Open Research Online

A pragmatics of intimacy

Journal Item

oro.open.ac.uk

The pragmatics of intimacy

Rosina Marquez-Reiter, David M. Frohlich

University of Surrey

Abstract

This study examines the ways in which multiple modern communication technologies facilitate, across time and space, the maintenance of a close interpersonal relationship between two best friends. The analysis, which focuses mainly on the openings and closings of the different types of communications, reveals a tendency for the friends to shorten openings and extend closings. However, this is possible only if the friends are fully aware of, and care about, the practical, social and emotional details of each other's lives during periods of absence. The concomitant linguistic behaviours in their interpersonal interactions could be described as a kind of pragmatics of intimacy which cannot be achieved without the explicit and practical demonstration of that mutual care and concern.

Key words: intimacy, technologies of mediation, interactional presence, interactional absence, openings, closeness.

1.   Introduction

The development of personal and social relationships is enabled by language and enacted through social contact. Two basic properties of relationships have challenged social scientists since the beginning of research on this topic. First, the quality of a relationship is difficult to define, measure, and understand, yet lies at the heart of any attempt to model or improve it (e.g. Reis & Patrick 1996). Second, the maintenance of a relationship is actively achieved through social interaction yet often persists in the absence of interaction when partners are 'a-part' (e.g. Dindia 2003,

Sahlstein 2004, Rosewarne 2016). This is a puzzle not only for studies of relationships but also for theories of social life more generally. As pointed out by Giddens (1984:35): "[T]he fundamental question of social theory… is to explicate how the limitations of individual 'presence' are transcended by the 'stretching' of social relations across time and space". Similarly, Sigman (1991) maintains that "social relationships are defined by and organized around the related spatiotemporal features of interactional co-presence and interactional absence" (p.110).

This question is complicated further by the growth of modern communication technologies which allow for 'perpetual contact' between people (Katz &Aakhus 2002), relationship maintenance through multiple media (Baym, Zhang & Lin 2004; Madianou & Miller 2012) and the feeling of continuous 'connected' presence (Liccope 2004). New forms of messaging and mobile communication enable partners to contact each other more frequently and more continuously than ever before; creating new means of engagement which, in turn, impact on the quality and maintenance of their relationships.

In this article we examine the way in which two close friends re-establish their relationship through modern communication technology, namely SMS, Instant Messaging, E-mail, landline and mobile calls. More precisely, we examine the way in which intimacy is achieved in the openings and closings of their technology mediated interactions before and after periods of interactional absence, with particular attention to the semiotic resources mobilised to construct such activities and how these, in turn signal the quality of their relationship. Our focus on the openings and closings responds to the potential social import of these activities in reconstructing relationships. According to Schegloff (1979),"[T]he opening is a place where the type of conversation being opened can be proffered, displayed, accepted, rejected, modified – in short, incipiently constituted by the parties to it" (p. 25). Thus, the opening represents a locally situated interactional activity where the relationship between the participants is mutually reconstituted. Similarly, the closing is a place in the conversation where agendas or programmes subsequent to

the closing may be established (Sigman 1991). Closings are, thus, places where participants mutually establish the duration of their interactional absence and the time and circumstances of their next co-presence. In long term relationships, interactions themselves can be seen as turns in an ongoing dialogue punctuated by 'pauses' of minutes, hours or days (Frohlich 1994). Heralding the likely duration of such intervals in closings, and picking up topics where they were last left off in openings is therefore of particular importance to the maintenance of these relationships.

The article also explores the extent to which the affordance of the media chosen to interact with one another impacts on activity construction and resource mobilisation. With this in mind, the article aims to contribute to research into the way in which people in close interpersonal relationships maintain and lubricate their ties in their everyday encounters by providing an interactional perspective of their communications across media and time. It also seeks to add knowledge to the existing body of research into the use of technology in everyday life by shedding some light on the way in which different communication channels enable or constrain the expression of intimacy.

2.   Related work

There is a large body of theory and research on the quality of relationships, in particular on closeness and intimacy. Despite burgeoning interest in the subject (e.g. Mashek & Aron 2004; Miller, Perlman & Brehm 2007), a clear definition of these concepts, their relationship and how they should be examined has not yet emerged.

