Overwrought utterances

"Complex sentences" in a different sense[*]

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1. Introduction

When a party to a conversation says something which presents interlocutor(s) with trouble in hearing or understanding the talk, one alternative available to the latter is to initiate repair to address that trouble. There are particular practices of turn-construction for doing this job of repair initiation by a recipient of talk which is cast as a trouble-source. These range from the most open-ended repair initiators, the ones which reveal the least grasp of the preceding talk and give the least guidance on what in particular is the source of the trouble — forms such as *huh?*, *what?*, *pardon me?*, and the like; through ones which target particular categories of trouble-source in the preceding talk — forms such as *who?*, *where?*, and the like, or point to the trouble-source by repeating it — forms such as *A parking place?*, to the "strongest" repair initiators — ones which claim a putative understanding of the trouble-source turn and offer the candidate understanding for confirmation (cf. Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977; Schegloff, 1997a, 2000a, for this and the next paragraph).

Although it is common, and not implausible, to treat the first of these types of repair initiation — *huh?*, *what?*, etc. — as conveying that there has been a hearing problem and as requesting a solution by repetition of the preceding utterance, in fact this is only sometimes the case. Speakers whose utterance is followed by such a repair initiation are not automata; they take into account the character of the turn which they produced and the circumstances of its production in determining what the likely source and character of the trouble was and what form its repair should take. If their turn was

straightforward but a clatter of dishes occurred in the course of their saying it, they may well treat it as a hearing problem and repeat it verbatim. If they find that it included a word that may be problematic for their current recipient — a name they might not recognize, a technical term or bit of arcana that they do not understand, and the like, then may re-say the utterance with a replacement for that trouble-source element in particular. Indeed, on some occasions speakers may recognize that the initiation of repair is really a veil behind which lurks not a problem of hearing or understanding, but a problem of alignment; for repair is also mobilized as one way of dealing obliquely with disagreement and misalignment, and replies to *huh?* may deal with "trouble" by backing down from a position, as well as by repeating or replacing a word. By looking at the responses to repair initiations of this "open class" variety (Drew, 1997), we can gain access to what the speaker understood to be the problem or trouble which an interlocutor was addressing with their repair initiation, or what they are taking to have been the trouble.

In examining a substantial collection of some 1300 other-initiated repair sequences, including a considerable subset of ones of this "open class" sort, I encountered a number in which the prior speaker — the trouble-source speaker — replied by producing what can properly be characterized as a reduced or expanded version of the original utterance. Designed to be recognizable as substantially the same utterance as was produced before, "expanded seconds" add elements not actually articulated in the first saying though commonly tacitly taken to underlie their use and uptake; "reduced seconds" leave out elements of the first saying, while clearly retaining the identity of the prior utterance. Elsewhere (Schegloff, 1999) I examine the sorts of elements that get omitted on re-saying, which are thereby treated as "dispensable"; and the sorts of elements which get added to the re-saying, which were treated as "dispensable" on the initial saying.

Here I would like to examine several specimens in which the reduced version testifies to the speaker's recognition that the utterance as first said was a challenge to understanding because of its complexity. The reduced second does not dispense with this or that word; it appears designed to remove that complexity. We are given access thereby to "complex sentences" in a different sense than is likely treated in other chapters of this volume. Almost certainly sentences like those treated here are not "complex" in a technical linguistic, grammatical sense. They are instead "complex" — complicated — in a vernacular or common sense sense. Having their complexity thus underwritten by the most practical of analyses — their interlocutor's analysis prerequisite to

responding, we can undertake to describe what composes their complexity in this sense, and what may underlie its production.

The central theme of what follows is that the speaker finds himself or herself in something of an interactional bind, and is fashioning a turn to deal with that circumstance — a fashioning which perhaps goes too far, and yields an "overwrought" utterance (as per the Oxford English Dictionary: "overwrought: … 2. Elaborated to excess; over-laboured.").

2. "Oooops!"

