UC San Diego
UC San Diego Previously Published Works

Title
On the recognitionality of references to time in social interaction

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2bn200fz

Authors
White, Anne Elizabeth C
Raymond, Chase W

Publication Date
2022

Peer reviewed

On the recognitionality of references to time in social interaction

Chase Wesley Raymond [a,*], Anne Elizabeth Clark White [b]

[a] *Department of Linguistics, University of Colorado, Boulder, USA*
[b] *Department of Family Medicine, Sanford Institute for Empathy and Compassion, University of California, San Diego, USA*

A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

This article explores the recognitionality of references to time as a participants' category and resource in social interaction. In short, we ask: How does referring to time in more vs. less recognitional ways contribute to the formation and ascription of action in context, and how can analysts of social interaction approach this dimension of reference in ways that remain grounded in the details of participant joint-conduct? After considering some of the complexities of recognitionality as an analytic category, we turn our focus to formulations built with *when* (e.g., "when I was in the Marine Corps"). Our aim in examining *when*-formulations in a range of different sequential and action environments is to use this exploration as a means to further develop the concept of recognitionality, namely as a phenomenon that is best understood as scalar and multidimensional in nature. We then probe what implications this has for our understanding of the preference organization of references to time (and other ontological categories), and conclude by presenting some possible avenues for future research.

© 2021 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction: Time reference 'in action'[1]

Whether an event is as mundane as finding your seat before the theater lights dim, or as significant as the calculated arrival of troops to battle, the social organization of human conduct is constituted within, and impregnated with, temporal coordination (see, e.g., Adam, 1995; Elias, 1992; Flaherty, 1999, 2003, 2011; Luckmann, 1991). For analysts of social interaction, a primary question that arises from this reality is how such coordination is brought about—both by and for the interactants themselves.

One of the ways in which interactants display their orientations to time is through the design and use of particular *time references* (TRs) (Raymond and White, 2017). Consider the following example from a Norwegian gynecological visit as a case-in-point. In describing when the patient had a medical device implanted, the doctor and patient nearly simultaneously refer

---

to the same point in time, but do so with two distinct formulations: "fo:r s:ix months." (line 1) and "since I was here," (line 2), respectively.[2]

(1) [Gynecologist][3]

```
01   DOC:   =Så det  har  du  hatt nå  i:   s:eks [månter.]
             =so that have you had  now for six    months
             =So you  have had that now fo:r s:ix months.

02   PAT:                            [ siden ]  jeg   var    her,
                                       since     I     was    here
                                     since I was here,

03   DOC:   Ya.
             Yes.
```

With regard to the design of turns-at-talk (Drew, 2013), this exchange presents us with a puzzle: What enabling affordances (Gibson, 1979; Giddens, 1984) do different time reference formulations offer their speakers with regard to social action? That is, what do interactants accomplish through the mobilization of one reference form or another, at particular moments in interaction?

Raymond and White (2017) propose a taxonomy of time reference formulations to explain the intrinsic affordances that different referential options offer. Drawing on prior work on references to persons and to space (e.g., Enfield, 2013; Levinson, 2003; Sacks and Schegloff, 1979), the authors make a distinction between *Absolute* TRs and *Event-Relative* TRs. Absolute TRs—such as "for six months" or "from 1979 to 1984"—are reference forms that are interpretable by all members of a community though their use of shared constructs for parsing the timeline (e.g., hours, days, years, clock/calendar time). Event-Relative TRs—such as "since I was here" or "the last time we had Chipotle"—by contrast, incorporate a direct reference to some event in the social world (which may or may not be meaningful beyond the interlocutors; see below), and use that event in the construction of the reference. With regard to the affordances of these formulations, as Raymond and White demonstrate, "while the design of Absolute TRs affords speakers the ability to reference time using methods that are, at the surface level, devoid of connotation, Event-Relative TR formulations allow speakers to imbue their cuts on the timeline with additional connotation by way of an event's inclusion in the reference itself" (116).

Participants have been shown to orient to further subdivisions between Absolute and Event-Relative formations. Adapted from Labov and Fanshel (1977:100-1) and Kamio (1997), in Fig. 1 below, A refers to the speaker, and B refers to the recipient; a speaker using an *A-framed* Event-Relative TR situates the event on their own personal calendar, whereas a speaker using a *B-framed* Event-Relative TR situates the event on their recipient's personal calendar. When speakers use a *jointly-framed* Event-Relative TR, they project shared access to the event.

ABSOLUTE		EVENT-RELATIVE			
Uncounted	**Counted**	*Jointly-Framed*		**B-Framed**	**A-Framed**
		O-Framed	**AB-Framed**		
March 30th	*in two hours*	*on Christmas*	*before our class*	*after your kid's party*	*on my birthday*
Does not require speaker to select unit of measurement No evaluation of duration	Allows speaker to shape hearer's perception by selecting unit of measurement Possibility of rounding, exaggeration, etc.	Re-invokes shared cultural knowledge, membership in common society	Reinforces interpersonal relationship	Allows speaker to project access to hearer's personal calendar	Speaker projects hearer as privy to speaker's personal calendar Does not require knowledge of hearer's personal calendar
Objective, devoid of connotation at the surface level		Indexical, imbued with social meaning; Invokes causality (e.g., person reference)			

Fig. 1. Summary of affordances by time reference design (Raymond and White, 2017:118).

Consideration of the affordances offered by distinct time reference formulations allows us to unpack the doctor-patient example presented above. Although considerations of space preclude us from presenting more than the few lines reproduced in (1), made evident throughout this medical visit is the doctor's preference for the patient to undergo surgery to replace the implanted device, and the patient's reluctance to do so (on which, see Landmark Dalby et al., 2015). Given that the device in question has a finite lifespan, the endpoint of which is fast approaching, the doctor's use of a counted Absolute TR "fo:r s:ix months" to refer to the duration of the patient's experience with the device helps establish his stance that surgery is inevitable.[4] In contrast, the patient's use of an Event-Relative TR works to justify her resistance to surgery by referencing the fact that her present device was implanted on this clinic's previous recommendation. The time reference formulations deployed by doctor and patient at this moment in the interaction thus reflect as well as constitute the more overarching, divergent project-level agendas of each participant in this medical encounter.

In presenting this taxonomy, Raymond and White (2017) underscore that these and other dimensions of time reference formulations (e.g., granularity, precision, exaggeration; see Churchill, 1966; Drew, 2003; Raymond, 2019; Sacks, 1988/89) are produced and understood locally in interaction as being mobilized in the service of social action. In the present study, we maintain this focus on social action, but turn our attention specifically to the dimension of reference concerned with *recognitionality* (Sacks and Schegloff, 1979; Schegloff, 1972, 1996). In short, here we ask: How does referring to time in more vs. less recognitional ways contribute to the formation and ascription of action, and how can analysts of social interaction approach this dimension of reference in a way that remains grounded in the details of participant joint-conduct?

In what follows, we explore the recognitionality of time reference formulations as a *participants' resource* in the design and interpretation of action. While we specify and motivate our analytic focus in greater detail in the coming sections, our aim in examining the range of different sequential and action environments presented here is to then use this exploration as a means to further develop the concept of recognitionality itself in research on language in social interaction, as well as probe what implications this has for our understanding of the preference organization of references to time (and possibly other ontological categories).

2. Approaching recognitionality in references to time

In their pioneering study of person reference, Sacks and Schegloff (1979) proposed that participants orient to two preferences in the construction and interpretation of references to third persons: (i) a preference for minimization, and (ii) a preference for recognition. In English conversation, proper names are a commonly used practice for satisfying both of these preference principles simultaneously (in locally initial position; for more comprehensive overviews and recent developments, see Enfield, 2013; Enfield and Stivers, 2007; Fox, 1987; Levinson, 2000, 2007; Raymond et al., 2021a). Importantly, as Sacks and Schegloff demonstrate, when these preferences are in conflict and cannot both be satisfied simultaneously, interlocutors prioritize recognition over minimization, "relaxing" (p.15) the latter in favor of the former. In this and subsequent research within conversation analysis, recognitionality has been conceptualized in binary terms: Schegloff (1996) for example distinguishes "recognitional" from "non-recognitional" reference forms—i.e., "expressions that are designed to allow the recipient to link the referring expression to a person the recipient knows versus expressions that convey that the recipient does not know or does not need to know who is being referred to" (Stivers et al., 2007:12)—a distinction which has been attested in a wide variety of languages (p.13; see also Enfield and Stivers, 2007). As a whole, this body of research illustrates the relevance of recognitionality as a participants' category in the design and interpretation of references to persons.[5]

As we began to consider the recognitionality of references to time in our corpora of both mundane and institutional interaction (see section 3.1), we first noted formulations that were designedly non-recognitional by virtue of their specific lexico-grammar. In case (2), for example, Edna and Margy are talking on the phone, and Edna proposes going for lunch "someday". The formulation "someday" does not actually refer to a recognitional point in time; that is, it does not refer in an identifiable way as would recognitional Absolute (e.g., *on Tuesday*) or Event-Relative (e.g., *after we get our nails done*)

---

[4] For discussion of the subjective experience of temporal duration, including what he refers to as "time work", see Flaherty (2003, 2011).