Closeness is referred to as a general pattern of relationship interdependence and intimacy as specific to social interaction (e.g. Collins & Feeney 2004). Closeness is the extent to which partners are cognitively (e.g. inclusion of the other in the self), emotionally (e.g. strength of influence on one another) and behaviourally (e.g. density of interaction) interdependent with one

another. On the other hand, intimacy - whether primarily conceptualised as a quality of a relationship (e.g. Laurenceau, Rivera, Schaffer & Pietromonaco 2004; Sexton & Sexton 1982), as an ability that rests within an individual (e.g. Weingarten 1991) or as an experience lived in a particular moment of a relationship (e.g. Taylor & Ferguson 1980; Warin 2005) - is understood as primarily belonging to the realm of social interaction. Thus, closeness appears to be understood as indicative of the quality of the relationship and intimacy of the activities participants engage in to maintain closeness.

Reis & Shaver (1988) explain that intimacy is an interpersonal transactional process comprising self-disclosure and partner responsiveness. It is 'the sequential unfolding of relevant thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, each of which is influenced by antecedent conditions and anticipated consequences' Reis & Patrick (1996:524). Although self-disclosure is a central component of all the descriptions of intimacy that have been put forward, not all types of self-discourse may index intimacy or for that matter occur in close relationships (e.g. Márquez Reiter 2005).

Intimacy is, thus, a social phenomenon constructed through the process of interaction and largely shaped by the actual or anticipated responses of others (Clancy 2016, Kaplan 2005, Weingarten 1991). The studies conducted into intimacy indicate that it is more likely to emerge in close rather than distant relationships and that immediate reciprocity may become less important as relationships grow (Perlman and Fehr 1987). However, empirical studies which support the view that intimacy is principally constructed at the level of interaction have mainly relied on self-reports, interaction diaries and clinical research (e.g. Laurenceau, Feldman, Barrett & Pietromonaco 1998; Reis & Patrick 1996).

Naturalistic interactions between participants in intimate relationships have been examined with a view to shedding light on different aspects of gender talk. Prominent examples can be found in Fishman's studies (1978, 1980) of the work that women do interactionally, including their use

of linguistic features typically associated with insecurity and powerlessness vis á vis those deployed by men; DeFrancisco (1991) on how men silence women; Piller (2002) on the actualization of ideologies of gender, nationality and immigration in bilinguals couple-talk; and, Knobloch & Solomon (2003) on the way couples characterise their own relationship in conversation with each other.

Research has, however, omitted to look at the enactment of intimacy between participants in close interpersonal relationships through the unfolding of naturalistic dyadic communications over media and time. The article, thus, concentrates on the naturalistic technology mediated communications between two friends over a two-week period. Its focus, thus, goes beyond the current interaction to those which occurred before and after in order to make sense of the information shared by the participants and shed light on how co-present and mediated encounters reactive, reaffirm and reconfigure the participants' relationship.

Relatedly, conversation analytic studies have examined how such interactions, albeit not necessarily between couples or close friends, unfold sequentially over time. Drew and Chilton (2000) analysed a corpus of weekly phone calls between a mother and her adult daughter to keep in touch with one another. They found that one recurrent activity in the openings was the formulation of inquiries regarding what had happened to each other on personal topics mentioned in their last conversation – thereby demonstrating intimacy and care. In a précis of research into the use of domestic and mobile phones, Liccope (2004) noted that frequency and continuity of contact between close friends and family members over the phone counts at least as much if not more than what is actually said as it signals mutual engagement, 'connected presence' and brings to the fore the continuity of the relationship. A recent study of mobile phone calls between friends and couples revealed further opportunities for demonstrating intimacy while on the move (Arminen & Weilenmann 2009). Participants were found to recruit their telephone partners into their own mundane activities as and when they happened, or were themselves recruited, through

'seductive place formulations' aimed at making the socio-emotional and symbolic qualities of the place relationally relevant, routine check-up calls and other mechanisms. .

