of a particular influence strategy. Conceptually, there is some disagreement as to the specific criterion for distinguishing between

compliance and persuasion. For Cialdini and Goldstein (2004), compliance designates the process that brings about a person's acquiescence to a request. In turn, Sanders and Fitch (2001) see compliance as mobilizing recipient-specific grounds for abandoning one's action plan in favor of a different course of action proposed by the compliance-seeker. By contrast, persuading is defined as attempting to change a person's conviction or mind through the use of evidence and reasons that positively portray the preferred state of affairs.

The above overview shows that the conceptual landscape of social influence is harboring tensions and inconsistencies; however, persuasion scholars are almost in full agreement that to study persuasion means to identify the processes involved in attitude change. For all familiar with DP, this definition raises a red flag. Since its inception, over 30 years ago, DP has worked to respecify social attitudes (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) relocating them from the realm of cognition to the realm of discourse and interaction. Potter and Wetherell (1988) outline three key problems with attitude theory: (1) it predicates a separation between attitude and its object, (2) it ignores the context in which the attitudes are voice, and (3) it discounts the variability of attitudinal displays. Building on this work, DP scholars treat attitudes as evaluative practices (Wiggins & Potter, 2003) whose meaning and organization are regulated by interactional structures. Thus, from a DP perspective, a distinction between covert attitudes and observable behavior is not ontologically tenable.

It does not suffice to redefine persuasion as displays of attitudinal change underpinned by cognitive processes activated by persuasive stimuli. This conceptualization would reduce persuasive communication to the workings of cognitive mechanisms and obscure the interactional work involved in persuading. Currently, when persuasion is operationalized, the role of verbal and embodied conduct is acknowledged but the conversational structures which organize persuasive conduct are ignored. Furthermore, linguistic strategies should not be treated as causal factors with predetermined results but as interactionally negotiated outcomes (Tannen, 1993). Thus, while persuasion research has focused on the role that discrete linguistic elements play in persuasion, it has not taken into consideration the interactional and sequential environments of talk. Experiments have examined, for instance, the effects that individual features such as argument quality (Areni, 2003),

linguistic extremity (Craig & Blankenship, 2011), or language style (Blankenship & Holtgraves, 2005) have on individuals' assessments of the persuasive messages and their sources, as well as individuals' declared stance towards the issues advocated for. Many studies still classify linguistic features such as hedges, hesitations, and tag questions under the generic conceptual category 'powerless' language (e.g., Blankenship & Holtgraves, 2005), without paying attention to their sequential location and interactional functions[1]. Further decontextualization is encountered in those studies that consider speech delivery features and embodied movement to be 'noise' that should be controlled to minimize their interference with the studies' variables (Sparks & Areni, 2002, 2008).

Language is more than a tool kit for exchanging information, expressing thoughts and emotions, or influencing others: language is also constitutive for the interaction. By decoupling persuasion from its interactional context and relegating it to the workings of intricate cognitive machinery, the cognitivist approach neglects to take into consideration the interactional structures that shape, and are shaped by, language-in-use, and how these are relevant to persuasion. While social psychologists have extensively researched multi-step compliance-gaining techniques such as 'the-foot-in-the-door' (Burger, 1999) or 'just-one-more' (Carpenter, 2014) techniques, compliance with requests has been theorized in terms of individuals' motives and cognitions instead of the interactional relevancies that are set up in and through talk.

Often social influence episodes span over long spates of talk and identifying the moment when a decision is taken or a change in opinion has occurred is not possible (Gibson & Smart, 2017). Naturally occurring persuasion is interactive and incremental (Sanders & Fitch, 2001), often organized as a multi-turn or multi-sequence activity, and comprising both the persuader's and the persuadee's turns (Darr & Pinch, 2013; Pinch & Clark, 1986; Prus & Frisby, 1990). Even when it seems that turn-arounds are accomplished through a single turn-at-talk, the outcome of a turn is partly the result of its sequential and interactional environment (Sikveland & Stokoe, 2016). Furthermore, persuasive actions are often designed to address and prevent resistance (Bone, 2006; Hepburn & Potter, 2011a), thus being heavily influenced by their placement in the stream of talk and interaction.

To study persuasive conduct in interaction, we turn to discursive psychology and conversation analysis, which provide a propitious framework for observing and describing the interactional structures of talk.

Persuasion as Discursive Conduct

Even though discursive psychology emerged over 30 years ago, it has only marginally engaged with persuasion as a research focus. Nonetheless, DP and CA have addressed related topics such as manipulation (Billig & Marinho, 2014), compliance-gaining (Backhaus, 2010), turn-arounds (Sikveland & Stokoe, 2016), and resistance (Clark, Drew, & Pinch, 1994; Clark & Pinch, 2001) showing that and how these forms of social influence play out in interaction.

From an interactional perspective, all conversations are a form of social influence because turns-at-talk are interconnected. First, for discursive psychologists, language-in-use is inherently rhetorical (Billig, 1987) and 'dilemmatic' (Billig et al., 1988). Individuals orient to possible counter-arguments when they take a particular position, for instance when they make an assessment (Billig, 1989), construct a description (Edwards, 2007), or build a scientific argument (Wooffitt, 2005). In turn, each position can be undermined, overridden, weakened, or rendered ineffective through the use of appropriate discursive practices. DP is agnostic with regard to individuals' volition or motivation. Instead, it explicates interactional outcomes through the workings of discursive practices. The rhetorical organization of persuasive conduct consists in discouraging potential or actual resistance to the course of action proposed by the speaker while also promoting alignment to it. To clarify, we understand alignment and resistance in interactional terms. Within a course of action that is carried out by collaborating interlocutors, an aligning or supportive response advances that course of action bringing it closer to its fulfilment. By contrast, resistance to a course of action is embodied by reactions (which range from nonresponse to outright rejection) that forestall or pre-empt its successful completion.

Second, according to the principle of contiguity, as proposed by Sacks (1987), all turns are connected both backward and forward in the conversational stream, thus, shaped and shaping adjacent utterances. A turn's design exhibits connections to prior talk, for instance through the incorporation of deixis, ellipsis, or repetitions (Drew, 2013). Furthermore, the meaning of a turn and the actions it accomplishes are ascribed based on its relationship with prior turns (Levinson, 2013). Similarly, looking forward, that turn provides a framework for understanding ensuing talk while also rendering certain types of reactions more salient. To understand how some responses become more relevant than others, we turn to 'preference organization' within 'adjacency pairs' – a type of sequential unit consisting of two, ordered adjacent turns by different speakers, performing type-related actions (Schegloff, 2007). 'Preference' informs the selection of actions embodied by each turn and their respective design. We are interested in how preference operates in the selection of responsive actions.