[5] There is significant overlap between the 'recognitionality' of references as conceived of in conversation analysis, and concepts from other theoretical and methodological traditions, particularly in linguistics—e.g., '(non)identifiability' (e.g., Birner and Ward, 1994; Chafe, 1994:93–107, 1996:37–39; Lambrecht, 1994:76), '(non)referentiality' (e.g., Chafe, 1994:103-5; Du Bois, 1980; Givón, 1979), '(in)definiteness' (e.g., Chafe, 1994; Clark and Marshall, 1981; Du Bois, 1980; Givón, 1979), 'sharedness' (Chafe, 1994:94–97), 'accessibility' (Chafe, 1994, 1996), and even notions such as 'givenness' (Chafe, 1976; Prince, 1981) and 'common ground' (Clark, 1996). For instance, Lambrecht (1994:76) defines 'identifiability' as "a speaker's assessment of whether a discourse representation of a particular referent is already stored in the hearer's mind or not"; that is, "a referent is identifiable when both the speaker and the addressee have a mental representation of that referent, whereas a referent is unidentifiable when only the speaker has a representation of it" (Iemmolo and Arcodia, 2014:319-20). Notwithstanding the conceptual overlap between some of these terms, in addition to variability in how different authors use them, there is evidence that suggests they should be kept conceptually distinct (e.g., Chafe, 1994, 1996 on identifiability vs. accessibility vs. activation; Lambrecht, 1994:79–85 on identifiability vs. definiteness). A comprehensive exploration of how these more cognitively focused accounts of reference intersect with CA's interest in recognitionality—i.e., as a publicly displayed feature of the particulars of turn design, produced and understood in the service of social action—would be worthwhile but has yet to emerge (but see Laury, 2001 on definiteness, Raymond and Fox, 2020 on non-referentiality, and Svennevig, 2010 on identifiability). See also footnote 12.

formulations. Rather, the inclusion of "someday"—through its lexically non-recognitional design—works to frame the invitation as an open-ended one, not tethered to or constrained by any particular point in time.

```
(2) [NB:VII; standardized orthography]

01   Mar:          =We'll have to do tha[t more] o[:ften.]
02   Edn:                     [.hhhhh] [Well w]hy don't we: uh-m:=
03   Edn:    ->    =Why don't I take you'n Mo:m up there tuh: Coco's.someday
04           ->    for lu:nch.We'll go, bkuzz up there tu[h,
05   Mar:                                             [k Goo:d.
06   Edn:          Ha:h?
07   Mar:          That's a good deal. .hh-.hh=
```

By using an intrinsically non-recognitional reference form, Edna prioritizes acceptance of the invitation to get together over making concrete plans for a specific date. "Someday" in this case patterns with other non-recognitional expressions in our data such as "in the future", "later on", "soon", "earlier", and "back in the day", in that they may index past or future times, but they do not situate events specifically on a timeline. The use of such formulations is thus similar in this respect (but not in others, as we will show later) to the use of lexico-grammatically non-recognitional references to persons, as described by Sacks and Schegloff (1979): On its occurrence, "someday" fails to allow the recipient to situate the proposed lunch specifically in time, in the same way that the non-recognitional person reference "someone" conveys to recipients that the speaker does not expect them "to know the one being referred to" (1979:17). Further orientation to the non-recognitionality of such designs can be found in cases in which the participants work sequentially to arrive at a more recognitional form, where recognitionality becomes relevant to the construction of a subsequent action (e.g., deciding what day/time, specifically, to have lunch in an arrangement-making sequence; see also cases (3), (7), and (10) below).[6]

While there were indeed a myriad of such clear, lexico-grammatically non-recognitional references to time in our dataset, in addition to the wide range of clearly recognitional forms we had focused on previously (Raymond and White, 2017), we also came across cases in which the recognitionality of the reference seemed more ambiguous, and in some instances was explicitly problematized by the participants themselves. Consider the following example (3), taken from a multi-year ethnography of Alaskan sea kayaking guides (White, 2013, 2020). In this setting, guides aim for efficiency in getting clients outfitted for paddling. Although clients are unaware, these activities (e.g., waiver signing, gearing up, restroom stop) are ordered for a purpose: A restroom stop is the last activity specifically because clients will be aboard a water taxi for almost 2 hours without convenient bathroom access. In the excerpt below, the guide is in the midst of outfitting clients with boots when a client enquires about going to the restroom.

```
(3) [AW:8-28c]

01   CLI:         Where is the bathroom?
02   GUI:         Ya uhm there- there is a restroom if- if you need it right now
03                it's around the corner in the back of the red building.  (.)
04         ->     u:hm we'll make a- a bathroom stop before we leave so it's up
05                to you uhm if you want to go use it right now or whatever.
06                ((shifts gaze to other client and hands her a boot))
07                So I think this is a thirtynine really well in there but ugh
08   CLI:   =>    When is the next restroom stop,
09   GUI:   ->    U::hm maybe 'bout (0.2) ten fifteen minutes
10   CLI:         Ahhhhh ((waves hand down to signify that's
11                sufficient)) ((laughter in background))
12   GUI:         Okay. cool. (.) great (.) u:hm (.) okay
```

In lines 2–3, the guide answers the client's question about where the restroom is located, but self-repairs (Schegloff, 2013) to insert the condition "if you need it right now". Following this, he informs the client that there will be a scheduled restroom stop "before we leave" (line 4), thereby producing an AB-framed Event-Relative TR (Raymond and White, 2017). The guide thus projects the client as knowing when this is, and therefore as able to decide from this formulation if she wants to interrupt the process of getting dressed or wait. As it turns out, though, the client is unable make this decision as she is unaware of the remaining activities to be completed, and consequently, the temporal distance between the present moment and "before we leave". After responding to the client's question, the guide immediately resumes handing out boots ("thirtynine" in line 7 being a boot-size), further demonstrating his prioritization of the task at hand. The client's subsequent question in line 8, "When is the next restroom stop," undercuts the framed-as-shared knowledge of the guide's Event-Relative TR by pursuing a reformulated TR that she can appropriately interpret and use to make her decision. In response, the guide transforms the TR to a counted (but still designedly hedged) Absolute TR—"maybe 'bout (0.2) ten fifteen minutes"—which is now more recognitional for the client. This TR is accepted in lines 10–11, and the activity of getting geared up continues.

In this example, then, what is *framed* as a jointly accessible (AB) Event-Relative TR is, in fact, *not* recognitional to B, the recipient, who exposes this through pursuit of a differently designed reference form.[7] This example again parallels some of

the practices used in formulating references to persons, where interlocutors have been shown to work sequentially to achieve recognition of a referent (Sacks and Schegloff, 1979; but see Heritage, 2007, discussed below).

3. *When*-formulations

3.1. Data and methods

Data for the present analysis were culled from a large collection of time reference formulations gathered from everyday conversation between friends and family members (e.g., via telephone or around the dinner table) (see Hoey and Raymond, 2022), as well as from institutional contexts (Drew and Heritage, 1992; Heritage and Clayman, 2010) including surgical consultations (White, 2017, 2018, 2021), courtroom cross-examinations (Atkinson and Drew, 1979:136-87), and political interviews of different sorts (Clayman and Heritage, 2002). As we began to unpack the issue of recognitionality amongst the diverse exemplars in our collection, it became clear that this was a complex and multifarious issue, and so we needed a means of better focusing our exploration, and grounding it in the details of the participants' joint-conduct.

First, given that Event-Relative TR formulations do not always make use of constructs that are shared by all members of a society, their recognitionality struck us as a worthwhile point of departure, particularly with regard to how that recognitionality may be relevant for action. We then elected to target a particular subset of Event-Relative TRs, namely formulations with *when* … (e.g., "when I was in the Marine Corps"). Approximately 100 *when*-formulations were present in our initial systematic collection, with various additional cases being considered as well as our investigation proceded. Our reason for focusing on this particular grammatical format is that, as we will see, we find it used in the construction of both demonstrably recognitional and demonstrably non-recognitional references to time; standardizing on this referential format thus offers an opportunity to examine the nature of recognitionality in a somewhat controlled turn-design structure (on which, see Raymond et al., 2021b). Moreover, targeting this format would allow us to interrogate references to both the past and the future (each with its own particulars involving recognitionality), as well as explore a range of actions that such references can be implicated in or are otherwise "accomplice to" (Heritage, 1984a:299; Jefferson, 1984:216), a point to which we will return in the Discussion. Data were analyzed using the theory and methods of Conversation Analysis (CA), which seeks to understand the systematic ways in which interactants design their talk for particular recipients at particular moments in the service of social action (see Heritage 1984b; Sidnell & Stivers 2013).