In contrast to the above work on spoken conversations and intimacy, studies of computer mediated communication (CMC) have looked at the use of individual messaging systems such as email, SMS and instant messaging, and their interplay in working contexts. Although few of them have addressed the issue of intimacy itself, a number of findings are relevant to longer term mechanisms of relationship maintenance. For example, in a classic study of instant messaging, Nardi, Whittaker & Bradner (2000) showed its usefulness for maintaining awareness of the activities of remote partners, negotiating availability to communicate and coordinating synchronous interactions. They refer to these as forms of 'outeraction' to distinguish them from 'interaction' usually considered to involve substantive information exchange. Related forms of exchanges and presence information have also been observed in social SMS message series (Spagnolli & Gamberini 2007). Participants have also been shown to adjust their responsiveness to email based on their understanding of the activities of their partners. For example, email threads often took place *peri-synchronously* in near-real time and resolved themselves within the same day, or were delayed to take account of working and sleeping patterns of international colleagues (Tyler & Tang 2003). In all these cases, individual media are used to share presence information about the ongoing activity of partners, and coordinate communication in the same or other media.

The difficulty of maintaining multiple relationships over time and media has been identified in studies of informal workplace communication. Early studies began to notice an overlap between personal and work-oriented communications at work, and the importance of sustaining long term personal relationships with work colleagues (Kraut, Fish, Root & Chalfonte 1990). The true complexity of this situation was revealed in one of our own studies where all the workplace interactions of two mobile professionals over one week were recorded (Frohlich 1995, Whittaker, Frohlich & Daly-Jones 1994). Participants were found to interact with over 100

interactants each across seven different media including face-to-face meetings, phone calls, fax, email, voicemail, letters and note exchange. This made it difficult for participants to keep track of commitments made in individual encounters and to manage interpersonal relationships at work. These appeared to be maintained through very long term 'conversations' comprising 'turns' in individual media exchanges or events, and governed by unknown rules of what we called interaction management (Frohlich 1994). Follow-up work by Whittaker and colleagues identified further properties of interaction or contact management (their term) and designed an alternative social desktop interface to documents called ContactMap (Whittaker, Jones & Terveen 2002). This was subsequently built and tested by AT&T Labs and heralded further interest in visualising social networks and communication patterns as a means of managing multiple relationships explicitly (e.g. Begole, Tang & Hill 2003, Fisher & Dourish 2004). These findings flag up the importance of personal relationship maintenance in cross-media communication, but fail to show how people are achieving it today across the plethora of contemporary communication channels open to them. The current study addresses this issue by recording new data from close pairs of participants (i.e. dyads), tracking their contiguous communications across whatever media they use to interact over a two to four week period.

3.   Background and methods

The data used in the current paper were collected in 2007 as part of a research project between British Telecommunications plc (BT) and the Digital World Research Centre with a view to understanding how individuals communicate across contemporary media. Despite the age of the data corpus, it covers an array of communication channels as chosen by the participants themselves: face-to-face interactions, handwritten notes, landline and mobile calls, voicemail, SMS, Instant Messaging, E-mail and social networking sites (i.e. Facebook).[1] A total of 499

communications were collected from eight participating pairs of people in close relationships. Each pair gave informed consent to recording their communication in the following way, and all data were anonymised and handled under ethical approval from the University of Surrey's ethic's committee.

The participants were volunteers who responded to adverts seeking pairs of people who communicated with each other more than ten times a week using four or more communication methods. The relationships between the pairs included best friends (5 pairs), partners (2 pairs), and parent and adult offspring (1 pair). The youngest participants were in their mid-teens and the oldest participant was in her fifties. There were all female, all male and mixed sex pairs. All pairs of participants consented to self-recording all interactions between each other for a limited period of about 2 weeks. This was done through a variety of methods specific to each medium of communication. They used a hand held digital recorder to record all telephone calls and voicemail messages (using an in-ear microphone), face-to-face interaction, and also to make voice notes about their communication and social network activities. Email messages, SMS messages and IM transcripts were forwarded to the researchers. Handwritten communications were kept by the receiver and handed in at the end of the data collection period.