The first specimen I would like to examine is the utterance implicated in the following exchange — first in its trouble-source initial production (at lines 1–2), then in its reduced, simplified form (at line 6).

```
(1a)  Hyla,    12:32–37
   1  Nancy:  →  =A:kshlly I should say what would'v gotten intuh me:, but
   2           →  yer more ambitious then I am,
   3                      (·)
   4  Hyla:        ˙t Wha:,
   5                      (·)
   6  Nancy:  -»  Yer more ambitious then I am.
```

This may appear very nearly indecipherable out of context, so here is the larger episode in which it figures. Hyla and Nancy are very good friends, college undergraduates in the mid-1970's. They are to meet later on to go to the theater that evening, have gotten in touch ostensibly to finalize arrangements, but end up having a longish conversation on a variety of matters, including:

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(1b)  Hyla, 12:01–13:03 (Extract 1a is at lines 32–37)
   1  Hyla:     ˙tch! A:u::nd, whut a:lse. ˙hhh D'you know w't I did t'day
   2            I wz so proud a'my[s e l   ]f,=
   3  Nancy:                      [What.]
   4  Hyla:     =˙hh I we:nt- (0.2) A'right like I get off et work et one,=
   5  Nancy:    Uh hu:h,=
   6  Hyla:     =En I haf- (·) my class starts et two:. ˙hh So within that one
   7            hou:r, I got tih school, I parked I went ˙hh to the ba:nk, I
   8            hadda stan'n the longest line deposit my che[:ck,
   9  Nancy:                                                [Mm-hm,=
  10  Hyla:     =˙hhh I hadtuh go: into a:, (·) a camra store t'get somethi:ng,
  11            ˙hh en I, (·) wey hadda wait fer the shuttul bus, ˙hh got up tih
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12                    school en I bot my lunch, en I got tih clahhsss hh=
13    Nancy:          =Are you se:rious?=
14    Hyla:           =˙hh No I made the whole thing up.'v course I'm ser(h)i[ous.
15    Nancy:                                                          [Wo::ow.=
16    (Hyla):         =hhhhhhh
17                        (0.2)
18    (    ):          ˙hh=
19    Nancy:          =Hadiyou feel, [tired¿hh
20    Hyla:                          [˙hh
21                        (·)
22    Nancy:          [˙hhh
23    Hyla:           [NO I wz very:, (0.3) pleased thet I c-[accomplish'.]
24    Nancy:                                                [You really a]ccomplished
25                    a lo:t.=
26    Hyla:           =so much.=
27    Nancy:          =What got intih yhhou=
28    Hyla:           =hhhhhh
29                        (0.2)
30    Nancy:          ˙hu[:::h]
31    Hyla:             [˙k ]˙k=
32    Nancy:  →       =A:kshlly I should say what would'v gotten intuh me:, but
33            →       yer more ambitious then I am,
34                        (·)
35    Hyla:           ˙t Wha:,
36                        (·)
37    Nancy:  →       Yer more ambitious then I am.
38                    (0.6)
39    Hyla:           (Fer [what widduw) ]
40    Nancy:               ['s there a la]ck'v c(h)mm[u(h)nica:tio(h)n he(h)re,
41    Hyla:                                          [hhhhhhhhhhhhhhh
42                        (·)
43    Hyla:           [I think so.=
44    Nancy:          [˙hhh
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What is going on here? Roughly this (in what follows I draw on Sacks, 1974; Schegloff, 1992, 1995; Terasaki, 1976).

Hyla launches a telling sequence of canonical form. It begins with a pre-sequence which projects a telling to come (line 1, *Do you know what I did today?*), a pre-sequence which is, however, equivocal as to whether it is an announcement which is to be told — a compact piece of news most commonly designed

as a single clause (Terasaki, 1976), or a story — a longer telling, ordinarily composed of more than one event and requiring more than a single turn-constructional unit to be told (Sacks, 1974). But the pre-sequence itself is expanded (line 2, *I was so proud of myself*) to include a characterization of the sort of thing to be told (an achievement), and thereby advance notice of the sort of action being implemented through it (a boast) and the appropriate sort of uptake on its completion (amazement, appreciation, admiration, etc.). Nancy replies (line 3, *what*) by aligning with the proposal to tell and forwarding the sequence to its "telling" part.

The start of Hyla's telling at line 4 has the form of an announcement — a one unit telling. But she self-interrupts, marks a re-beginning (*Alright*) followed by a common mode of starting a story — giving background information (*I get off at work at one* [*o'clock*] *and …my class starts at two*), and thereby builds the telling as a story-telling, and projects what will mark its completion — getting to class, a trajectory we need not track for our purposes here, noting only that it is designed to display the large number of things accomplished, in spite of untoward delays.