Preference and Persuasion

The bearing of preference[2] in selecting among response alternatives is crucial to understanding how speakers use language to set up auspicious conditions for recipients to accept invitations, grant requests, and go along with proposals. According to a structural (not psychological) understanding of preference, initiating actions 'prefer' – that is invite and promote – responses that carry out the initiating action's project. This is independent of speakers' psychological preferences (Schegloff, 2007), which, like intentions, do not inform interactants' actions[3]. The preference for aligning responses does not predict that all invitations will be accepted and all requests granted. Instead, it indicates which response types preserve social solidarity and which do not (Heritage, 1984b; Pillet-Shore, 2017). Understanding persuasive conduct in terms of recipiency management and preference constraints allows us to push against an understanding of persuasion as intentional or purposive behavior. When talking about courses of actions, projects, activities, and preferred/dispreferred responses, we should understand them in terms of how they are accomplished through linguistic and

other design features of turns and sequences of talk, while withholding any speculation as to whether participants want, hope, or expect a certain outcome to be achieved (Schegloff, 2007).

A second dimension of preference, which works in conjunction with the grammar of turn design, is reflected in how alternative forms of initiating actions are more or less effective in eliciting aligned responses. For instance, Kendrick and Drew (2014) note that high entitlement requests (using formats such as 'Can you…' through which speakers assert their rights to have the requests granted) are more effective in securing acceptance than low-entitlement formats (which use 'I wonder if…' prefaces that show lack of rights to make the request). In mediation intake calls, Stokoe and Sikveland (2016) found that resistant prospective clients asked whether they are 'willing' to try mediation agreed to it, while other formulations were unsuccessful. They argue that 'willing' engendered agreement by allowing prospective clients to position themselves as reasonable people who want to make an effort to resolve their conflict, an affordance that other formats like 'are you interested' did not have.

Furthermore, drawing on the already mentioned principle of contiguity, Sacks (1987) observed that, in a list of alternatives, say, an offer of several objects, the option placed last was the preferred one and was likely to be selected by the recipient. Conversely, a set of alternatives designed with a turn-final 'or', for example 'Are- are y'divorced #then o::r single or:' (Stokoe, 2010, p. 269) relaxes preference constraints (Drake, 2013). Additionally, a CA-informed experimental study on doctor-patient interactions found that when doctors ask patients if they have additional concerns using the negative polarity marker 'any' they get fewer positive replies, compared to the use of the positive marker 'some' (Heritage & Robinson, 2011). Heritage *et. al.* (2007) explain this finding by suggesting that 'any' formulations convey to patients doctors' expectations of there being no more concerns to address. This line of reasoning is also consistent with Bilmes's (2014) elaboration of preference theory: turn design features enact preference constraints by embodying the speaker's expectations of the recipient's reply, expectations to which the latter usually aligns.

A third dimension of preference regulates the grammar of response formats. This has been explored with respect to yes/no interrogatives which prefer yes/no formatted replies (Raymond,

2010), with dispreferred responses treating questions as somewhat inapposite and/or modifying them retrospectively (Stivers & Hayashi, 2010; Walker, Drew, & Local, 2011). In a commercial setting, at a museum ticket counter, Llewellyn (2015) found that yes/no interrogatives are more effective than alternative interrogatives in getting visitors to buy a slightly more expensive gift aid ticket. His explanation draws on alternative response formats and action trajectories engendered by the two formats. Yes/no interrogatives make accepting or rejecting to pay the higher price relevant, while alternative interrogatives invite speakers to choose one of the two price options. Furthermore, Llewellyn noticed that turn design variations, such as the use of the negative polarity marker 'at all' or the adverb 'today', weakened the constraints of yes/no interrogatives. Conversely, in the construction of alternative interrogatives, qualifying the standard ticket with 'just', tilted the preference towards choosing the gift aid option. This study shows how several dimensions of preference are brought to bear within one turn: while the yes/no interrogatives in this study strongly encourage 'yes' replies, alternative interrogatives allow more response flexibility, and further variations in turn design strengthen or weaken the pressure for agreement.

Finally, preference organization is reflected in the employment of pre-sequences. Pre-expansions, such as pre-invitations (Schegloff, 2007) or pre-announcements (Terasaki, 2004) display speakers' orientation to potential trouble that might lead to a dispreferred reply (Levinson, 1983). Pre-sequences provide the opportunity for these problems to surface and perhaps even be dealt with ensuring the smooth progression of the prefigured course of action. Furthermore, preliminaries to preliminaries open up a space where issues related to intersubjectivity, such as terms and references (Schegloff, 1980), and social solidarity, such as accounting for a delicate, imposing, or cheeky actions, are addressed (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1990).

The studies presented so far shed light on how speakers' initiating actions constrain recipients' responses through preference organization. However, not all these cases feature persuasion. While the mediators in Stokoe and Sikveland's (2016) study manage to turn around prospective clients who had initially rejected mediation, in Llewellyn's (2015) study there was no indication whether the museum visitors were treated as likely or unlikely to purchase the gift aid

ticket. As we have already argued, what sets persuasion apart from other forms of social influence is interactants' orientation to potential or actual resistance.

In this paper, then, we investigate persuasion as an interactional phenomenon. We argue that persuasive conduct should be understood as recipiency management; that is, speakers controlling how their actions are responded to. We will show in our analysis that the interactional mechanisms of recipiency management stem from the rhetorical, preference organizational, and turn design orders of interaction. This sketch of the interactional manifestation of persuasion is not meant to be understood as a definition; instead, it serves as a starting point for an empirical examination of persuasion-in-interaction, which we will undertake in the remainder of the paper, after briefly introducing our data and methods.

Data and Methods

This paper draws on a corpus of 153 business-to-business prospecting 'cold' calls from three UK companies that sell, lease, and service multifunctional printers (dataset 1) and telecommunication systems (dataset 2). The data were supplied by the two companies, who routinely record calls for 'training and quality purposes'. All calls in the datasets were initially transcribed verbatim before extracts containing our analytic phenomenon were transcribed using the conversation analytic system (Hepburn & Bolden, 2017; Jefferson, 2004). All transcripts were anonymized: we modified all first names and surnames of persons, their telephone numbers, email and other addresses. We also modified all place names, to a fictional but English-sounding name, and company names were given pseudonyms.