An initial study examined the patterns of communication involved in communicating availability and capability to communicate (Land, Lumkin & Frohlich 2008). The present study draws on some of the same data to offer new insights on relationship maintenance. Specifically, it examines the enactment of intimacy in the openings and closings of the mediated interactions between two best friends: Cassy and Georgina on the basis of their 51 self-recorded technology mediated communications. They entail 26 SMS, 10 e-mails, 6 landline calls, 3 mobile calls, 5 Instant Messaging conversations and 1 Facebook message. The distribution of these communications over time is shown in Figure 1. This shows that contact between the women was frequent, and typified by patterns of interaction repeating over the recording period. In fact, both

women worked together, sharing a lift to work at the beginning and end of the day. This is shown by phone calls to synchronise lifts, face to face conversations in the car and at work, and intermittent emails, SMS text messages and phone calls to keep in touch in and out of work.
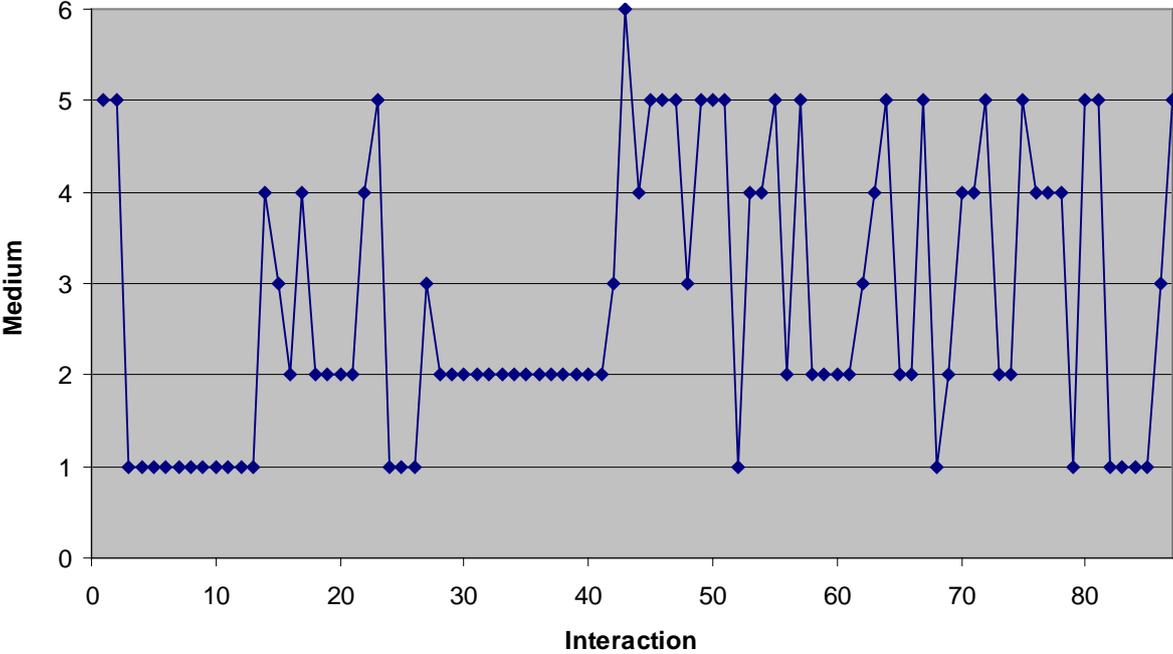

Figure 1. The distribution of cross-media communications between Georgina and Cassy over 16 days (Key to medium: 1=email, 2=SMS, 3=IM, 4=Phone, 5=Face-to-face, 6=Facebook)

The content of some of the communications between Georgina and Cassy provide us with some information about their relationship which can helps us with the interpretation of the data. They live close to each other and work in different buildings at the same organisation. They share a parking permit and drive to work together. Their working times are flexible so that they constantly need to arrange times of going to and back from work. Even trips which are not done together make it necessary to ensure that the person driving into work is in possession of the parking permit. Co-ordinating this activity requires ongoing communication. Despite the fact that much of Georgina's and Cassy's interaction takes place for practical reasons, the frequency with which and the way in which they communicate, as well as the extent to which they keep each other

informed about the activities they engage in throughout the day, show that they are very close friends.