As a means of organizing the discussion that follows, we will begin by considering *when*-references to past events, and then we will transition to discuss *when*-references to future events. In each section, the cases we present have been selected to expose different dimensions of the recognitionality of *when*-references, each of which being used to incrementally inform our analysis. In the subsequent Discussion section, we will then aim to take stock of these observations and consider what collective relevance they may have for our thinking about recognitionality as a participants' category and resource.

3.2. References to the past

The following example (4) is taken from the opening phase of a post-surgery follow-up office visit. The surgeon, Dr. Sosa, and the patient have not seen each other since the patient was discharged from the hospital. This is actually the patient's second follow-up visit, but due to Dr. Sosa being away, the patient was last seen by Dr. Allen (line 8), another surgeon in the practice. Given that continuity of care is the norm in this rural general surgery practice, not seeing the same surgeon who performed the operation is atypical and therefore accountable (White, 2017). The patient first orients to this absence by asking Dr. Sosa how he's been (line 1). Dr. Sosa's answer is fitted to the question but does not acknowledge the time lapse or his absence. The patient then pursues with a declarative statement about how long it has been since they last saw each other with the counted Absolute TR "four weeks today". This precision (see Sacks, 1988/89; also Drew, 2003) shows the patient's acute awareness of the time lapse. While Dr. Sosa acknowledges that time has passed quickly, he keeps it in Absolute terms (line 4). In the next turn, the patient then transforms this into an Event-Relative reference, casting four weeks/one month ago as "when you were releasing me from the hospital" (line 5). This formulation allows the patient to explicitly cite the surgery itself as the last time Dr. Sosa saw him, which in this context is hearable as a possible complaint (Drew, 1998). Dr. Sosa minimizes this potential complainable with a figurative expression—"time flies when you're having fun" (line 6)—commonly used for topical transitions (Holt and Drew, 2005; Jefferson, 1984). The patient's response to this expression is notably resistant and disaffiliative, lacking laughter and, with the labial closure on "yep.", projecting no elaboration or turn expansion (line 7) (Bolinger, 1946; Heritage and Sorjonen, 1994; Raymond, 2000). Following this minimal response, Dr. Sosa highlights that, notwithstanding his absence since the day of surgery, he "of course" (line 8; Stivers, 2011) arranged for the patient to receive appropriate follow-up care, thereby further minimizing the potential complainable.

```
(4) [6-20-13, Out of Town]

01   PAT:        So how- have you been doing?
02   DOC:        I've been doing fine.
03   PAT:        I haven't seen you in four weeks today.
04   DOC:        Four weeks, it's been a month already?
05   PAT:   ->   Yeah when you were releasing me from the hospital.
```

```
06   DOC:          .hh Well I guess time flies when you're having fun huh?
07   PAT:          Mm hm yep.
08   DOC:          Of course Doctor Allen's checkin' on yah.
09   PAT:          Right.
```

With regard to the recognitionality of the Event-Relative *when*-formulation in this case, "when you were releasing me from the hospital" is unambiguously recognizable as pointing to a specific moment in time—an event that happened "a month" or "four weeks (ago) today". The locally subsequent positioning of the reference—i.e., that it is produced following the Absolute designs in lines 3 and 4—sequentially provides for the recognitionality of the *when*-formulation, as has been noted for locally subsequent references to persons and other referents (e.g., Fox, 1987; Raymond et al., 2021a; Schegloff, 1996).

With this first *when*-formulation example in mind, consider now extract (5) below, taken from a Bible study group of women who are new acquaintances to one another (Loeb, 2014).[8] Here, Valerie is describing how traumatic life events led her to turn to prayer. Specifically, she mentions the loss of her first-born child, and her mother's passing, as accounts for turning to God: "when I realized that I had to you know to pray and turn to god is the loss of my first born," (lines 2–3) and "and then when my <u>mo</u>:m passed" (line 12).

(5) [Bible Study] (Loeb 2014)

```
01   Val:          Well one thing I would like to say is um
02         ->      when I realized that I had to you know to pray
03         ->      and turn to god is the loss of my first born,
04   MsJ:          mmmm yes ((nodding))
05   Val:          Which I felt alone although I was married and in love
06                 cuz it was our first child (and but as it is) why god
07                 why did this happen to
08   MsJ:          mm
09   Val:          m-[ me.] and my family
10   Ang:             [(y)es;]
11   MsJ:          mm
12   Val:   ->     and then when my mo:m passed that's when I (.)
13   MsJ:          whoa:: yeah= ((nodding))
14   Val:          =turned over to god
15   MsJ:          mmhm ((nodding))
16   Val:          and I went to the church to pray to give me strength
17                 to go though_
```

While these *when*-formulations are used as accounts for turning to God, as time references, they are non-recognitional for the members of this particular audience, who are not all familiar with Valerie, her biography, or her personal calendar. Moreover, unlike the surgeon-patient case (4) above, the prior sequential context in Valerie's sharing has not made clear when exactly these events took place, or how much time there was between them. Nonetheless, it is the fact that these two tragic events happened at all, and one after the other, prior to her involvement in the Bible study group, that the speaker uses to account for her turning to God. Had the speaker used Absolute TRs here instead (e.g., "in 1985 … and then in 1986"), recognitionality on the timeline would have been prioritized and unambiguously achieved for all co-participants, but a distinct action would thereby have been realized: The causal relationship between the events included in the Event-Relative *when*-formulations, on the one hand, and the speaker's nascent faith, on the other, would be left unarticulated, and thus the turns would no longer deliver the particular accounting actions that we see here. Furthermore, from an analytic perspective, if this *when*-formulation can accomplish the action of accounting irrespective of its recognitionality to individual recipients, which indeed it does here (lines 4, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15), how are we, as analysts, to deal with 'recognitionality' as a *participants'* category, as opposed to solely an analyst's one?

Consider another example of an accounting action in (6), taken from the history-taking phase of a general surgery consultation. Here the surgeon topicalizes the cause of the patient's pancreatitis, offering "alcohol" as a first candidate cause. The patient actively resists this with a multiple saying (Stivers, 2004), an upgrade to "not at all", and lateral headshake (line 3, see also "but no I don't dri:nk …", later in line 11), produced in overlap with the surgeon's second candidate cause ("gallbladder disease"; line 2). Notably, both of these candidate causes risk casting the patient in a negative light: Either the pancreatitis was (i) the result of alcoholism, or (ii) the result of gallbladder disease that was left untreated, which over time led to pancreatitis. Both of these catalysts therefore depict the patient as not taking adequate care of his body (Halkowski, 2006; Parsons, 1991 [1951]). It is in this context that the patient vehemently rejects these hypotheses and goes on to provide the actual cause of his pancreatitis (a rib break), which is described as having occurred "when I was in the Marine Corps" (line 5).

(6) [6-14-13, Marine Corps]

```
01   DOC:   what was y:our (.) cause of your pancreatitis,=was
02   DOC:   i[t al- alco]ho:[l (related) or'd'you have gallbladder disease?
03   PAT:    [(    )]        [No: no: not at all ((lateral head shake))
04   PAT:   I had a=r- rib broke off my spine=
```

```
05   PAT:    =when I was in the Marine Corps.<it's the: tenth ri:b=hh
06   DOC:    ((vertical head nod))
07   PAT:    an' it injured my pancreas.=hh
08   DOC:    mkay.
09           (1.0)
10   DOC:    mka[y=
11   PAT:       [but no I don't dri:nk an- an- an- never:: ever drank
12           to excess.=er- even when I did drink.=but I eh-eh haven't
13           drank in twenty years.
```

In terms of action, "when I was in the Marine Corps" serves as an account for the patient's rib having been broken (lines 4–5), and by extension, for his pancreatitis (line 7). This exonerates him from the potential interpretation that he did not take adequate care of his body, and additionally presents the injury as no fault of his own since it was sustained while serving in the Armed Forces. As in the prior example, then, it is the event *itself* (i.e., being in the Marine Corps) that is jointly oriented to as most relevant in terms of action—here, as in the previous case, a causal account—not *when* exactly that event took place in time.

Notwithstanding the fact that "when I was in the Marine Corps" may not require absolute recognitionality in order to locally achieve its accounting action, inferential processes from the situated context may nonetheless provide for some approximations of temporal recognitionality. In this case, because the patient is in his 60s, the surgeon may infer a time estimate for when this event might have taken place (i.e., decades ago). This same utterance, in this same sequential context, from a patient who is only in his 20s, however, could only be referring to a point within the last few years (i.e., 18+ years old, the required age for U.S. military service). Thus, the latter instance would refer to a comparatively more restricted—and thus arguably more recognitional—*range* of timeline possibilities. This example and hypothetical comparison illustrates how the recognitionality of a *when*-formulation is not based solely on its linguistic form, or the sequential/action context, but is also shaped by altogether local social, contextual factors, including especially how familiar the recipient is judged to be with the speaker's 'personal calendar' (Sacks, 1988/89). Moreover, it suggests that our conceptualization of recognitionality should be less binary (i.e., "recognitional" vs. "non-recognitional") and more scalar and multidimensional in nature, so as to account for such contextual inferencing (see Chafe, 1996; Prince, 1981) on the part of the participants.