'Cold' calls are well-suited for the study of persuasion, as a kind of 'natural laboratory' in which persuasion and resistance are occasioned in and as part of the activities that comprise the setting. 'Cold' calls are salesperson-initiated commercial encounters whereby salespeople contact prospective customers (prospects) to get them interested in future commercial transactions. Before a commercial agreement is reached, a salesperson may need to call a prospect several times. Thus, our

collection consists of both first-time ‘freezing’ calls and returning ‘lukewarm’ calls. In the former, salespeople interact with prospects for the very first time, while in the latter they claim to have been in contact with the company before. A key objective in both types of a ‘cold’ calls is to achieve sale progress, usually by securing a face-to-face meeting. Actual selling or buying seldom occurs in a ‘cold’ call. Instead, these encounters are the early stages of a longer sales process, each bringing the parties closer to a commercial transaction.

As ‘cold’ calls are unsolicited encounters, researchers have found that prospects are likely to exhibit resistance to the sale and rapidly move to terminate the call (Bone, 2006). In fact, only a very small proportion of these calls end with the salesperson securing an meeting (Bone, 2006; D’Haen & Van den Poel, 2013; Jolson, 1986; Monat, 2011). Consequently, salespeople tasked with getting appointments as part of their institutional goals (Drew & Heritage, 1992) may deploy a wealth of persuasive resources to pre-empt and deal with prospects’ resistance, which we attend in the Analysis section.

Our analytic approach is Discursive Psychology informed by Conversation Analysis. Over the last 30 years, discursive psychological approaches to psychological phenomena have diversified. Based mainly on methodological options we can distinguish between Critical Discursive Psychology, which draws on discourse and rhetorical analyses of verbal and written discourses, and an ‘agnostic’ Discursive Psychology underpinned by conversation analysis and ethnomethodology. The kernel of this distinction can be traced back to the 1997-1999 debate between the conversation analysist Emanuel Schegloff (1997, 1999a, b) and the psychologist Michael Billig (1999a, b) whose views diverged over the political and critical purposes of discourse/conversation analysis. Nonetheless, the two approaches are certainly compatible and foster more similarities than differences. As we have already provided an extensive account of CA and DP in the previous section, we will move onward to present our analysis and findings.

Analysis

Our analysis is structured in three sections. We first present, in detail, a single extract in which we show that and how the salesperson builds a conversational environment that encourages the prospect to accept the meeting while also dealing with potential grounds for resistance. In the subsequent two sections, we unpack two sets of practices that feature recurrently in appointment-making sequences across the collection. We show how these practices are geared towards promoting two interactional outcomes (1): securing the prospect's support of the salesperson's project before it has been fully revealed and (2) minimising the prospect's grounds for resistance after the appointment has been solicited.

The Building Blocks of Persuasive Conduct

Extract 1 comes from the beginning of a call between a salesperson (S) and a prospect (P). We join the conversation as the salesperson introduces the reason for the call.