According to their recorded interactions, landline calls are made during work hours from the office and mobile ones are made outside office hours. Mobile phones are also used to make calls at home, while instant messaging and e-mails are exchanged exclusively at work. The use of text messages is least predictable in terms of both time and place.

4.   Analysis

We analyse the way in Georgina and Cassy enact intimacy with one another by turning our attention to the "transitions from and to co-present and non-co-present engagements" (Sigman 1991: 111). With this in mind, we focus on the openings and closings of their communications.

The analysis of these locally situated activities enables us to examine how interactional absences are dealt with and how the status of the relationship is reaffirmed every time communication is resumed and temporarily brought to an end. Moreover, the fact that the data has been recorded across time, allows us to explore the way in which the communications are timed and linked with each other. The openings and closings not only point to previous and future interactions but also reflect the speakers' shared knowledge, their shared activities and the quality of their relationship.

The first part of the analysis deals with the openings of their communications and the second with the closings. In both cases we start with their asynchronous communications and then turn our attention to their synchronous interactions.

4.1 Openings

Our data show that asynchronous communications, namely SMSs, e-mails and Facebook messages exchanged between these close friends are less likely to contain an opening compared with synchronous communications, such as phone calls and Instant Messaging. One of the reasons why they tend to start in medias res is that many of them constitute a response to a previous SMS or e-mail – but also to earlier synchronous communications.

4.1.1 Asynchronous Communications: E-mail and SMS

Interestingly, the only e-mail between Georgina and Cassy which does include a greeting formula is one that Cassy sends in order to add something to a previous e-mail she had sent only five minutes earlier. The first sentence of this email runs: "Ooh, hello, just one more quick thing..." (C.4: 02/05/07, 08:38). In this case, saying "hello" prefaced by the particle 'Ooh' function as a means of reopening the communication channel which had been closed only a few minutes ago. This is further evidenced by the content of the topic projection which makes reference to their prior e-mail and thus explicitly connects the current encounter with the previous one.

All remaining emails start in medias res, while also constituting a continuation of previous interactions. Similarly to the above quoted message, e-mails may be written as an addition to a previous communication. One of the emails following a face-to-face communication, for instance, starts with: "P.s. did I forget to say I'm SO HUNGRY"(C.3: 02/05/07, 08:33). It then goes on to explain that the sender would have to wait for her breakfast for 58 minutes. The reply to this e-mail was sent only 13 minutes later and it begins with the words: "58mins!!! That's a hell of a long wait for breakfast!!" (C.5: 02/05/07, 08:46), thus constituting an immediate continuation of the conversation initiated in the P.S. of the preceding e-mail. It reflects how the participants update each other on their current or planned activities throughout the day as a way of sharing their experiences while a-part.

11

The SMS messages exchanged between Georgina and Cassy are more likely to contain an opening element than the e-mails they write to each other, especially if they initiate a sequence of messages. Eight of the 26 text messages contain a greeting formula, such as "Hey honey!" (e.g. C.36: 07/05/07, 22:44), and four of these messages constitute the first communication of the day. Two of the remaining four text messages that include a greeting formula were sent on a Sunday evening after a weekend during which Cassy and Georgina had not seen each other. Another SMS with an opening that runs "Hello little slacker!"(C.16: 02/05/07, 16:55) was sent after a missed call, an unsuccessful attempt at communicating via instant messaging and a failed meeting. Hence, the use of greeting formulae in text messages in our data can be linked with the first encounter within a series of interactions and with what for Georgina and Cassy constitutes a long phase of interactional absence and, in turn, to their expectations of continuous co-presence (i.e. "Hello little slacker!").

Openings are more frequent in text than in e-mails. The reason for this may reside in the fact that e-mails are written in the office, that is, during institutional time while using the technology for work related purposes. Furthermore, they are composed after some type of communication had already taken place between the two friends. Text messages, on the other hand, are primarily sent in the evenings and weekends, that is, during private rather than institutional time. Still, the majority of SMSs start in medias res, even if they do not constitute responses to previous messages. An SMS saying "Just leaving!xxx" (C.56: 11/05/07, 08:59), for instance, was the first form of communication in the morning. It confirms and updates an arrangement made the day before. At the same time, it refers to a recurrent activity of meeting in the morning in order to drive to work together and what is expected from one another in the relationship. It also links their interactional absence with an imminent presence. The inclusion of multiple kisses "xxx" demonstrates affectivity and signals the close bond between the participants.