At the story's arrival at projected recognizable completion, Nancy begins a series of story uptakes or receipts designed to align with the story's design as displayed in the pre-sequence at the outset: first amazement at the amount accomplished (line 13, *Are you serious*), then assessment and appreciation (line 15, *wow*), then an effort at solicitousness about the aftermath of such an undertaking (line 19, *how do you feel, tired*) which, however, misses the point also conveyed in the pre-telling (line 2, *proud*). And so Hyla rejects the solicitousness and replaces it with the pride at achievement (line 23), something with which Nancy tries to align in the very course of its saying, virtually co-saying it (i.e., shadowing it) with Hyla (lines 23–26). And then she — Nancy — puts her foot in it!

Whereas something like *What inspired you?* might have asked for an account of the episode in positive terms, *What got into you?* does so in a negatively valenced fashion, intimating that such activity is un-characteristic.[1] And it is the effort to cover up this gaffe that lies behind the "complex" (if not convoluted) sentence which is our specimen: *A:kshlly I should say what would'v gotten intuh me:, but yer more ambitious then I am.*

This is not, however, the initial registering that something is amiss, and not the initial effort to deal with it. As the last word of the problematic utterance is being produced, it is infiltrated by aspirated laughter (represented by the *hh* inside the word *yhhou* on line 27), marking the utterance being ended equivocally —

either as a last minute effort to mark the utterance as "a joke," and "not meant seriously" on the one hand, or as a mark of embarrassed, dawning realization of "how it sounds" on the other. In any case, the laughter is picked up and echoed by Hyla at line 28–in alignment with what is in effect an invitation to join the laughter (Jefferson, 1979), co-registering that something laughable has occurred — either as joke or as gaffe, and the laughter continues by both through lines 30–31. And it is here that the target specimen utterance begins.

All that is possible here is a kind of summary quasi-analytic gloss of what the several elements of this highly fashioned utterance seem designed to do — what practices of talk-in-interaction have issued in their appearance here.

Actually here, as in many other occasions of use, serves to mark an occurrence of self-repair. As Clift (1999: 43) remarks in concluding a recent analytic mapping of the uses of *actually*, when deployed in initial position in a turn-constructional unit (TCU) deployed in the service of self-repair, it registers "changes [in the] trajectory of talk, often in response to talk marked as interactionally 'delicate'."[2] In this respect, then, beginning this turn with *Actually* shows Nancy to be dealing with her prior turn qua gaffe rather than qua joke, for there is a distinct practice of talk-in-interaction used to manage a speaker's transition from "joke" to "serious," and that is a post-joke deployment of the token *no* (Schegloff, 2001). With *actually*, then, the possibility is being projected that the turn being launched will implement self-repair addressed to trouble in what has just preceded. It is, then, what has elsewhere (Schegloff, 1997b) been termed "third turn repair," and has the characteristics of third turn repair: it repairs something which occurred at the end of the speaker's prior turn; there has been a brief and non-problematic (and non problem-raising) intervening turn by recipient, but for which the repair would have been a transition-space repair.

The implementation of the repair is initiated with *I should say*, which, when considered by comparison to the much more common *I mean*, frames the repair operation in normative terms, resonating the normative character of the trouble-source, as compared to some technical execution problem. But it is the repair operation itself, which takes *What got* u̲n̲tih yhhou into *what would'v gotten intuh* m̲e̲:, which is most striking in the transparency of its design.

– The *what,* the *got,* and the *intuh* are constant points of reference, retaining and echoing the underlying structure of the turn, framing the simple replacement of the remaining components of the turn.
– The *you* of the trouble-source turn is replaced by *me,* which is given the contrastive stress common to replacements in self-repair.

– And past tense *got* becomes *would have gotten*, apparently to capture *if I had done what you did, one would properly have asked "what got into you", but…*

– Finally, *but yer more ambitious then I am*, and so this question is not properly put to you, hence it was a trouble-source which warranted this repair.

Combined into a single turn, this emerges as *A:kshlly I should say what would'v gotten intuh <u>me</u>:, but yer more ambitious then <u>I</u> am*, an utterance which, while designed as a repair of the preceding turn, itself embodies a trouble-source of a different sort — a problem of understanding for its recipient.