Extract 1 Eplus 58

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 1   S:   Uhm- had it in my diary (0.5) to give you a ↑call.
 2             (0.3)
 3   P:   Oh right.=Yeah.
 4             (0.2)
 5   S:   .hh >(We=were)< speaking about you:r (.) machines and
 6        printables.
 7             (0.3)
 8   P:   Oh right. Yeah,
 9             (0.5)
10   S:   U:hm a:nd I had some very good conversations (with you)
11        about contracts and everything like that. .h[h   h]H=
12   P:                                                [Yeah,]
13   S:   =U:hm (0.5) an'=I- >I was just wonderin'< is now the
14        time to arrange a visit to come and see you.
15             (0.5)
16   P:   U:hh ↑Y- yea:h. <Probably>
```

The extract starts with the salesperson's account for calling and continues with the invocation of a prior conversation between him and the prospect. The sales visit is mentioned in lines 13-14, where the salesperson inquires about the appropriateness of scheduling a visit. The prospect acquiesces to it in lines 16. While the prospect's response may appear tentative, it is

still an aligning move, which the salesperson can use to his advantage to carry on with his project. Indeed, by the end of this call, the salesperson will have managed to secure the meeting. For the salesperson, line 16 represents a first milestone in his project: both parties agree that the meeting should take place. Our analytic task is to show if and how, in this stretch of talk, the salesperson is persuading the prospect. By that, we mean that his talk is designed, from the outset, to promote the meeting's acceptance and, conversely, to hamper its rejection.

Within the overall structural organization of the call, lines 1 to 16 occupy the 'anchor position' (Schegloff, 1986, p. 116). They encompass an extended 'reason for the call' composed of a base sequence (lines 13-16) and a pre-expansion (lines 1-12). This sequential design allows the salesperson to produce an ample account for the call ensuring it is listened to as a preface for an upcoming actionable item (Couper-Kuhlen, 2001). The salesperson gains the prospect's alignment by invoking a prior conversation about the latter's 'machines and printables' (lines 5-6) – a formulation which foreshadows the scope of the ensuing appointment-making inquiry. In his next turn, in lines 10-11, the salesperson builds on the story-in-progress in two ways. First, he evaluates the prior conversation positively, by embedding an assessment in the formulation of the prior interaction 'I had some **very good** conversations (with you)' (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987). The mid-turn position of the evaluation downplays its importance as well as the need for the prospect to respond to it. Second, the salesperson elaborates on the topic of the prior conversation, adding it has focused on 'contracts and everything like that' (line 11). Through this move, he zooms in on printer contracts, while the idiomatic phrase 'everything like that' wraps up the recounting at the point where the contracts are a salient next topic (Antaki, 2007).

So far, we have provided evidence that the location of the pre-sequence (before the appointment solicitation) allows the salesperson to manipulate the salient features of the not-

yet-mentioned-meeting and present it as occasioned by a prior interaction. Next, we will argue that such use of a pre-expansion is effective in setting up interactional constraints for the prospect to align with the upcoming meeting solicitation. The prospect responds to the salesperson's account for calling (line 1) and gist of the prior interaction (lines 5-6) with news receipts (Heritage, 2018) 'Oh right' followed by continuers 'Yeah' (lines 3 and 8). These responses enable the salesperson to carry on recounting their previous conversation to achieve a solid common ground. By supporting the salesperson's unfolding course of action, the prospect pre-aligns to the not-yet-issued meeting request.

Note also how the salesperson connects the pre-sequence with the base appointment solicitation by holding the floor with an inbreath and a delay token, without allowing the prospect to intervene. He continues to talk within the same turn '.hhhH U:hm (0.5) an'=I- >I was just wonderin'< (lines 11 and 13) and frames the TCU as part of an ongoing activity through the prefacing conjunction 'an'' (line 13). Throughout our collection, we find this pattern: not only are appointment solicitations pre-expanded, but salespeople also work to ensure that the base sequence is produced in the conducive environment constructed for it by the 'pre'. This suggests salespeople orient to the importance of the sequential ordering of these activities. We propose that by securing that the pre-expansion is seen as part of the larger appointment-solicitation project, salespeople make prospects' situated identities, enacted during the pre-sequence, relevant for the appointment solicitation. Thus, the prospect is positioned as having already, at least partly, shown their interest in the future meeting, by them having aligned to it during the pre-sequence. If prospects back down and reject the appointment solicitation, not only do they have to account for producing a dispreferred reply, but probably also for being inconsistent or misleading, because by supporting the unfolding of the pre-sequence they have, implicitly, presented themselves as inclined to accept to meet the salesperson.

Summing up, the pre-expansion provides a conducive environment for the not-yet-solicited appointment not only through the framing of the meeting, but also through gaining the prospect's alignment to the salesperson's not-yet-disclosed project. The appointment-making adjacency pair occupies lines 13-16. The first-pair part (FPP) starts with a low entitlement preface followed by an arrangement-making inquiry 'U:hm (0.5) an'=>I was just wonderin'< is now the time to arrange a visit to come and see you.' (lines 13-14). The second-pair part (SPP) consists of a hedged acquiescence 'U:hh ↑Y- yea:h. <Probably> ' (line 16). This sequence is tied to the prior one through the turn-initial delay token 'U:hm (0.5) an'' which holds the floor while the 'and' preface frames the meeting inquiry as belonging to an ongoing larger project (Heritage & Sorjonen, 1994), which the interlocutor has already aligned to.

By examining the design of the salesperson's FPP, we should be able to observe some sort of constraints on the prospect's turn encouraging a preferred reply. The preface '>I was just wonderin'<' (line 14) displays the speaker's orientation to his low entitlement to ask for a meeting. Usually, when formulating low entitlement requests, speakers also anticipate various obstacles that may hinder their fulfilment (Curl & Drew, 2008). Here, the salesperson goes in a different direction. He abandons what might have been continued as a reported request in favor of a direct question 'is now the time to arrange a visit to come and see you.' (lines 14-15). This move makes the meeting contingent upon the prospect's judgement of its timeliness. However, this contingency is not formulated as an obstacle, but as an auspicious condition, that actually works in favor of having the meeting.

Another consequence of the design of this utterance is the set of constraints it puts on the prospect's response format. In accordance with the preference for agreement, it encourages an affirmative reply as the preferred SPP (Schegloff, 2007). In accordance with the preference for type-conforming replies, it makes a 'Yes' / 'No' answer relevant next

(Raymond, 2003). Finally, the design of the action as an inquiry rather than a request for a meeting further hinders the production of a rejection. First, it strongly encourages a 'Yes' response. While a 'Yes' reply from the prospect would be heard as a confirmation of the meeting's timeliness and, implicitly, as an acceptance, a 'No' reply would constitute a disconfirmation of the meeting's timeliness, but not a rejection. To refuse the meeting, the prospect would have to bring the so-far-implicit request for an appointment to the surface of the conversation in order to be able to address it. This requires more interactional work from the recipient than rejecting a more direct request for a meeting. These apparently minor interactional expectations, put forward through minutiae turn design options, can have major consequences (see Llewellyn, 2015).

All these tensions are apparent in the prospect's reply. He produces a 'qualified acceptance' (Kendrick & Torreira, 2015, p. 19); that is, a preferred response delivered with markers of dispreference such as the 0.5 seconds gap, the turn-initial delay token 'U:hh' as well as the hesitated '↑Y- yea:h.'. Thus, while he acquiesces to the meeting's opportuneness, he designs his reply to be heard as somewhat reluctant. Further, he qualifies his response by adding a second turn constructional unit (TCU) '<Probably>' which downgrades the certainty of his initial response and shows even less commitment to the meeting. Nonetheless, on the record, the prospect is heard to agree to the visit. In fact, the call ends with the salesperson securing an appointment.

To summarize, the analysis of Extract 1 has focused on turn design, preference, and rhetorical practices mobilized in encouraging a preferred response to the appointment inquiry. The use of a pre-expansion secures the prospect's alignment and support for the salesperson's not-yet-disclosed project. This conversational move provides a sequential space where the salesperson can work up a favorable framing of the upcoming sales visit. By explicating how the meeting comes about from a previous fruitful conversation with the prospect, the

salesperson frames it as a relevant shared project and not as a unilateral goal that he has brought to the call. It also casts the prospect in the temporary identity of 'project supporter' which comes with interactional expectations to continue to align with the salesperson throughout the sequence and, eventually produce a preferred response to the appointment solicitation – the main action carried out by the sequence. The design of the appointment solicitation also promotes autonomous acceptance, by minimizing potential grounds for resistance. By using an inquiry into the meeting's timeliness, instead of a request or an offer, the salesperson avoids opening up a space in which the prospect might have refused the meeting.

It is important to note that the interactants do not address, expose, or orient to persuasion as the main business of the talk. Persuasion, like other social psychological phenomena such as building relationships (Mandelbaum, 2003) or making decisions (Boden, 1994), is habitually one of the 'seen but unnoticed' (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 36) scenic features of the interactional episodes which can be identified only by careful tracking of conversational practices and their outcomes. In the next two sections we will focus on two such sets of practices for (1) securing the prospect's support and (2) minimizing potential resistance.

Securing the Prospect's Support

Recurrently, the appointment solicitations in our collection were pre-expanded either via pre-sequences or via one or more turn constructional units that occupied the beginning of the salesperson's initiating action. Given the preference for conversation to keep moving forward (Sacks, 1987; Stivers & Robinson, 2006), as well as the pressure in most call centres to keep telephone conversations short and efficient (Taylor & Bain, 1999; Woodcock, 2017), prolonging the call seems to be a marked departure from interactional and institutional

prescriptions. In this section, we investigate the interactional consequences of these pre-expansions in respect to the appointment solicitation.

Extract 2 is located early in the call, after the salesperson, who has asked to talk to a prospect called Jonathan, is informed by the current call taker that he is not available. Upon finding out that the call has to do with 'print management', the call taker offers to handle it herself as she is the company's 'office manager'. In line 1, the salesperson launches an extended reason-for-calling sequence (Couper-Kuhlen, 2001) that culminates with an appointment solicitation in lines 17-20. Our analytic focus is the pre-sequence in lines 1 to 16.

Extract 2 Tech 53