"Fuck me that was bad!" (C.58: 12/05/07, 21:37) is the beginning of another SMS sent during the weekend, with no previous communication for at least 36 hours. What makes such an introduction of a text message possible and understandable to the recipient is that the two friends know what they are both doing at the time of sending the message, namely watching a TV programme, on which the above quotation comments, as evidenced by content of the follow up message where it becomes obvious that they are both watching "The Apprentice".

The only Facebook message found in the data runs "Just to keep you going until I give you Heat magazine tomorrow! x xx" (C.43: 08/05/07, 14:43), which is a comment on a link to a webpage included in the message. Again, this communication starts in medias res. It not only refers to a previous communication without which it is not understandable, but also points to a future communication, with the Facebook message functioning as an element bridging the gap between these two and between interactional absence and presence.

4.1.2 Synchronous Communications: Landline Calls

An important property of synchronous communications distinguishing them from asynchronous communications is that for the former to take place, both speakers need to be present and available to each other at a given time. While SMS and e-mail communications, in which the "constraint of mutual attentiveness is absent" (Licoppe 2004: 137), can be responded to at a time convenient for the recipient, when making a phone call one needs to take into account that it can be ill-timed or that it may not be answered by the intended recipient. These additional considerations are reflected in the openings of synchronous communications.

The telephone conversations that take place between Cassy and Georgina over the landline are all made while they are at work, as evidenced by the content of their communications. This means that it is not entirely unlikely that the person called might not be able to answer the phone

or have time to talk. The openings of the landline conversations between Cassy and Georgina suggest that the work phones they are using do not display the name or number of the caller. Nearly all of the openings include a sequence devoted to self-identification and / or recognition, as illustrated by the following fragment of a call made by Georgina towards the end of a day spent at work (C.53: 10/05/07, 16:42 - 2min 53sec):

```
01    Cas:    lo
02    Geo:    Hey Cassyit's Georgina
03    Cas:    Hello.= are you [alri:ght
04    Geo:                    [(Hello)
05    Geo:    Yeah I'm good thank you. uhm:: (.) how are you
06            with time.
```

The transcript begins with a cut-off answer to a summons in line 01, followed by recognition and self-identification uttered by Georgina in line 02. In line 03 Cassy returns the greeting. In doing so, mutual recognition and ratified participation is established. This is followed by the first part of a 'how are you' exchange, to which Georgina provides second pair parts in lines 04 and 05 before she proffers the reason for the call.

The above fragment shows that both participants primarily orient to the purpose of the call, as observed in the slightly condensed structure of the opening (cf. Schegloff 1986) where the greeting and 'how are you' turns are interlocked (line 03) and produced in one breath. The "hello" in line 04 is somewhat rushed and directly followed by the second pair part to the 'how are you' and, after some hesitation, with a turn construction unit introducing the purpose of the call. Notwithstanding the frequency of contact between the participants and the fact that the call in question is made to coordinate the time when they will both leave work and share a ride home and, thus, possibly expected, the participants engage in relationally oriented sequences which, strictly

speaking, are unnecessary to get the business done (i.e. coordinate the time of the ride home). Arguably, their presence displays affectivity.

While previous research has shown that extended 'how are you' sequences in call openings between close people can signal involvement and encourage greater intimacy (e.g. Pavlidou 2002: 201), all the call openings in our data tend to follow the same pattern, with the 'how are you' turn being responded to but not reciprocated. Instead, having completed all the communicative tasks associated with an everyday call, the caller moves onto reason for the call. This is probably because of the frequency of contact between the participants whereby intimacy is not merely enacted by the presence of interpersonally oriented elements or the display of affectivity but also by the frequency with which they seek to interact with one another.