Contrast the above cases (5 and 6) with the following example (7). While minimal (or a lack of) timeline recognitionality was not topicalized or problematized in the prior cases, here we see how being able to situate an event specifically in time can indeed be oriented to as demonstrably relevant and procedurally consequential (Schegloff, 1987) for the trajectory of action in progress. In this doctor-patient interaction, the doctor is gathering the patient's medical history.

(7) [Mishler 1984:165]

```
01   DOC:         How long have you been drinking that heavily?
02   PAT:   ->    Since I've been married
03   DOC:         How long is that?
04   PAT:   ->    ((giggle)) Four years
```

While not a *when*-formulation, specifically, the patient's A-framed Event-Relative "since I've been married" offers a form of an account for her heavy drinking, similar to "when I was in the Marine Corps" as an account for pancreatitis in the prior example (6). However, in this case, the apparent non-recognitionality of the event in time diverges from the doctor's action agenda: It is not the event that led to the drinking that matters for the doctor here; rather, it is the length of time that the heavy drinking has persisted which is medically relevant for the assessment of the patient's health. By soliciting a more recognitional time reference formulation in his follow-up question (line 3), the doctor demonstrably prioritizes situating the onset of heavy drinking on the timeline recognitionally over accounting for the social factors that contributed to the drinking. The patient's giggle in line 4 reveals her recognition of her initial failure (or 'misdeed', Haakana, 2001; Jefferson, 1984) in not providing the type of answer the doctor was seeking. Both participants in this sequence thus ultimately construct recognitionality as relevant to the particular action trajectory underway, in a way that the participants did not do in examples (5) and (6).

3.3. References to the future

With these observations in mind about *when*-formulations in referring to past events, let us now consider the use of such formulations to reference future events, in which recognitionality can play an interesting role given that the event in question has, by definition, not yet occurred in time.

Example (8) is taken from a 1960 BBC radio interview with Hastings Banda (IE), soon-to-be-president of Malawi (formerly Nyasaland). The discussion here centers around Banda's plans for the country's independence, a line of questioning which Banda is noticeably resisting (lines 6, 8, 12, 16–17). The interviewer asks Banda when he "hope[s] to get independence" (line 7), but Banda refuses to answer (line 8). Notwithstanding the failure to obtain a recognitional point on the timeline, the interviewer proceeds to ask about Banda's plans to break away from the Central African Federation (lines 9–11) at that future moment.

(8) [BBC Radio 1960]

```
1    IR:    Doctor Banda what is the purpose of your visit.
2    IE:    Well I've been asked by the Secretary of State to come
3           here.
```

```
4     IR:    Have you come here to ask the Secretary of State for a
5            firm date for Nyasaland's independence.
6     IE:    I won't tell you that.
7     IR:    When do you hope to get independence.
8     IE:    I won't tell you that.
9     IR:    Doctor Banda when you get independence are you as
10           determined as ever to break away from the Central
11           African Federation.
12    IE:    Need you ask me that question at this stage.
13    IR:    Well this stage is as good as any other stage why do
14           you ask me why I shouldn't ask you this question at
15           this [stage.
16    IE:         [Haven't I said that enough for any- everybody to be
17           convinced that I mean just that.
```

Here the interviewer needs to refer to gaining independence in order to ask about Banda's plans after independence is achieved (cf. Du Bois, 1980 on the 'slot-and-fill strategy'). He notably produces this question with a more generous *when*-formulation, casting independence as an inevitability, in contrast to an *if*-formulation, which would have called into question the assumed inevitability of independence (which Banda may have taken issue with). As in the prior examples referencing past events, here the action of lines 9–11 is completely about the event (i.e., of independence), not the specific point on the timeline at which that event will happen. In contrast to earlier past-event *when* cases, however, the interviewer's *when*-formulation cannot be replaced with an Absolute TR form due to the intrinsic unknowability of the future point in time.

For another case of a future event, consider example (9). Here, Ida has purchased some new furniture from a store called "Barker and Stonehouse" (line 8), and is calling to tell her friend Jenny that it has arrived. Jenny asks to come and see it, and after an extended discussion of other matters (data not shown), Ida moves toward closing with "So .h you come round when you're ready. Alright?" (line 15) (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973). The open-endedness of this proposal allows Jenny to decide when is best for her to stop by, which is part of the delicate negotiation of who is the benefactor and who is the beneficiary of this visit (on which, see Clayman and Heritage, 2014).

(9) [Rahman:B:1:IDJ(12); standardized orthography]

```
01    Jen:   *Hello?,*
02           (0.5)
03    Ida:   Jenny?
04           (0.3)
05    Ida:   It's me:,
06    Jen:   Oh hello I:da.
07    Ida:   Ye:h. .h uh:m (0.2) I've just rung to te- eh tell you (0.3)
08           uh the things have arrived from Barker'n Stonehou[:se,
09    Jen:                                                    [Oh::::.
10           (.)
11    Jen:   O [h can I come rou:nd,h[h
12    Ida:     [An'              [Ye[s please[that's w]'t=
13    Jen:                          [ha ha    [.a : h  ]
14    Ida:   =I want=you to come rou:nd.
.            .
.            .
.            .
15    Ida:   [So .h you come round when you're ready. Alˆri[ght?
16    Jen:                                                 [u=Ri:ght.=
17    Ida:   =[O k a : : y .    ]
18    Jen:   =[Okay then I was] askin=her and she says you're working
19           tomorrow as well.
20    Ida:   Yes I'm supposed to be tomorrow yes,
21    Jen:   O[h::.
22    Ida:    [Yeh,
23           (.)
24    Ida:   Mm:. So see you later: J[enny
25    Jen:                           [Yes okay then I'll [just ]=
26    Ida:                                              [Right]=
27    Jen:   =[euh,
28    Ida:   =[I'll be in,=
29    Jen:   =I'll just finish tea and=
30    Ida:   =Mm[:.
31    Jen:      [clear up'n I'll see you the[n.
32    Ida:                                 [Alr[ight [dear,
33    Jen:                                     [.hhh [O(h)kay,
34    Ida:   [Bye for no:w,]
```

In contrast to the previous example in which Malawi's independence had a wider range of timeline possibilities to become an actuality, here the timing of Jenny's visit is oriented to as an event that will occur later that same day, although at an as-of-

yet unspecified point in time. That this *when*-formulation is not entirely recognitional on its occurrence is oriented to by Jenny, who subsequently announces that she is just finishing tea and will head over after clearing up, thus providing Ida with greater recognition of "when you're ready" will be in time (lines 25, 27, 29, 31). Taken together, cases (7) and (8) illustrate that the range of possible future points on the timeline that a *when*-formulation calls into relevance cannot be determined by linguistic form alone; rather, just as we saw with references to past events, the use and interpretation of future-event *when*-formulations likewise depends on contextual features specific to the sequence of action in which they are produced.

It should be noted that English does provide morphological and other resources that can make more or less explicit the recognitionality of a time reference. The morpheme *–ever* is one such resource, as in *whenever* (see Dayal, 1997). This is seen in the following case in which two acquaintances are discussing a cancelled road trip to Syracuse. Ilene, who was originally going to get a ride from Charlie, moves toward closing the call by requesting that Charlie contact her the next time he plans on making the trip. She first asks Charlie to alert her "when you're gonna go:." (line 1), and then pursues further uptake (Clayman and Raymond 2021) by transforming her request to "when*e*ver you have intentions of going" (lines 3–4). This transformation lexico-grammatically marks the future *when*-formulation with greater non-recognitionality, thus underscoring the open-endedness of her request.

```
(10) [Trip to Syracuse; standardized orthography]

01   Ile:   You know just let me know when you're gonna go:.
02   Cha:   .hh Sure .hh
03   Ile:   You know that- that's all, whenever you have intentions of
04          going .hh let me know.
05   Cha:   Ri:ght.
06   Ile:   Oka::y?
07   Cha:   Okay,=
08   Ile:   =Thanks and e- than:ks: anyway Charlie,
09   Cha:   Ri:ght.
10   Ile:   Oka:y?
11   Cha:   Oka[y,
12   Ile:      [Ta:ke care=uh
13   Cha:   Speak to you [( )
14   Ile:                [Bye: bye
15   Cha:   Bye,
```

The transformation[9] from "when" (line 1) to "whenever" (line 3) works to broaden the non-recognitionality of the time being referenced. This 'upgraded' non-recognitionality makes more explicit that the action from line 1—a request—should not be understood as *in any way* tethered to a particular timeframe. Combined with a syntax that might best be described as overbuilt or "overwrought" (Schegloff, 2002), the non-recognitionality of the time reference formulation in line 3 clarifies that this request is a temporally open-ended one, and that Charlie should interpret it (and act on it) accordingly. The use of "whenever" here is thus similar to the inclusion of the designedly non-recognitional "someday" that we saw in example (2), and reminds us that considerations of recognitionality must always take into consideration the particular lexico-grammatical resources available in the language in question.