```
 1   S:    I spoke to Jonathan, it was it was a while back:.
 2         .hhh uh:m but he >said it wasn't really the< right
 3         time  to discuss it as they weren't looking to review..hhh
 4         [and he] said call back around: January. .hhh [uh:-  ]
 5   P:    [Yes.  ]                                      [Right,]
 6               (0.3)
 7   S:    So I've sent him an emai:l, [uh:m ] (.) .ptk just to=
 8   P:                                [Okay,]
 9   S:    =letting him know basically- we've recently partnered up
10         with Electec. .hhh[h and it- ] means we can provide a=
11   P:                     [↑Oh right,]
12   S:    =free discovery session. <Just to [find out] how we can=
13   P:                                      [Okay,   ]
14   S:    =improv:e your print management rea:lly,
15               (0.4)
16   P:    [Righ:t:.]
17   S:    [Uh:m    ] so I was just seeing if- (0.2) w:ell yourself
18         or Jonathan might be availabl:e next week at some
19         point.=Just for him to pop in, .hh and have a quick chat
20         with you.
21               (0.2)
22   P:    .pthhh uhm(uh) let me- can you send all the details on
23         to me:¿ And I will liaise with Jon:.
```

The salesperson invokes a prior conversation with the call taker's colleague, Jonathan and his alleged request to call back as a justification for launching a new course of action. Reporting her recent attempt to contact Jonathan 'So I've sent him an emai:l' (line 7), she announces that her company has started collaborating the electronics manufacturer 'Electec'. Note how

the latter is referred to simply by company name, which implies that ‘Electec’ is a well-known company which the prospect is already familiar with (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979). This informing is used to account for the offer of a ‘free discovery session’ (line 12) that would presumably generate useful information for the prospect’s company. Throughout this lengthy pre-sequence, the prospect receipts the various pieces of information (Gardner, 2007), thus displaying her orientation to the talk as a preface to the upcoming actionable item and supporting its unfolding. Like we have argued in the analysis of Extract 1, by not blocking the salesperson’s pre-sequence, the prospect positions herself as interested in the not-yet-disclosed-project, which, in turn, creates interactional expectations to also align to the appointment solicitation. While we see, in lines 22-23, that she does not commit to a meeting, the prospect still upholds the expectations of being interested in the salesperson’s services by offering to receive more information about them. She will later offer to call the salesperson back (data not shown) after liaising with her colleague. She refer to him as ‘Jon’ – presumably his preferred name – and not as ‘Jonathan’, thus indexing their relationship and intimating that the salesperson, even though she has claimed to have talked to Jon before, is still a quasi-stranger who does not know or use Jon’s preferred name.

As in Extract 1, the pre-expansion provides an interactional space where the salesperson can explicate why she has called at this particular time, separating this ‘because of’ account from the appointment solicitation, which constitutes the ‘in order to’ reason of the call (Burke, 1950; Schütz, 1953). This uncoupling allows her to highlight how the current call came about as a response to Jonathan’s request; which speaks to potential reserves the call taker might have towards a salesperson-initiated call. Furthermore, responding to Jonathan’s request at the time he suggested conveys the salesperson’s solicitude, a quality which would recommend her as a future service provider.

While the first component of the pre-sequence is occupied with accounting for the call as a timely responsive action, the second adjacency pair (lines 7-16) introduces the not-yet-mentioned meeting as free of charge and beneficial for the prospect's company: 'we can provide a free discovery session. <Just to [find out] how we can improv:e your print management rea:lly,' (lines 12, 14). Throughout the pre-expansion, the prospect aligns to the salesperson's project, supporting its unfolding and not contesting the salesperson's framing of the meeting as relevant and beneficial. Accepting this 'definition' of the meeting precludes her from refusing it without being accountable. Thus, in response to the salesperson's meeting request 'Uh:m so I was just seeing if- (0.2) w:ell yourself or Jonathan might be availabl:e next week at some point.' (lines 17-19) she produces a counter-request which manages to delay the progression of the sale, but not actually end it.

While most pre-expansions in our collection occupy one or more turns, we also have two cases in which the appointment solicitation is preceded by same-turn talk. Let us examine such a case, shown in Extract 3, in which the salesperson has called Hotel Neptune (anonymized) in London. Line 1 comes after the end of the How-Are-You sequence.

Extract 3 Eplus 12

```
1   S:    huhu £Uhm£ yeah #uh- basically we look after a lot of
2         uhm hotels in the UK and 'specially in London w[ith]=
3   P:                                                  [Yes]
4   S:    =Yeltel, I'm just wond'ring i- u:h if we could come
5         down and have a chat to you in February.
```

In lines 1-3, the salesperson introduces his company by describing its remit. Looking at the details included in the description, we notice that they are not arbitrary (Edwards, 1998). Out of all the types of clients they service, the salesperson picks one category of clients to mention, 'hotels in the UK' (line 2), and then emphasises a subgroup within that category ''specially in London'. The prospect is an employee of a London hotel. This recipient-tailored description elicits an acknowledgment from the prospect (line 3), by which he aligns to the

ongoing course of action (Stivers, 2008). By mentioning clients who are co-members of the recipient's category – London hotels – the salesperson sets up the relevance of the services being offered. As in the previous extract, the salesperson mentions the company they are working with, Yeltel (anonymized), which the prospect would be able to recognize as a well-known communication technology provider. The production of the ensuing appointment solicitation is warranted by the fact that the salesperson has established a common ground with the prospect.

Having secured his interlocutor's alignment (line 3), the salesperson produces the appointment request (lines 4-5) which occupies the second position within the speaker's extended turn. The first TCU is produced with a slightly rising intonation, projecting a further contribution by the same speaker. Even though the two TCUs embody different actions, they are part of the same project, getting the prospect to agree to a meeting.

We have seen, so far, how both participants treat the salesperson's talk as prefatory to an upcoming 'actionable' item. This interactional space is used by salespeople to make provisions for the acceptance of the appointment solicitation. Let us now look at a deviant case, where the prospect blocks the pre-sequence. We will see how this move is consequential for the salesperson's project.

Extract 4 Tech 85

```
 1   S:    .hh I think it was yours↑elf I had a conversa:tion with
 2         u:hm mkt (.) (i-) it was last year someti:me, .hh in
 3         regards to the print management for the office, .hh h
 4         u:hm an' you asked me to give you a ca:ll back in
 5         January.
 6               (0.9)
 7   P:    Uh- yes.=We still: haven't made a:hm:: decision on that
 8         side sorry.
 9               (0.2)
10   S:    ↑No (↑prob'lm).=It's okay.=I've ↑sent you an email
11         across: (p) ↓u:hm I don't know if you've received it
12         last week. .pthh just saying we've partnered up with
```