And with this we return to the beginning. Hyla's *wha?* initiates repair on this turn of Nancy's, and Nancy's repair in response simply repeats the last component of the trouble-source turn, removing the complexity of what preceded. Although stripping out the talk that gave "yer more ambitious than I am" its import engenders its own trouble, this trouble simply has its presence consensually registered, not solved, and the talk is quickly turned in a new direction.

3. "Bad luck!!!"

The second specimen I would like to examine is the utterance implicated in the following exchange (from a conversation recorded at an East Coast American university in the 1970's) — first in its trouble-source initial production (at lines 4–5), then in its reduced form (at line 9).

```
(2a)  Trip to Syracuse
  1  Charlie:      [hhhe:h heh ˙hhhh I wuz uh:m: (·)˙hh I wen' ah:- (0.3)
  2                I spoke teh the gi:r- I spoke tih Karen.
  3  (Charl):      (˙hhhh)/(0.4)
  4  Charlie:  →   And u:m:: (·) ih wz rea:lly ba:d because she decided of a:ll
  5            →   weekends fuh this one tih go awa:y
  6                     (0.6)
  7  Ilene:        Wha:t¿
  8                     (0.4)
  9  Charlie:  -↠  She decidih tih go away this weekend.
 10  Ilene:        Yea:h,
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Ilene had apparently arranged to "hitch a ride" with Charlie when he next drove to the nearby city of Syracuse, and the trip had been slated for the following weekend. Extract (2a) is taken from the conversation in which Charlie has called to tell Ilene that the trip is off, and that she therefore no longer has a ride.[3] The trajectory of the

conversation in which the extract occurs is given in Extract (2b).

(2b)   Trip to Syracuse (Extract 2a is at lines 10–19)

1	Ilene:	Hull<u>o</u>:,
2		(0.3)
3	Charlie:	hH<u>e</u>llo is eh::m:: (0.2) ˙hh-˙hh Il<u>e</u>ne th<u>e</u>re?
4	Ilene:	Ya::h, this is Ile:[ne,
5	Charlie:	[˙hh Oh h<u>i</u> this's <u>Charlie</u> about th'trip
6		teh <u>Sy</u>racuse?
7	Ilene:	Ye:a:h, <u>Hi</u> (k-ch)
8	Charlie:	H<u>i</u> howuh you <u>d</u>oin.
9	Ilene:	Goo::[d,
10	Charlie:	[hh<u>he</u>:h heh ˙hhhh I wuz uh:m: (·)˙hh I <u>wen</u>' ah:- (0.3)
11		I spoke teh the <u>gi</u>:r- I spoke tih Karen.
12	(Charl):	(˙hhhh)/(0.4)
13	Charlie: →	And u:m:: (·) <u>i</u>h wz <u>rea</u>:lly <u>ba</u>:d because <u>s</u>he dec<u>i</u>ded of a:ll
14	→	<u>w</u>eekends fuh <u>t</u>his one tih go a<u>wa</u>:y
15		(0.6)
16	Ilene:	Wha:t¿
17		(0.4)
18	Charlie: -»	<u>S</u>he dec<u>i</u>dih tih go a<u>w</u>ay this weekend.
19	Ilene:	Yea:h,
20	Charlie:	˙hhhh=
21	(Ilene):	=˙kh[h
22	Charlie:	[So tha:[:t
23	(Ilene):	[k-khhh
24	Charlie:	Yihknow I <u>r</u>eally don't have a place tuh <u>sta</u>:y.
25	Ilene:	˙hh <u>Oh</u>:::::.hh
26		(0.2)
27	Ilene:	˙hhh So yih not g'nna go up this week<u>e</u>n'¿
28	( ):	(hhh)/(0.2)
29	Charlie:	Nu::h I don't <u>t</u>hink so.
30	Ilene:	<u>H</u>ow about the <u>following</u> weekend.
31		(0.8)
32	Charlie:	˙hh <u>D</u>at's the vac<u>a</u>tion isn'it?
33	Ilene:	˙hhhhh <u>Oh</u>:. ˙hh <u>AL</u>right so:- <u>no</u> ha:ssle,
34		(·)
35	Ilene:	S[o-
36	Charlie:	[<u>Y</u>e:h,
37	Ilene:	<u>Y</u>ihkno:w::

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38  (   ):        ˙hhh
39  Ilene:        So we'll make it fer another ti:me then.
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Here again, as in the treatment of the preceding extract, an analytic sketch (a pointillistic one at best) is all that is possible here. Regarding the lead up to the exchange on which we will focus let me register only the following observations.

1. From its outset, the prospect of this conversation is a problematic and delicate one. Bad news has to be delivered (cf. Maynard, 1997, inter alia), and a previously afforded resource and service (the ride) is to be withdrawn.

2. That this is problematic for Charlie is evidenced in, and reinforced by, various aspects of his talk. He fails to recognize that it is Ilene who has answered the phone (lines 2–3), and presumes that Ilene will fail to recognize him; note the supplementary identification resource he provides at lines 5–6, …*about the trip to Syracuse,* without waiting to see if *This is Charlie* will suffice to allow recognition (Schegloff, 1979).

3. Although the opening has not gone through its full development (there is room and relevance still for a reciprocal inquiry by Ilene), Charlie intervenes at line 10, intercepting Ilene's turn at its earliest possible completion with a turn that ends up launching the reason for the call preemptively. By this I mean not that he preempts it from her, but that he launches it before its "natural" place has been collaboratively arrived at (Schegloff, 1986). This is commonly a way in which the urgent or otherwise pressing character of the matter so introduced is embodied.