It seems that the main function of the above call opening is to confirm that everything is going as planned. However, although Georgina and Cassy call each other nearly every afternoon in order to decide when they will go back home, most of these calls contain a turn combining a turn construction unit devoted to recognition of the person called with another turn construction unit in which the caller provides self-identification. Since Georgina recognises Cassy from the minimal voice sample she provides in the answer to the summons, Cassy can be expected to recognise Georgina on the basis of her recognition turn. The addition of a self-identification turn seems even more superfluous if one considers that this telephone call represents a recurrent activity and occurs at a time when it is expected. It is therefore feasible to suggest that the self-identification turn performs a different function, namely as a device foreshadowing the purpose of the call.

While in some of the landline call openings the self-identification following the recognition takes the form of the more personal "it's me", in the following fragment (C.63: 14/05/07, 17:47 - 1min 34sec) the caller does not produce an identification sequence. Instead recognition is interlocked with the first pair of the how are you exchange following the greeting:

```
01          Ring-
02   Geo:   Hello
03   Cas:   Hello. how you do:i[ng
04   Geo:                    [hey Cassy I'm munching
05          on [tchtuhmHaribo which- they probably=
06   Cas:      [huh huh
07   Geo:   =make you go [(              ) huh huhhuh
08   Cas:                [Hwooo don't do that huh huh
09          [huh huhhuhhuhhuhhuhhuhhuh
10   Geo:   [No(h)t rea(h)lly huh huh (        ) I need
11          a sugar rush
12   Cas:   Hah how's it goi:ng
13   Geo:   Yeah oka:y. c[rap]
```

This landline call opening differs from the remaining ones in that Cassy skips the turn identifying the addressee and herself. Instead, she produces a greeting and the first pair part of a how are you exchange (i.e. "how you doing") in line 03, to which Georgina does not respond canonically either. With "Hey Cassy" in line 04, Georgina returns the greeting. Arguably, the inclusion of her best friend's name (i.e. "Cassy") pushes the caller into recipiency before she announces the activity that she is currently engaged in (i.e. "munching a Haribo"). This, in turn, enhances the participants' perspective boundness given that the channel of communication chosen on this occasion does not afford access to visual information.

While the first apparent reason why this topic is introduced is to account for her changed voice quality, another reason, indicating that the topic needs to be discussed further, is provided in lines 10 to 11. The initial explanation, however, is first responded to by laughter in line 06, which is then followed by jokes and further affiliative laughter in lines 07 to 10. Unfortunately, the joke made by Georgina is not audible due to the laughter, but ultimately she ends the joke by saying "not really." Having dismissed her joking explanation, she provides another explanation for the topic introduced in lines 04 to 05, now stating that the reason for munching Haribo is that she needs a sugar rush (line 11). In line 12 Cassy responds with a "Hah" signalling understanding of

her friend's feelings, followed by a re-formulation of the 'how are you' sequence as "how's it going," thus showing that she is open to the topic and offering Georgina the opportunity to talk about her problems.

The announcement of the topic of munching a Haribo becomes a secondary shared activity between the participants. It begins in line 04 and is resolved in line 12 with Cassy's reformulation of the 'how are you'. It marks the participants' engagement in a side sequence whereby aspects of the context in which the main business in hand is getting done are formulated (McHoul et al 2007). Essentially, the main business of keeping in touch with each other and, thus, lubricating their interpersonal ties finds resonance in Georgina's comment as to the need for a sugar rush which, by inference, underlies the fact that she is tired or down. Support for this can be found in Georgina's response to Cassy's reformulation of the 'how are you'. At line 13 she explicitly displays her animic state with an extreme expression (Pomerantz 1986) (i.e. "crap") indexing affectivity. Drawing on Reis& Shaver (1988), this constitutes an instance of self-disclosure and partner responsiveness.

These two examples of landline openings illustrate the function of the 'how are you' sequence in Georgina and Cassy's conversations. While the calls they make from work have primarily a practical purpose, by asking 'how are you' these friends check on each other's situation, thus making sure that possible problems or obstacles to further arrangements are dealt with first. Depending on the situation, the 'how are you' sequence is treated either as a phatic formula or as an invitation to share some recent information and fill the other person in on the current situation. The attentiveness to the other person's well-being and the openness to each other's problems, making sure that whatever is occupying the other person's mind is shared and dealt with together are indicative of the friends' close relationship.