```
13          Electec, (0.4) u::hm mkt=an' it means we can provide a
14          free discovery session just to find out how we can help
15          improve your print management.
16                (0.4)
17    S:    U:hm (.) mkt=I (said) it's free, so I'm just ringing to
18          see if you've got any availability next week for Larry
19          to come in for a quick chat.
20                (0.8)
21    P:    .h #U::h #N::ot really.
```

In many respects, Extract 4 is similar to Extract 2, which offers a unique opportunity for comparing the action trajectories engendered by the prospects' different reactions to the pre-sequence. In this extract, in contrast with Extract 2, the salesperson's recounting of a previous interaction (lines 1-5) is not treated as a 'pre' but as an information elicitation. The prospect's answer is designed as a dispreferred informing that they have not 'made a:hm:: decision on that side' (lines 6-7) which prefigures sequence and call closure. Nonetheless, the salesperson attempts to revive the sale. Like in Extract 2, she mentions the email she had sent, the free discovery session, and its benefits for the prospect. But unlike in Extract 2, her talk leading up to the appointment solicitation does not promote its acceptance. Throughout the post-block sequence, she minimizes her actions and their importance. She recounts the content of her email as a simple telling '**just** saying we've partnered up with Electec' (lines 12-13), instead of delivering it, like in Extract 2, as news: 'we've recently partnered up with Electec.' (lines 10-11). Also, she hedges the certainty of the benefits of the free discovery session by formulating its outcome as finding out 'how we can **help** improve your print management' (note the insertion of 'help' here, in contrast with Extract 2). On the prospect's side, note the absence of acknowledgement tokens and continuers, meaning she is not aligning to the salesperson's course of action. The salesperson picks up on that: in line 17, she delays the appointment solicitation and prefaces it with another account which legitimizes its production 'I (said) it's free'. Finally, the appointment-making inquiry (lines 17-19) features the negative polarity marker 'any' which invites a 'No' response (Heritage & Robinson, 2011). This

design encourages the recipient to reject the appointment, and thus, supports our analysis that the salesperson is, in this extract *not* persuading the prospect.

This extract shows that not all appointment-making sequences are designed to be persuasive. We have shown that, after the prospect blocks the salesperson's pre-sequence, the latter, while still continuing her project, does not push for an acceptance. The salesperson's framing of the future meeting (lines 10-15) and her inquiry (17-19) are not designed to promote the meeting, or to discourage its rejection. When compared to a similar stretch of talk in Extract 2, it becomes clear that the salesperson, through subtle word choices and turn design options, is softening the interactional constraints for meeting acceptance by qualifying her actions. Also, throughout the pre-sequence, the prospect withholds alignment to the salesperson's unfolding project. As a consequence, no interactional obligations are set up for her to be interested in or accept to meet with the salesperson. Note her reply to the appointment-making inquiry is a rejection ' #U::h #N::ot really' (line 21) which is also closing implicative.

To summarize, this section shows that and how salespeople use pre-expansions to entice prospects (*cf.* Reynolds, 2011) to support unfolding, not-yet-disclosed projects, thus making provisions for ensuing appointment solicitations to be accepted. Looking at their design, we observe that they differ from other types (such as pre-requests or pre-offers) already documented in the CA literature (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1990; Rossi, 2015; Schegloff, 1980, 2007). First, while other pre-sequences are type-specific, meaning that they prefigure what actions they are prefacing, the pre-sequences here do not foretell that they are laying the groundwork for ensuing meeting requests. Second, pre-expansions usually deal with potential trouble that may impede the production of aligned responses in the base adjacency pair. However, the pre-sequences in our collection furnish auspicious preconditions for accepting the ensuing appointment-making inquiry, such as the benefits the prospect will incur from the

meeting. Bringing up the benefits of a future meeting before the prospect responds compels the latter to take them into consideration when responding to the appointment-making inquiry.

From a sequence organizational perspective, pre-expansions provide a space where salespeople can account for the upcoming appointment solicitation and deal with potential grounds for rejection before they are brought up by the prospect. Thus, the expansions build a favorable environment for the deployment of the appointment-making sequence and encourage acceptance by framing the upcoming meeting as relevant and (potentially) beneficial for the prospect. Pre-sequences recurrently allocate the initiating position to the salesperson's turn, who, as a result, controls the trajectory of the sequence (Sacks, 1989; Silverman, 1998). Crucially, pre-sequences ascribe reciprocal situated identities to participants which are upheld throughout the sequence. A prospect who aligns with the salesperson's project in the pre-sequence can more easily align to it in the base sequence. Thus, accepting the meeting is a simple move, while rejecting it would require more interactional work.

Having looked at how the environment for appointment-making is co-constructed, in concert, by salespeople and prospects, in the next section, we focus on 'minimising potential resistance'. This is the outcome of a second set of practices salespeople routinely employ in designing their appointment solicitations.

Minimizing Grounds for Rejection

The appointment solicitations in our collection are recurrently produced through a low entitlement grammatical format such as '>I was just wonderin'<' (Extract 1) or 'I was just seeing' (Extract 2). While low entitlement formats are typically accompanied by one or more contingencies which the speaker proffers as obstacles for carrying out the request (Curl & Drew, 2008), in our collection we will see a different pattern. Salespeople either do not

invoke any contingencies (as we saw in Extract 1) or, when they do, they also provide, in the same turns, solutions for overcoming them. Let us look at two examples.

Extract 5 comes from the beginning of a call between the salesperson and the prospect (Walter). Lines 1-10 feature the pre-sequences in which the salesperson invokes several prior interactions she has had with Walter's colleagues, Eva and Fernando, whereby she claims to be familiar with the company. She then reports that Eva suggested to her to get in touch and schedule a meeting with Walter. Framing the meeting as Eva's initiative, instead of her own, bestows more relevance and importance to it and guards against it being resisted as a sales pursuit. Our analysis will focus on the appointment-making sequence in lines 10-17.

Extract 5 Eplus 2