4. Revisiting recognitionality

Having now explored some of the relevant dimensions of recognitionality in time reference formulations, in this section we take stock of these empirical observations in an effort to further probe the concept of recognitionality itself. First, as already intimated in the preceding case-by-case analysis, we will argue that recognitionality, which in the conversation-analytic literature is often understood dichotomously (i.e., "recognitional" vs. "non-recognitional"), is best understood in *scalar* terms—as a *continuum*—and seemingly as a multidimensional one as well. And second, we posit that the preference for recognition in references to time is best understood in terms of the specific action and sequence of actions underway, as opposed to as an omnirelevant or otherwise overriding primary concern for participants. We will discuss each of these points in turn.

4.1. Recognitionality as a scalar and multidimensional phenomenon

In the preceding section, we saw that *when*-formulations can refer to both past and future events, and in each case they can be clearly recognitional or clearly non-recognitional for recipients. For instance in case (4), "when you were releasing me from the hospital," uttered after several Absolute time references, is undeniably a recognitional time reference in its locally subsequent position, as well as from a mutual personal calendar perspective. In case (5), by contrast, "when I realized that I had to you know to pray and turn to God is the loss of my first born," does not demarcate a recognizable point on the timeline for the other women in her Bible study group. Falling between recognitionality and non-recognitionality, however, is the ability of recipients who are unfamiliar with the speaker's personal calendar to use social and contextual clues in order to infer where a

---

[9] For more on sequential transformations of morphological forms, see Raymond, 2022.

referent may lie on the timeline, and speakers' corresponding ability to take this sort of recipient inferencing into account as they design their references in the service of action. In example (6), for instance, the surgeon can use the patient's age to approximate a time estimate for when "when I was in the Marine Corps" may have been, and the patient can depend on him to do so (recall also Ida's future TR "when you're ready" in (9)). Such *when*-formulations therefore call into question a simple binary distinction between recognitionality and non-recognitionality, and suggest that these concepts would be better conceived of as existing on a continuum, with intermediate degrees and multiple dimensions of inferred recognitionality.

While we argue that recognitionality is a scalar and multidimensional phenomenon, importantly it is the participants who determine how recognitionality will be relevant for the particular trajectory of action underway. That is, participants can treat the recognitionality of a time reference form as "adequate-for-all-practical-purposes" and "good enough" (Garfinkel, 1967:8)—or not—based on the action agenda of the turn. As an account for turning to prayer, "when my mo:m passed" (example (5)) may not need to be interpretable as having occurred at a specific point in time; rather, what is relevant is that the tragic event happened at all (on such 'relevant precision', see Drew, 2003; Raymond, 2019). In contrast, knowing the duration of a patient's heavy drinking is paramount to the doctor's ability to assess the patient's health in example (7), and thus a recognitional time reference is pursued. When referring to future events, recognitionality can also be contingent on the range of timeline possibilities. For instance, when Ida and Jenny are discussing when Jenny will stop by to see the new furniture in (9), while the event is in the future, there is a limited timeframe for when that will happen, namely before the end of the day. The exact point in time is still not entirely recognitional (i.e., Ida does not know the exact time that Jenny will knock on her door), but the participants demonstrably orient to a finite range of temporal possibilities—possibilities that become incrementally more recognitional as the participants progress the sequence forward and bring the call to a close. On the other hand, when asking Prime Minister Banda about his country's future independence in (8), this time frame has a wide range of possibilities; and indeed, Malawi did not gain independence until 1964, a full four years after this interview. Thus the more contextually and sequentially restricted the range of timeline possibilities, the more inferentially recognitional the reference becomes; and the wider or more open-ended the range of timeline possibilities, the less recognitional the reference becomes. This provides further evidence that recognitionality is best conceptualized as a scalar and multidimensional phenomenon, as opposed to a simple binary one.

The recognitionality of future events merits particular discussion in this regard, as it is in such cases that we routinely see recognitionality intersecting with issues of accountability (see Robinson, 2016) due to the intrinsic uncertainty or un-knowability of many upcoming events. In the sea kayaking example (3), the guide's initial use of an Event-Relative TR affords him the ability to maintain temporal authority with respect to the group's progression from one activity to the next: "Before we leave" is an interactionally more secure design for the guide, as the group is sure to depart eventually. Articulating the time of the bathroom break with a definitively recognitional TR (e.g., 'at 8:00' or 'in 20 min'), by contrast, runs the risk of setting up potentially un-met expectations that clients can then hold the guide accountable to—for example, if gearing up takes longer than expected. It is therefore only when the client pushes for a more recognitional reference that the guide produces an Absolute TR that is nonetheless hedged: "U::hm maybe 'bout (0.2) ten fifteen minutes". In guiding, Absolute time references are often avoided specifically to preclude clients from holding guides accountable for the recognitional precision of clock time references (White, 2013).[10] Practices of this sort—including the demonstrable avoidance of certain formulations—illustrate the highly agentive ways that the continuum of recognitionality can be used as an interactants' resource in interaction.

The accountability of future events being situated more recognitionally in time is specifically topicalized in our final case (11). Here, in an interview with UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the interviewer prefaces his question (lines 5–6) with a description of Thatcher's prior claims that the UK will join the European Union's "exchange rate mechanism" (line 1) "when the ti:me is right" (line 3). He immediately problematizes the ambiguous recognitionality of this *when*-formulation, citing that "people are saying: .hh that that means never." (line 4), and uses this as the setup for asking Thatcher to "defi:ne the ki:nd of conditions" (line 5) she has in mind.

(11) [UK BBC TV Newsnight 1989] (Heritage & Clayman 2010:230-1)

```
1   IR:        Now turning to the exchange rate mechanism you:
2              have consistently said or the government has said
3        ->    .hh that you will joi:n when the ti:me is right
4        ->    but people are saying: .hh that that means never.
5              Could you defi:ne the ki:nd of conditions when
6              you think we would go in.
7   IE:        Uh no I would not say it means never.
8              For the policy...
```

The affordance of Thatcher's "when the ti:me is right" TR formulation is that, through its non-recognitionality, it does not in fact situate joining the exchange rate mechanism on any particular timeline. This in turn curtails the public's ability to hold her accountable for the realization of this event. With this preface to his question, however, the interviewer *exposes* the deliberate non-recognitionality of this particular "stock" (Heritage and Clayman, 2010:231) time reference formulation used

---

[10] Note that this context-based practice parallels the controlling relevance of clock time during the emergence of capitalism: During this time, factory workers were forbidden to carry watches and instead relied on management to set the schedule for them. This allowed supervisors to manipulate time, potentially setting the clock back at the end of the day to have employees unknowingly work extra hours (Woodcock 2000[1944]; see also Flaherty, 1999).

in the past by Thatcher, thereby conveying that more recognitional—and accountable—terms will be the primary agenda of the present line of questioning.

It should also be noted that politicians' active use of more *recognitional* time references, by contrast, can be used in attempts to give evidence of the concreteness of their future plans and their willingness to be held publicly accountable to those plans (see President Barack Obama's use of "July of two thousand eleven" in a 2010 interview regarding the removal of troops from Afghanistan; Raymond and White, 2017:120–1; for additional examples, see Churchill, 1966; Clayman and Romaniuk, 2011). The recognitionality of a time reference, and its relationship to accountability, is thus wholly a participants' concern, negotiated within the specific objectives of the action- and sequence-in-progress, and the context of which those sequences of action are a constitutive part.

4.2. Preference organization and social action

With their foundational paper on the design of references to persons, Sacks and Schegloff (1979) not only offered a contribution to the study of reference, but in so doing also undertook an exercise in what has come to be known as preference organization (for an overview, see Pomerantz and Heritage, 2013). Recall that the authors proposed two principles in the design and interpretation of references to persons (i.e., 'minimal' over 'non-minimal' forms, and 'recognitional' over 'non-recognitional' forms), and that the preference for recognition trumps the occasionally competing preference for minimization.[11] To this hierarchical ordering of preference principles, Heritage (2007) crucially adds the notion of *progressivity*—i.e., the forward-moving nature of interaction (Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 1979, 2007; Stivers and Robinson, 2006). Heritage shows that interlocutors on occasion abandon their attempts to secure recognition of person (and place) references in favor of moving on with the action, sequence, and activity at hand; in so doing, the participants construct progressivity as a superordinate preference (over the preference for recognition) within the particular trajectory of action in progress. Thus, with Heritage's study, a more complex preference-organizational landscape with respect to person/place references begins to emerge—one that takes into account the particulars of actions in context.

With the cases examined in the present study, we have aimed to explore how participants construct recognitionality as a relevant feature of the design and interpretation of references to time. Consonant with Heritage's (2007) findings as to the import of progressivity in references to persons, here we likewise find that recognitionality is not always the preference to which participants overridingly orient. Indeed, in many cases, Absolute forms *could* in fact be used, and if so would unambiguously secure recognition, but in fact are *not* used; this basic empirical fact challenges a view of recognitionality as the superordinate constraint in operation. We therefore propose that the preference organization of recognitionality in references to time is best conceptualized in terms of what the reference is being used to accomplish locally in terms of social action.