4. After starting the turn with laugh tokens which serve to close the inquiry sequence he launched at line 8 by registering and appreciating the "anticipatory" prosody in which Ilene's response is delivered, Charlie's in-breath serves to mark a boundary between that sequence and a next which he is about to begin.[4] But two starts are abandoned (*I was uhm* and *I went ah* at line 10) before a third is settled on (*I spoke…* at line 11), and even that one is not brought to completion without a hitch.

5. That hitch (replacing at line 11 *the girl* with *Karen* while re-saying the whole of the turn-constructional unit) again indexes (as did the problems in recognizing other and identifying self at lines 3–6) the ill-defined relationship between the two, and the incapacity effortlessly to select the appropriate reference with which to identify to **this** recipient — to Ilene — the person to whom he has spoken. He appears on the way to referring to her with a descriptor that could be either "recognitional" or "non-recognitional" (Sacks and Schegloff, 1979; Schegloff, 1996). The latter is a way of conveying that the referent is not

someone known to the interlocutor; the former is a way of conveying that the referent *is* someone known to recipient, and is known in this way (here, incipiently, *the girl* [*at whose place I was going to stay*], cf. Line 24). Neither is the preferred form of reference if recognitional reference using personal name as the reference form is possible. Charlie does eventually arrive at the preferred form of reference, but only after showing his initial mis-judgement as to which form would be appropriate for **this recipient**, a failure in interactional "calibration." 6. In such an environment one finds recipients registering their recognition of the person referred to, if there has been any problem at all in getting the reference produced properly.[5] It is notable, then, that after the reference to *Karen* is finally achieved, at line 12, there is no such mark of recognition by Ilene, though there is clearly sequential space left for one.

The trajectory just preceding the turn on which we are focussing is thus an interactionally troubled one. Charlie has not done well in measuring and designing his talk for the recipient-of-the-moment, and Ilene has shown in various ways (the wariness of her reply to inquiry at lines 7 and 9, her non-forthcoming-ness at line 12) her orientation to something problematic in the works. That there is something problematic has further been designed into the talk by the multiple delays in Charlie's launching of the talk at line 10. And now, at line 13, as he approaches the telling which he has set up by reporting that he has talked with Karen, he delays further — first with the *And um*, then with the micro-pause (marked by *(.)*), and then by the pre-assessment of what is to come: *it was really bad.*

The "what-is-to-come" comes next, and is the "complex sentence" that is our target here. It is: *because she decided of all weekends for this one to go away.* How shall we understand it? Unlike the previous instance which we examined, the eventual repair of the trouble with this utterance does not involve discarding its first part and repeating only its latter part. Rather parts of the clause in question are dropped and others are re-arranged. So let us use the speaker's display of what the reduced, "simple" version of this is, and see what had been done in the design of the more complicated first version.

First of all we may note that the *because* is dropped. It serves in the first version of this utterance as a way of linking the assessment which precedes with the bad news of which it is the assessment. These could have been two separate independent clauses: *It was really bad. She decided…* Here they are combined into a single turn-constructional unit, as a great many announcements are designed to be. Semantically this is set up as an account for why it

was really bad, but no serious causation is involved. *Because* is simply a bit of sequential glue to attach one of these units to the other. And when it needs to be repeated, and the pre-assessment is to be dropped in favor of repeating only the news that matters, the *because* goes with it. Its status as mere sequential connector is made clear.

There are three other elements of the TCU that figure in both of its incarnations: *She decided; to go away; this weekend.* In the second, reduced, "simplified" version, these elements occur in that order. If the utterance was designed to respond to the repair initiation by providing a most accessible version, this is it. Again only a few observations can be offered about each of these elements, what they might be doing and be used to do, and what deployment they are given in the "complex" first delivery of this bit of news.