```
 1   S:    .h ↑Walter ↑very very quickly just before sometime I spoke
 2         to Eva, .mht A:ndu:h we discussed about the telecoms
 3         contracts=I used to be in touch with Fernando: last year?
 4         .hh A:ndu:h we discussed about your Yeltel contracts which
 5         are up for renewal by early next year?
 6               (0.3)
 7   S:    .Pt[h  So] Eva advised me to have a quick chat with you=
 8   P:       [Mkay,]
 9   S:    =an' schedule a meeting in to discuss about the: Yeltel: .h
10         (.) contracts. .h U:h just (a) wonderin' if u::h you're
11         available sometime (.) °December or January time°?
12               (0.5)
13   P:    U::h be more likely: January 'cause u::h (0.7) December I'm
14         g'nna be on holidays quite lot.
15               (0.2)
16   S:    Oh wow. [(hH)£Oh r]igh', (Hh)kay£, .hh  So [Jan]uary:=
17   P:            [   Yeah  ]                       [( )]
18   S:    =whatu:h which date suits ↓you [(         )]
19   P:                                   [I would say] maybe second
20         week of January.
```

The appointment-making sequence stretches across four turns: the salesperson's request (lines 10-11), the prospect's granting response (lines 13-14), the salesperson's multiple receipts (line 16) and the prospect's confirmation (line 17). Our first observation focuses on the design of the salesperson's request: note the elliptical beginning of the TCU and the minimizing just '.h

U:h **just** (a) wonderin' if'. The salesperson has deleted the self-referential 'I' in tune with her framing of the meeting as Eva's and not her own initiative.

At first glance, the salesperson's request does not seem to pressure the prospect into accepting a meeting. It is constructed using a low entitlement format that makes the meeting contingent on the prospect's availability. However, note that the restrictions that may have been brought about by this contingency are dealt with through the flexible and long time frame for the meeting 'sometime (.) °December or January time°' (lines 10-11), produced incrementally, in pursuit of a preferred reply (Anderson, Aston, & Tucker, 1988; Davidson, 1984; Pomerantz, 1984). Thus, even though the salesperson's availability is treated as a potential obstacle for the meeting, it is minimized through the provision of an accommodating time frame. A consequence of this contingency having been brought up and dealt with is that it would be difficult for the prospect to invoke 'unavailability' as an account for rejecting the meeting. Finally, note also that increment the '°December or January time°?' (line 11) changes the format of the question from a polar interrogative to an alternative interrogative, with additional constraints for the prospect's response format. While polar questions prefer yes/no responses (Raymond, 2010), alternative interrogatives invite recipients to select one of the options, with the last alternative being preferred (Llewellyn, 2015; Sacks, 1987).

The design of the salesperson's request promotes acceptance through the minimization of the invoked contingency which hampers the production of a dispreferred response. Additionally, the appointment request is oriented towards the prospect's availability and not his willingness to have the meeting. Thus, the question does not seek the prospect's acceptance, but presupposes it by initiating the scheduling of the meeting.

The request format constrains the prospect's response, strongly encouraging acceptance, with rejection being difficult to accomplish as the prospect would have to first bring to light to presupposed agreement to meet implied in the salesperson's question. The

prospect's response, in lines 13-14, selects the preferred alternative 'January'. Nonetheless, his response is designed to exhibit the speaker's agency. He accounts for his choice by invoking personal plans.

'Availability' is probably the most frequent contingency in the appointment solicitations in our collection. When they invoke it, salespeople minimize its potentially harmful consequences, for instance by providing flexible and long-time frames for the meeting (Extract 5), or by constructing the meeting as a short and non-imposing encounter. By contrast, the next extract features a different contingency, which requires solving: accommodating the schedules of several participants.

Extract 6 is located 7.25 minutes into the 'cold' call. Prior to line 1, the interlocutors have extensively discussed the prospect's current telephony setup. Also, the prospect has mentioned that, besides himself, two other people in the company, an external IT consultant and the managing director, are involved in the section of telephony providers. In lines 1-2, the salesperson brings up the possibility of a business visit for the first time.

Extract 6 Eplus 1