Our examination of *when*-formulations suggests that participants consider the relevant degree of recognitionality that is procedurally consequential (Schegloff, 1987) for recipients' next actions: Is greater recognitionality relevant for an appropriate next action to be delivered, or is some lesser degree of recognitionality "good enough" for (Garfinkel, 1967:8), or irrelevant to, the production of an appropriate response?[12] Specifically, we posit that participants orient to the following ordered series of maxims in producing and interpreting the recognitionality of time references in context:

1. If the action enacted by the speaker's turn is not taken as requiring recognitionality, the recipient can interpret the action with a non- or less recognitional reference, and can proceed with an appropriate next action.
2. Whether the speaker's action *is* or is *not* taken to require recognitionality, the recipient may work to *infer* (some) recognitionality with the aim of further interpreting the speaker's action. If the recipient's inferencing achieves adequate recognitionality to allow them to produce a next action, they can then proceed with that next action.
3. If the action is taken as requiring some degree of recognitionality, and design and inferencing fail to provide or allow for action-relevant precision toward the successful recognition of that reference, the recipient may work sequentially to arrive at a more recognitional form (e.g., may initiate repair), in the service of producing an appropriate next action. This process may result, as in some of Heritage's (2007) cases, in the sequential abandonment of the search for greater recognitionality in favor of progressivity.

---

[11] These preferences can of course be flouted in various ways to accomplish particular actions (e.g., Fox, 1987; Raymond et al., 2021; Schegloff, 1996; Stivers 2007).

[12] It bears mention that some analytic frameworks would exclude some of the cases we have included here from the category of reference altogether on the grounds that they are supposedly "non-referential" or otherwise "fail to refer" (Chafe 1994:103). That is, one might claim that such cases are not, in fact, references to time, and thus shouldn't be included in a discussion thereof. But of course formulations built with *when* …, for example, do not come out of speakers' mouths pre-labeled as 'referential' vs. 'non-referential', any more than they come out pre-labeled with some degree of recognitionality. From the participants' perspective, this is an online, emergent negotiation that they must work out within the here-and-now immediacy of interaction. The *a priori* exclusion of cases that do not fit such pre-theoretical categorizations (which, to be sure, are based primarily on nominal expressions, as opposed to, e.g., adverbial phrase arguments which we have focused on here; cf. Lambrecht, 1994:75) therefore risks disattending to the very sense-making processes that participants are using to navigate the domain of reference *in situ*, within the progression of situated interaction. Again we see the need for a more detailed exploration of how cognitively focused explanations of reference (and 'non-reference') might be integrated with more interaction- and action-focused perspectives, such as that which we have offered here (recall also footnote 5).

In the Bible Study case (5), for instance, the *when*-formulation is used to offer a causal account for the speaker's decision to turn to prayer. The success of this action—i.e., the recipients' ability to provide adequate uptake to her story—does not *depend* on recognitionality: Whether each individual recipient can situate the references on a concrete timeline, or whether they cannot, the use of the reference form to deliver an account for the onset of the speaker's religiosity remains. Similarly, in case (6), the patient's reference to "when I was in the Marine Corps." (line 5) works to resist the surgeon's candidate causes for his pancreatitis by providing an alternative (and socially acceptable) causal account. Again, the success of this accounting action for the surgeon's next action in context does not depend on the surgeon's ability to situate the patient's Marine Corps experience concretely on a timeline, despite the fact that the surgeon may be able to roughly infer when this might have been. Accordingly, in neither case do we see 'unknowing' recipients call into question the recognitionality of these forms; and thus in both cases we see recognitionality being tacitly constructed as ancillary to the agenda of the particular sequence of action underway.

This is likewise the case with references to future events that by definition have not yet occurred and whose temporal recognitionality is often indeterminate: "when you get independence" (extract (8), line 9) may not be entirely recognitional (to either participant), and yet that fact does not interfere with the action of the turn in which it occurs, namely a request for information about Banda's intentions to break away from the Central African Federation at that future, unknown point in time. Similarly, in extract (10), Ilene's request that Charlie let her know "when [he's] gonna go:" (line 3) to Syracuse next does not require either participant to situate that moment recognitionally in time in order for the action to be interpreted appropriately. That is, whether or not Charlie knows when, specifically, his next trip to Syracuse will be, Ilene's turn remains comprehensible, and thus actionable. We also noted the upgrade in *non*-recognitionality in the transformation of "when" to "whenever", and how that contributes to the action being delivered by further detethering it from any specific point in time.

By contrast, in some sequences of action, the recognitionality of a time reference formulation is demonstrably relevant and procedurally consequential for what one or more of the participants is working toward. In extract (7), in response to the doctor's question about the onset of the patient's heavy drinking, the patient produces "since I've been married" (line 2). While this reference form can be interpreted as issuing an account for the drinking, similar to cases (5) and (6), its temporal non-recognitionality for the doctor diverges from his medical agenda, which requires a recognitional reference form to adequately assess the patient's health. The non-recognitionality of the reference form is thus specifically exposed and problematized in the immediately following turn, as the doctor works sequentially to arrive at a more recognitional metric from which to judge the patient's health: "How long is that?" (line 3). The same was true of case (3), where having a bathroom stop "before we leave" was deemed insufficiently recognitional for the client to decide if she wanted to go to the bathroom at that moment or wait for the scheduled stop. The client then solicited a more recognitional reference form that she could use to make her decision, despite the guide's initial attempt to keep the timing less recognitional. And in example (11), "when the ti:me is right" (line 3) is specifically topicalized in the preface to a question as being insufficiently recognitional for the journalist's action agenda, which is to get an on-record statement from Thatcher as to the conditions under which the UK will join the EU's exchange rate mechanism. In cases such as these, then, we see participants orienting to and prioritizing the recognitionality of references to time as demonstrably relevant and procedurally consequential for the *particular* sequence of actions underway, which they can also do by restricting the range of possible moments in time (and therefore increasing recognitionality) over the course of the sequence's progression. Such cases contrast with those discussed in the preceding paragraphs, where the recognitionality of the reference form was treated as largely if not totally inconsequential with regard to action.

This diversity of instances suggests that there is no overarching preference for securing recognitionality with regard to references to time. Rather, we argue that the preference for temporal recognition is better conceptualized in terms of the particular action and sequence of actions in which it is produced. While such an *action-specific* conceptualization of preference organization may diverge in part from Sacks and Schegloff's (1979) initial, more *action-agnostic* (or 'omnirelevant') conceptualization of preference in the design of references to persons, our approach is consonant with much work in conversation analysis that resists such generalizations by recognizing that preference-organizational principles are best understood in terms of the particulars of action (on person reference, see Enfield, 2013:438-45; Levinson, 2007:30-1; Stivers, 2007).

Notwithstanding the evidence that preference organization is likely best considered with regard to the local action trajectory underway, Pomerantz and Heritage (2013) conclude their overview of the preference literature by arguing that this body of work suffers from two primary weaknesses: (i) a tendency to generalize preferences and preference principles across gross action categories, and (ii) tendencies to view interactional events in terms of single preference principles when multiple principles are involved (223–227) (for more discussion, see Enfield, 2013:438-48; Levinson, 2007; Heritage and Raymond, 2021; Raymond and Heritage, 2021; Robinson, 2020a, 2020b; Sacks 1987[1973]). In our exploration of references to time, had we only considered cases like (3, Kayaking) and (7, Heavy Drinking), in which recipients of less recognitional time references pursued more recognitional forms, we might have posited an overarching preference for recognitionality. By working with a diverse set of action types, however, we see that it is not an overarching preference for recognitionality that governs references to time; rather, certain sequences of action make recognitionality a relevant concern for the participants, while others do not. Or, put in more interactant-centered terms: In some sequences of action, interactants *make greater recognitionality relevant*, and in others they do not.

This action-specific approach to preference thus attempts to reconcile the two critiques that Pomerantz and Heritage (2013) offer of the preference literature, while at the same time taking a step toward addressing Enfield's (2013) call for

conversation analysts to, through detailed empirical work, "develop a more solid and more broadly applicable theory of the preferences that apply in formulating reference" (452). First, while we have considered a range of actions in the examples analyzed here, we have done our best to take into account the particulars of specific actions in specific sequences of action. We argue that participants consider whether a more recognitional time reference is indeed *relevant* to the particular action underway, or whether a less recognitional form will better deliver the action at hand, or be sufficiently interpretable to progress the sequence forward. Second, and relatedly, we have not assumed that a preference for recognition is the only or primary preference that participants are orienting to and negotiating. There is, after all, the preference for progressivity (Heritage, 2007): If a recipient can successfully grasp the action of the turn in which a less-than-fully recognitional reference form is deployed, and provide an appropriate next action, pursuing a more recognitional reference form would violate the preference for the forward-moving nature of talk. And indeed, in our data, we do not find that participants sacrifice progressivity and prioritize increasingly granular recognitionality at moments in interaction where less recognitional terms are, as Garfinkel (1967:8) might put it, "adequate-for-all-practical-purposes" or "good enough".