She decided appears in more or less the same form (some articulatory differences aside) in the same positions. Why *she decided*? The point, as we see over the next several utterances, is that Charlie has no place to stay, and that could as well be conveyed by *She's going away this weekend.* So what is conveyed or achieved by reporting that something was *decided*?

I can do no more here than simply mention some regularities that show up when *decided* is deployed: 1) it occurs when absences and non-occurrences are being addressed (e.g. Sherrie: *You didn't get an ice cream sandwich,* Carol: *I know I decided that my body didn't need it.* (Schegloff, 1988a)); or Jim: *Didju call up the place?* Alex: *No y'know what I decided, I decided to uhm …*); 2) these absences and non-occurrences are thereby rendered not failures but intentional or motivated outcomes; 3) *decided* invokes the relevance of grounds and reasons, and these enter the talk shortly thereafter. Documentation of these and other points must be reserved to another occasion.

Here, then, Karen's *going away* is cast as a motivated action with grounds on Karen's part. They do not get taken up here, but we may hazard a guess that they were taken up in Charlie's conversation with Karen; at least this is conveyed by the form of Charlie's report.

To go away appears to be identical in its composition in both the trouble-source turn and in the repair turn, but its position is different. In the "complex" version it appears in clause-final, sentence-final, TCU-final, turn-terminal position; grammatically speaking we might say that it occurs in complement-final position, for it is the arrangement of the elements of the complement — of what it is that she decided — that is being oriented to in the design of these two versions of the utterance. But since *to go away* remains constant but the other element varies, perhaps if we can get at what is involved in the design of

the temporal reference, we will have a lead on how that might motivate the positional change.

What becomes *this weekend* in the repaired version of the turn is initially delivered as *of all weekends for this one* [to go away]. Now this form of expression — *of all X's, this one* — embodies or serves a practice of talking. What does this practice do? It appears in the first instance to be a coincidence marker. *Of all X's* can take not only *weekends* as it does here, but also a virtually limitless set of possible contextually relevant objects (*people* as in *of all people who do I run into but…*; *books* as in *of all the books left on the table what do I find but…*, etc.). Reported coincidences marked this way can be positive and reported as "happy coincidences," or negative (as in this case) where the outcome of the coincidence is negative for the parties to the interaction or for the persons being talked about. So in the trouble-source turn here the design of Charlie's turn conveys not only that *she's going away this weekend*, and not only that *she* **decided** *to go away this weekend*, but that, by an unhappy coincidence, by a stroke of bad luck, it was just this weekend, of all weekends — the one Charlie was going to stay there and therefore be able to give Ilene a ride — just this weekend that *she decided to go away*. It is, then, not something that Charlie has done or chosen to do. It is something that has happened to him, and to Ilene as well; arbitrary in its coincidental intersection with their plans, but not random, for it is the product of grounded decision by Karen.

The bottom line of the bad news here is the *going away*; that is what disables both Charlie's and Ilene's plans. It is a common observation among writers about preferred and dispreferred responses and tellings that the trouble tends to be delayed, often as long as possible, sometimes actually omitted altogether, or even eventually articulated by its recipient (Schegloff, 1988b), as indeed it is here, for the bottom line — that Charlie is not going to Syracuse this weekend — is in fact articulated not by Charlie, but by Ilene (at line 27). But what makes the import of Charlie's turn at lines 13–14 a **negative** coincidence and **bad** news is that Karen is going away, and, in the design of that turn, this piece of it is deferred to the last position.[6]

The consequence is a product whose grammar is, in vernacular terms, "complex," even convoluted. And, in grounding this claim in the conduct of the parties, we rely not so much on the judgement of its recipient, who after all only says *what?*, but of its speaker, who understands that, in order to deal with this call to address the trouble, what must be fixed is the arrangement of the parts of the utterance. What he does is simplification of what seems rendered by contrast to have been "complex."