```
1   S:    .hh U:hm, (.) So=all I'd hope to do at this stage is
2         arrange a time that suits you:.=And ho- hopefully: uh
3         it's always very difficult to bri:ng .hh u:h (0.3) two
4         other people in on a meeting if it does have to move to
5         accommodate the diaries of your colleagues, .hh uh Then
6         we can certainly .h u:hm (0.3) take that into
7         account,=But  in[ iti ]ally: wha- when would be a good=
8   P:                    [Yeah.]
9   S:    =time to cal- come down to see yourselves about this.
```

In the extract above we see how the salesperson skillfully deals with potential issues arisen from scheduling a multi-party meeting. He first highlights the difficulty of arranging a meeting with multiple participants due to possible incompatibilities between schedules. He then portrays this obstacle as uncertain using an if-conditional construction 'if it does have to move to accommodate the diaries of your colleagues' (lines 4-5). He suggests the possibility

of moving the meeting as a solution to the identified potential problem. Note that the formulation of the solution includes the presumption that the prospect has already agreed to the salesperson's visit. The salesperson indexes the former's acceptance by asking *when* and not *if* there would a good time for a meeting 'But initially: wha- when would be a good time to cal- come down to see yourselves about this.' (lines 6-7 and 9). This appointment solicitation presumes the prospect is willing to have the meeting. So, while the format of the inquiry provides the prospect with full autonomy over scheduling it, by indexing the recipient's preference for a time frame for the meeting, it casts him as having already accepted the meeting.

In Extract 6 we see how the salesperson invokes a potential obstacle that would hinder the scheduling of his visit and immediately provides a workaround for it. Similarly, in Extract 5, we saw how the salesperson had made the meeting contingent on the prospect's availability, while also providing an accommodating time frame for it. In both extracts, the appointment-making inquiries cast prospects as autonomous deciders over the meeting's schedule. We argue that, by first highlighting contingencies that may hinder the scheduling of the appointment and then producing solutions to these issues, salespeople pre-empt prospects from using them as accounts for rejecting the appointments. There is a striking similarity between contingencies and accounts featured in dispreferred responses (*cf.* Robinson, 2016). So, by invoking potential obstacles, salespeople would furnish resources for their interlocutors' rejections, thus facilitating them. To avoid that, salespeople minimise contingencies by providing solutions to these anticipated hindrances. Moreover, by orienting to the potential imposition of the meetings for prospects, salespeople present themselves as thoughtful and considerate and attempt to ward off suspicions that they may be assertively following a sales agenda. Finally, we want to highlight that the invoked contingencies are always related to external circumstances, such as availability, and never index prospects'

unwillingness to meet or their lack of interest in the offered services. By orienting to external circumstances as the only issue that precludes the scheduling of the meeting, salespeople treat prospects as being willing to meet and/or interested in the offered services (*cf.* Heinemann, 2006).

Discussion and Conclusion

Our aim in this paper was to augment social psychological understandings of persuasion, by treating it as an interactive and interactional, rather than largely cognitive, phenomenon. Using conversation analysis and discursive psychology, we identified a series of recurrent, visible, recognizable, and accountable features of *persuasion in practice*. We did this by designing a project that would enable us to investigate a setting where 'persuasion' was likely to be omnirelevant. Thus, we analyzed 'cold' call encounters initiated by salespeople, whose goal is to secure new clients. We conceptualized persuasion in interactional terms, with the aim of identifying the communicative practices that comprised *persuasive conduct*.

Note that, while we treat persuasion as an accomplishment – that is, the result of the concerted work done by both participants – our conceptualization of persuasion does not rely on whether the salesperson is successful in getting an appointment with the prospect. Salespeople can design their talk to persuade prospects and, if they fail to do so, it does not mean they have not made a persuasive attempt. It is important to highlight the distinction between persuasion as a process and persuasion as an outcome. This paper focuses on the former by describing the patterned organization of persuasive communication.

Our analysis revealed a number of recurrent practices across the calls. In the data we examined, the goal for salespeople was to book an appointment with prospective clients, so that they could later show them their technological wares. First, perhaps obviously, we found that salespeople did not simply ask to make an appointment with prospects. Instead, they

began their conversations with a number of other things that laid the groundwork for such an upcoming activity. For example, salespeople *pre-expanded* future appointment solicitations and did not initially disclose their upcoming projects. Rather, they attempted to secure positive, aligned responses from prospects through pre-sequence turns at talk. This move had several practical consequences. First, it gave salespeople control over the sequential trajectory of the conversation. Through the way it was designed, the pre-sequence did not foretell what action was forthcoming, making it difficult for the prospect to block it. Thus, the pre-sequence forestalled potential rejection and compelled prospects to hear salespeople out and align to their course of action. Second, when appointment solicitations occupied the slot in the conversation routinely reserved for the 'reason for calling', the pre-sequence allowed salespersons to separate the reason for calling from the appointment inquiry, the justification for the latter being worked up interactionally within the pre-sequence. Third, pre-expansions provided an interactional space where salespeople framed their visits as relevant, beneficial, or opportune for the prospects before asking for an appointment which compelled the latter to take these arguments into consideration when responding to the appointment solicitation. Fourth, pre-expansions mobilized prospects' support for the salespersons' unfolding project and cast the former as presumably interested in the future meetings. This created interactional obligations for prospects to accept the appointment solicitations or to, at least, uphold the displayed interest in the meetings.

We also found that salespeople routinely addressed and minimized the likely contingencies associated with sales meetings; that is, the 'reasons' that might be easily invoked by prospects to resist or reject the request for an appointment. In this way, salespeople demonstrated their understanding of likely barriers to appointment-making, and designed their talk to counter potential resistance. This was achieved either by omitting potential contingencies or by providing, within the same turn, solutions for overcoming them.

By naming and solving the difficulties prospects could invoke as grounds for rejecting the meeting, salespeople narrowed down prospects' response choices. Additionally, the design of appointment solicitations, although accomplished through low entitlement formats, constrained speakers' responses and further hampered the production of dispreferred responses.

We propose that persuasion is accomplished by carefully managing recipiency; that is, through the design of actions, turns, and sequences that encourage preferred responses that align to and carry out the project of the initiating action. Like 'recipient design', which consists in selecting, among alternative formulations, the ones that promote the intelligibility of the action-in-progress (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979; Wilkinson, 2011), recipiency management (Hepburn & Potter, 2011a) encompasses practices that encourage alignment to the speaker's project-in-progress. This analogy provides a first caveat to the respecification of persuasion as publicly available conduct. Like recipient design, recipiency management is not designed to be *recognized* as *purposive* conduct. Speakers' orientations to recipient design are observable in the methods for selecting among alternative references in different sequential environments (Stivers, Enfield, & Levinson, 2007), as part of their projects and actions (Stivers, 2007), and in breakdowns in intersubjectivity. Similarly, persuasive conduct becomes observable through speakers' selection of alternative practices employed to implement their actions and projects.

The second caveat arises from the necessity to distinguish between persuasion and other forms of social influence. Persuasive conduct, we argue, is (1) organized to deal with potential or actual resistance and (2) is oriented to interactants' unequal entitlement to determine the outcome of the appointment-making sequence. More specifically, salespeople treat their interlocutors as the ones entitled to decide whether the meeting will take place or not, thus displaying low entitlement to ask for it. In our data, the orientation to potential

resistance was visible in the use of pre-expansions which reflexively constituted the upcoming appointment solicitations as accountable actions that required prior justification and explanation. Also, salespeople ward off potential resistance by minimizing the contingencies associated with accepting appointments and precluded their use in dispreferred responses. Relatedly, salespeople took a low deontic stance (Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012) through their 'low entitlement' solicitations, thus inviting prospects to design their responses to the proposed courses of action as agentic and voluntary commitments. Note that this last feature of persuasive conduct poses additional strain on identifying persuasive conduct, given that aligned responses to it are designed to exhibit recipients' autonomy.

Social interaction constitutes a continuous negotiation between the parties to the conversation. The outcome of a sequence, an activity, or a project is neither pre-determined nor an individual attainment, but jointly accomplished by the interactants. Nonetheless, each turn-at-talk comes with more or fewer opportunities for weighing up where the conversation is headed. Furthermore, each turn can constrain one party's opportunities to contribute to the action-in-progress while also providing the other party with more control over its direction. Persuasive conduct consists in manipulating these conversational affordances to create interactional obligations for recipients to align to speakers' action projects. The practices identified in this paper set out the ways in which salespeople achieve their conversational goal when interacting with prospective clients who may not align to it. In their original exposition of discursive psychology, Edwards and Potter (1992) were clear to point out that their approach, and that of conversation analysis, is not behaviorist. It is not that, if a salesperson says one thing, their recipient will produce a response automatically. All parties to interaction are agents, but what we can see by studying talk in interaction is that we are potentially constrained and nudged by language, turn by turn. While conversation analysts have laid out the architecture of preferred responses, in which both parties move forward in conversational

alignment, they similarly show us what dispreferred responses look like, and what it takes, in terms of component features, to disagree, say no, reject, resist, and so on. These are all options. Studying real talk enables us to inspect what actually happens when one party persuades and another resists or acquiesces, such that we do not stereotype, mischaracterize, or caricature what is an ordinary part of everyday social life.

Notes

[1] Studies that examine naturally occurring uses of hedges, hesitations, tag questions, and extreme formulations do not substantiate any of the assumptions embedded in the social cognitive approach to language and persuasion See, for instance, empirical research on naturally occurring use of (1) 'hesitation' tokens like "u(hm)"' (Schegloff, 2010), and 'oh' (Bolden, 2006; Heritage, 1984a), (2) tag questions (Hepburn & Potter, 2011a, b), and (3) extreme formulations (Billig, 1989; Edwards, 2000; Pomerantz, 1986)

[2] Unless otherwise specified, in this paper, by 'preference' we refer to 'preference for alignment' within adjacency pairs

[3] However, see Bilmes (2014) for an alternative understanding of preference as conveying speakers' desires

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