5. Conclusions and avenues for future research

In attempting to take into account the distinct actions and preferences at work in the cases in our collection—including the interactions between those actions and preferences—we have done our best "not to sacrifice the detailed examination of single cases on the altar of broad claims" (Schegloff, 2010:42). Instead, we have endeavored to offer a more nuanced, locally constructed conceptualization of recognitionality in references to time, including how such references are produced and understood with regard to preference organization.

The exploration we have offered here is designed to offer a range of possible avenues for future research. First, detailed studies of particular action types would allow further interrogation of the potential relevance of degrees of recognitionality to those particular actions. How is temporal recognitionality oriented to in invitation or request sequences, for instance, and how does it become procedurally consequential for the trajectory of action underway? In considering particular actions, greater attention might also be dedicated to uncovering the specific practices through which participants sequentially negotiate and thus collaboratively construct the relevance of recognitionality, to what degree, and with what dimensions.

Cross-linguistic exploration is also a crucial next step, particularly as one considers the wide range of lexico-grammatical options available across languages. Does the language in question require speakers to grammatically mark epistemicity in some way, such that recognitionality may also be grammatically marked? Similarly, we might ask if the language offers both 'inclusive' (including the recipient) and 'exclusive' (excluding the recipient) first-person plural forms, and how this intersects with the ways in which participants produce and interpret recognitionality in context. English grammar does not oblige its speakers to make such distinctions in designing *when*-formulations, and thus these ambiguities can be used as participants' resources on particular occasions of use (see Jefferson, 1978). But the grammar of other languages may not offer these particular affordances in this particular construction, and indeed altogether distinct resources may be bought to bear. This reminds us again that recognitionality, in time reference formulations or otherwise, must be investigated by taking into consideration the lexico-grammatical resources at the participants' disposal.

What all of these future directions have in common is that they keep recognitionality in the hands of the participants—as a participants' concern, and a participants' project. As we have demonstrated in this study, the relevance of recognitionality is not a theoretical or abstract notion, but rather is "talked into being" (Heritage, 1984b:290) at the ground level of situated interaction, as participants design and interpret time reference formulations in the service of social action. As scholars of social interaction continue to revise our understanding of the many (sometimes competing) dimensions of preference that participants orient to in producing references, it would be worth considering whether the action-specific account described here may extend beyond references solely to time, to the various other ontological categories to which speakers routinely refer in social interaction.

References

Adam, B., 1995. Timewatch: the Social Analysis of Time. Polity Press, Cambridge.
Atkinson, J.M., Drew, P., 1979. Order in Court: the Organisation of Verbal Interaction in Judicial Settings. Macmillan.
Birner, B., Ward, G., 1994. Uniqueness, familiarity, and the definite article in English. In: Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society. Berkeley Linguistics Society, pp. 93–102.
Bolinger, D., 1946. Thoughts on 'yep' and 'nope. Am. Speech 21 (2), 90–95.
Chafe, W.L., 1976. Givenness, contrastiveness, definiteness, subjects, topics and point of view. In: Li, C. (Ed.), Subject and Topic. Academic Press.
Chafe, W.L., 1994. Discourse, Consciousness, and Time: The Flow and Displacement of Conscious Experience in Speaking and Writing. University of Chicago Press.
Chafe, W.L., 1996. Inferring identifiability and accessibility. In: Fretheim, T., Gundel, J.K. (Eds.), Reference and Referent Accessibility. Benjamins, pp. 37–46.
Churchill, L., 1966. Notes on everyday quantitative practices. Paper Presented to the American Sociological Association Meeting (Miami Beach, Florida, August).
Clark, H.H., 1996. Using Language. Cambridge University Press.
Clark, H.H., Marshall, C.R., 1981. Definite reference and mutual knowledge. In: Joshe, A.K., Webber, B.L., Sag, I.A. (Eds.), Elements of Discourse Understanding. Cambridge University Press, pp. 10–63.
Clayman, S.E., Heritage, J., 2002. The News Interview: Journalists and Public Figures on the Air. Cambridge University Press.
Clayman, S.E., Heritage, J., 2014. Benefactors and beneficiaries: benefactive status and stance in the management of offers and requests. In: Drew, P., Couper-Kuhlen, E. (Eds.), Requesting in Social Interaction. John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 55–86.

Clayman, S.E., Raymond, C.W., 2021. 'You Know' as Invoking Alignment: A Generic Resource for Emerging Problems of Understanding and Affiliation. J. Pragmat. 182, 293–309.

Clayman, S.E., Romaniuk, T., 2011. Questioning candidates. In: Ekström, M., Patrona, M. (Eds.), Talking Politics in the Broadcast Media: Cross-Cultural Perspectives. John Benjamins, pp. 15–32.

Dayal, V., 1997. Free Relatives and *Ever: Identity* and *Free Choice* Readings. SALT VII, pp. 99–116.

Drew, P., 1998. Complaints about transgressions and misconduct. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 31 (3/4), 295–325.

Drew, P., 2003. Precision and exaggeration in interaction. Am. Socio. Rev. 68, 917–938.

Drew, P., 2013. Turn design. In: Sidnell, J., Stivers, T. (Eds.), The Handbook of Conversation Analysis. Wiley-Blackwell, Malden, pp. 131–149.

Drew, P., Heritage, J., 1992. Talk at Work: Language Use in Institutional and Work-Place Settings. Cambridge University Press.

Du Bois, J.W., 1980. Beyond definiteness: the trace of identity in discourse. In: Chafe, W.L. (Ed.), The Pear Stories: Cognitive, Cultural, and Linguistic Aspects of Narrative Production. Ablex, Norwood, NJ, pp. 203–274.

Elias, N., 1992. An Essay on Time. University College Dublin Press, Dublin.

Enfield, N.J., 2013. Reference in conversation. In: Sidnell, J., Stivers, T. (Eds.), The Handbook of Conversation Analysis. Wiley-Blackwell, Malden, pp. 433–454.

Enfield, N.J., Stivers, T. (Eds.), 2007. Person Reference in Interaction: Linguistic, Cultural and Social Perspectives. Cambridge University Press.

Flaherty, M., 1999. A Watched Pot: How We Experience Time. NYU Press, New York.

Flaherty, M., 2003. Time work: customizing temporal experience. Social Psyhcology Quarterly 66 (1), 17–33.

Flaherty, M., 2011. The Textures of Time: Agency and Temporal Experience. Temple University Press, Philadelphia.

Fossli Jensen, B., Gulbrandsen, P., Dahl, F.A., Krupat, E., Frankel, R.M., Finset, A., 2011. Effectiveness of a short course in clinical communication skills for hospital doctors: results of a crossover randomized controlled trial (ISRCTN22153332). Patient Educ. Counsel. 84 (2), 163–169.

Fox, B.A., 1987. Discourse Structure and Anaphora: Written and Conversational English. Cambridge University Press.

Garfinkel, H., 1967. Studies in Ethnomethodology. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs.

Gibson, J.J., 1979. The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

Giddens, A., 1984. The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration. Polity Press, Cambridge.

Givón, T., 1979. Discourse and Syntax. Academic Press.

Haakana, M., 2001. Laughter as a patient's resource: dealing with delicate aspects of medical interaction. Text 21 (1), 187–219.

Halkowski, T., 2006. Realizing the illness: patients' narratives of symptom discovery. In: Heritage, J., Maynard, D. (Eds.), Communication in Medical Care: Interactions between Primary Care Physicians and Patients. Cambridge University Press, pp. 86–114.

Heritage, J., 1984a. A change-of-state token and aspects of its sequential placement. In: Atkinson, J.M., John Heritage (Eds.), Structures of Social Action. Cambridge University Press, pp. 299–345.

Heritage, J., 1984b. Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology. Polity Press, Cambridge.

Heritage, J., 2007. Intersubjectivity and Progressivity in References to Persons (And Places). In: Enfield & Stivers, pp. 255–280.

Heritage, J., Clayman, S.E., 2010. Talk in Action: Interactions, Identities and Institutions. Blackwell-Wiley, Oxford.

Heritage, J., Raymond, C.W., 2021. Preference and polarity: epistemic stance in question design. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 54 (1), 39–59.

Heritage, J., Sorjonen, M.-L., 1994. Constituting and maintaining activities across sequences: and-prefacing as a feature of question design. Lang. Soc. 23, 1–29.

Hoey, E., Raymond, C.W., 2022. Managing conversation analysis data. To appear. In: Andrea, B.-K., Brad, M., Eve, K. (Eds.), The Open Handbook of Linguistic Data Management. MIT Press.

Holt, E., Drew, P., 2005. Figurative pivots: the use of figurative expressions in pivotal topic transitions. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 38 (1), 35–61.

Iemmolo, G., Arcodia, G.F., 2014. Differential object marking and identifiability of the referent: a study of Mandarin Chinese. Linguistics 52 (2), 315–334.