4.   Conclusion

Although almost certainly not "complex" in any recognizable, technical linguistic sense, that term does not seem out of order for the "sentences" to which we have given special attention here. Whatever linguistic terminology would be most felicitously used to characterize and/or explain what has been done to make these sentences seem complex, they do seem to have given their interlocutors trouble, and that trouble has seemed to their speakers repairable by simplification. We would do well to take seriously the possibility that the complexity of such sentences is the product of practices for managing interactional exigencies, and when those practices conflict with ordinary grammatical practice in a fashion which goes beyond harnessing grammar to familiar pragmatic contexts and purposes, the grammatical may yield to the interactional, and the sentences appear to depart from the "normative" configuration, in a vernacular sense. But here, as elsewhere, disturbances at the surface of the talk should alert us, as they alert the co-participants, to attend to the interactional projects and contingencies which the language is being deployed to work through.

Notes

* This essay displays another facet of the relationship of grammar and interaction underlying the volume *Interaction and Grammar*, edited by Ochs, Schegloff and Thompson (1996), to the last of whom — Sandy Thompson — it is dedicated for her sustained fostering of this relationship since we were colleagues at UCLA starting some 25 years ago. This chapter draws on research supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant #BNS 87–20388.

1. Compare, for example, one young woman's question to another, *What's the matter with you, you sound happy,* which constructs the question in a manner which alludes to the stance that the recipient is always "down" and perhaps even always complaining. For further discussion of the context of this utterance, cf. Schegloff, frth a. (Available in German as Schegloff, 2000b.)

2. Clift appears to be dealing with British English, but many of her findings (this one included) pertain to American English as well. See also Clift 2001.

3. The imputation of intent ("Charlie has called to tell Ilene…") is grounded in the achieved design of the overall structural organization of the conversation, with the telling of the trouble occupying "first topic" position, canonically the site for the reason for the call (Sacks, 1992a: 773–79; Schegloff, 1986). Other discussions of this particular conversation, though not of this exchange in it, may be found in Drew, 1984 and Heritage, 1984.

4. In qualification of the suggestion in the text that Charlie's start of the reason for the call is preemptive, it should be noted that this in-breath does afford Ilene a place in which she could have launched a reciprocal *how are you* sequence, had she moved to do so. But her *Good* at line 9 does convey a wary orientation to what this call is about; it is that which I take Charlie's laugh tokens to be registering; and it is that which he may be responsive to in proceeding here to the reason for the call, and that which underlies the absence of a reciprocal *how are you* from Ilene.

5. For example:

    (a)   TG, 6:1–3
     1   Bee: nYeeah, ˙hh This feller I have-(nn)/(iv-)"felluh"; this
     2   ma:n. (0.2) t! ˙hhh He ha::(s)- uff-eh-who-who I have fer
     3   Linguistics [is real   ]ly too much, ˙hh[h=   ]
     4   Ava: [Mm hm?]   [Mm [hm,]

Ava's first *mm hm* is positioned just where Bee has finally achieved the person reference she is trying to articulate — in this case, a recognitional description only in the sense that this person has been referred to earlier the conversation, though Ava does not otherwise know him.

6. And may I note one other consequence of its final positioning. It enables the rhyming relationship between *she decided of all weekends fuh this one to go away* and the subsequent *So that yihknow I really don't have a place tuh stay*, which might have been consecutive lines, were it not for the repair sequence at lines 16–19 which intervenes. Though this may seem to some to be too remote and improbable to be taken seriously, I call attention to such work on the poetics of ordinary conversation, or what might be termed "vernacular poetics" as that of Sacks, 1973, 1992b: 261–8, 291–335, 396–401, 419–36, et passim; Jefferson, 1996; and Schegloff, frth b, and various work in progress.

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