Jefferson, G., 1978. What's in a 'nyem. Sociology 12 (1), 135–139.

Jefferson, G., 1984. On stepwise transition from talk about a trouble to inappropriately next-positioned matters. In: Maxwell Atkinson, J., John Heritage (Eds.), Structures of Social Action. Cambridge University Press, pp. 191–221.

Jefferson, G., 2004. Glossary of transcript symbols with an introduction. In: Lerner, G.H. (Ed.), Conversation Analysis: Studies from the First Generation. John Benjamins, pp. 13–31.

Kamio, A., 1997. Territory of Information. John Benjamins, Amsterdam.

Labov, W., Fanshel, D., 1977. Therapeutic Discourse: Psychotherapy as Conversation. Academic Press, New York.

Lambrecht, K., 1994. Information Structure and Sentence Form: Topic, Focus, and the Mental Representation of Discourse Referents. Cambridge University Press.

Landmark Dalby, A.M., Gulbrandsen, P., Svennevig, J., 2015. Whose decision? Negotiating epistemic and deontic rights in medical treatment decisions. J. Pragmat. 78, 54–69.

Laury, R., 2001. Definiteness and reflexivity: indexing social shared experience. Pragmatics 11 (4), 401–420.

Levinson, S.C., 2000. Presumptive Meanings: the Theory of Generalized Conversational Implicature. MIT Press.

Levinson, S.C., 2003. Space in Language and Cognition. Cambridge University Press.

Levinson, S.C., 2007. Optimizing person reference: perspectives from usage on rossel island. In: Enfield, N.J., Stivers, T. (Eds.), Person Reference in Inter-action: Linguistic, Cultural and Social Perspectives. Cambridge University Press, pp. 29–72.

Loeb, L., 2014. Call and response: an anatomy of religious practice. Discourse Stud. 16 (4), 514–533.

Luckmann, T., 1991. The constitution of human life in time. In: Bender, J., Wellbery, D.E. (Eds.), Chronotypes: the Construction of Time. Stanford University Press, pp. 151–166.

Mishler, E., 1984. The Discourse of Medicine: Dialectics of Medical Interviews. Ablex, Norwood.

Parsons, T., 1991[1951]. The Social System. Routledge.

Pomerantz, A.M., Heritage, J., 2013. Preference. In: Sidnell, J., Stivers, T. (Eds.), The Handbook of Conversation Analysis. Wiley-Blackwell, Malden, pp. 210–228.

Prince, E.F., 1981. Toward a taxonomy of given-new information. In: Peter, C. (Ed.), Radical Pragmatics. Academic Press, pp. 223–255.

Raymond, C.W., 2019. Intersubjectivity, normativity, and grammar. Soc. Psychol. Q. 82 (2), 182–204.

Raymond, C.W., 2022. Suffixation and sequentiality: methodological notes on morphology in action. Interact. Linguist..

Raymond, C.W., Clift, R., Heritage, J., 2021a. Reference without anaphora: on agency through grammar. Linguistics 59 (3), 715–755.

Raymond, C.W., Fox, B.A., 2020. Asserting No-problemness in Spanish: '*No hay (ningún) problema*' and the study of noun phrases in interaction. In: Oni, T., Sandra, A., Thompson (Eds.), The 'Noun Phrase' across Languages: an Emergent Unit in Interaction. John Benjamins, pp. 119–152.

Raymond, C.W., Heritage, J., 2021. Probability and valence: two preferences in the design of polar questions and their management. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 54 (1), 60–79.

Raymond, C.W., Robinson, J.D., Fox, B.A., Thompson, S.A., Montiegel, K., 2021b. Modulating action through minimization: syntax in the service of offering and requesting. Lang. Soc. 50, 53–91.

Raymond, C.W., White, A.E.C., 2017. Time reference in the service of social action. Soc. Psychol. Q. 80 (2), 109–131.

Raymond, G., 2000. The Structure of Responding: Type-Conforming and Noncornforming Responses to Yes/no Type Interrogatives. Dissertation, UCLA.

Robinson, J.D., 2016. Accountability in social interaction. In: Robinson, J.D. (Ed.), Accountability in Social Interaction. Oxford University Press, pp. 3–46.

Robinson, J.D., 2020a. One type of polar, information-seeking question and its stance of probability: implications for the preference for agreement. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 53 (4), 425–442.

Robinson, J.D., 2020b. Revisiting preference organization in context: a qualitative and quantitative examination of responses to information seeking. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 53 (2), 197–222.

Robinson, J.D., Kevoe-Feldman, H., 2016. The accountability of proposing (vs. soliciting proposals of) arrangements. In: Robinson, J.D. (Ed.), Accountability in Social Interaction. Oxford University Press, pp. 264–293.

Sacks, H., 1987[1973]. On the preferences for agreement and contiguity in sequences in conversation. In: Button, G., Lee, J.R.E. (Eds.), Talk and Social Organisation. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, pp. 54–69.

Sacks, H., 1988/89. On members' measurement systems. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 22, 45–60.

Sacks, H., 1992. Lectures on Conversation (2 vols.). Blackwell.

Sacks, H., Schegloff, E.A., 1979. Two preferences in the organization of reference to persons and their interaction. In: George, P. (Ed.), Everyday Language: Studies in Ethnomethodology. Irvington, New York, pp. 15–21.

Schegloff, E.A., 1972. Notes on a conversational practice: formulating place. In: David, S. (Ed.), Studies in Social Interaction. Free Press, New York, pp. 75–119.

Schegloff, E.A., 1979. The Relevance of Repair for Syntax-for-Conversation. In: Givón, T. (Ed.), Syntax and Semantics 12: Discourse and Syntax. Academic Press, pp. 261–288.

Schegloff, E.A., 1987. Between macro and micro: contexts and other connections. In: Alexander, J.C., Giesen, B., Münch, R., Neil, J., Smelser (Eds.), The Micro-macro Link. University of California Press, Berkeley, pp. 207–234.

Schegloff, E.A., 1996. Some practices for referring to persons in talk-in interaction: a partial sketch of a systematics. In: Fox, B. (Ed.), Studies in Anaphora. John Benjamins, pp. 437–485.

Schegloff, E.A., 2002. Overwrought utterances: "complex sentences" in a different sense. In: Bybee, J., Noonan, M. (Eds.), Complex Sentences in Grammar and Discourse: Essays in Honor of Sandra A. Thompson. John Benjamins, pp. 321–336.

Schegloff, E.A., 2007. Sequence Organization in Interaction: A Primer in Conversation Analysis, vol. 1. Cambridge University Press.

Schegloff, E.A., 2010. Commentary on Stivers and rossano: "mobilizing response. Res. Lang. Soc. Interact. 43 (1), 38–48.

Schegloff, E.A., 2013. Ten operations in self-initiated, same-turn repair. In: Hayashi, M., Raymond, G., Sidnell, J. (Eds.), Conversational Repair and Human Understanding. Cambridge University Press, pp. 41–70.

Schegloff, E.A., Sacks, H., 1973. Opening up closings. Semiotica 8 (4), 289–327.

Sidnell, J., Stivers, T., 2013. The Handbook of Conversation Analysis. Wiley-Blackwell.

Stivers, T., 2004. "No no no" and other types of multiple sayings in social interaction. Hum. Commun. Res. 30 (2), 260–293.

Stivers, T., 2007. Alternative recognitionals in initial references to persons. In: Enfield & Stivers, pp. 73–96.

Stivers, T., 2011. Morality and question design: 'Of course' as contesting a presupposition of askability. In: Stivers, T., Mondada, L., Steensig, J. (Eds.), The Morality of Knowledge in Conversation. Cambridge University Press, pp. 82–106.

Stivers, T., Enfield, N.J., Levinson, S.C., 2007. Person Reference in Interaction. Enfield & Stivers, pp. 1–20.

Stivers, T., Robinson, J.D., 2006. A preference for progressivity in interaction. Lang. Soc. 35 (3), 367–392.

Svennevig, J., 2010. Pre-empting reference problems in conversation. Lang. Soc. 39, 173–202.

White, A.E.C., 2013. Timework: an Occupational Ethnography of Guiding. M.A. thesis. UCLA.

White, A.E.C., 2017. Additional Concern Initiations in General Surgery Visits: A Longitudinal Analysis of Doctor-Patient Communication. Ph.D. Dissertation. UCLA.

White, A.E.C., 2018. Patient-initiated additional concerns in general surgery visits. Patient Educ. Counsel. 101 (12), 2219–2225.

White, A.E.C., 2020. Authority and camaraderie: the delivery of directives amongst the ice floes. Lang. Soc. 49 (2), 207–230.

White, A.E.C., 2021. When and how to surgeons initiate noticings of additional concerns? Soc. Sci. Med. 244.

Woodcock, G., 2000[1944]. The tyranny of the clock. In: Peterson, L.H., Brereton, J.C., Hartman, J.E. (Eds.), The Norton Reader. Norton and Company, New York, pp. 815–819.