While this is the only landline call that does not abide by the pattern established for phone call openings, the mobile phone call openings found in the data all depart from it. The main

difference between the landline calls discussed above and calls made between mobiles phones is that the latter display the name of the caller (or the owner of the telephone who is assumed to be the caller), which makes conversational turns devoted to identification superfluous (see Arminen 2005 and Hutchby & Barnett 2005 for a discussion).

4.1.3 Synchronous Communications: 'Mobile' Calls

The data for this study comprises three mobile phone calls. In one of them it is difficult to ascertain the location of the caller, an aspect that has been shown to impact on the structure of the activities the participants engage in (e.g. Liccope & Morel 2010), including those typically accomplished in the openings. When mobile phones first appeared, some features of mobile calls were established pertaining to their "contextual configuration" (Arminen&Weilenmann 2009). An important feature of mobile call openings identified by previous research is that unlike landline phones, the location of mobile phones cannot be predicted by the caller.

As mobile phone costs decreased and companies began to offer free minutes to their customers, mobile phones began to be used as a substitute of landline phones. The following transcript presents the opening of a phone call in which both speakers use mobile phones while they are at home (C.17: 02/05/07, 21:15 - 8min 53sec):

```
01            Ring-ring ring-ring ring-
02    Cas:    You're fired
03    Geo:    Huh huhhuhhhhell[o:: huh huhhuh
04    Cas:                    [Huhhuhhuhhuh
05    Cas:    [Hel(huh)lo ar(h)e y(h)ou al(h)right]
06    Geo:    [Huhhuhhuhhuhhuhhuhhuhhuhhuh] I (huh) do(h)n't
07            £want to be fired£ huh huh
08    Cas:    £You're not really£
09    Geo:    Huh huhphe(h)w .hhhhh hello.=I'm very sorry to call you
10            during the Apprentice and I'm very sorry to have not
11            replied to your message
```

Even though this call is not a call while the participants, or at least one of them, is on the move as it takes place while both participants are at home, thus demonstrating the pervasiveness of the medium. The opening deviates from the pattern established on the basis of landline call openings. Cassy's answer to the summons in line 02("You're fired") shows that she knows the identity of the caller as she picks up the phone. The technical feature of displaying the caller's identity not only makes conversational turns devoted to recognition and self-identification redundant, but also allows for formulating a response tailored towards the caller. Answering a phone call with "You're fired" presupposes knowledge about the caller in that it predicts the activities that the caller will be engaged in at the time and anticipates her reaction to it. The participants' mobilisation of humour and laughter underlies their close interpersonal bond.

As can be derived from Georgina's response in lines 09-10, this phrase seems to be a joke alluding to the TV program Cassy's currently watching. This joke opening the conversation is followed by a pair of greetings in lines 03 and 05, which are accompanied by laughter.Cassy's 'how are you' in 05 gets the sequence back on the track of the opening, but it does not receive a second pair part from Georgina; instead the joke is brought to an end in lines 06-09. Through the catchphrase of 'The Apprentice' (i.e. 'You're fired'), Georgina expresses her wish to revert to the status of the relationship prior to her faux pas and Cassy offers her reassurance (line 08). In a sequence closing third packaged with laughter and an expression of relief ('Huh huhphe(h)w', line 09), Georgina ascertains her friend's animic state and re-establishes the anchor position to launch into the reason for the call. She does so by expressing relief with final intonation contour followed by some hesitation and the uttering of "hello" with final intonation contour. She thus signals topic boundness and in latch offers the reason for the call.

Georgina apologises for disturbing Cassy during a TV program and for not having replied to her previous message. At the same time, this conversational turn can be viewed as referring back to Cassy's opening turn and treating it as a complaint on two different levels. Georgina's first

apology for calling at an inconvenient time not only displays an understanding of Cassy's joke, but also of her habits and daily schedule. Simultaneously, her second apology for not responding to a text message that was sent slightly over four hours prior to the call justifies a call interrupting the programme.

On the whole, this call opening illustrates the closeness of their relationship. Georgina's re-opening of the conversation indicates her understanding of her friend's needs and her willingness to attend to them and to maintain their friendship. Moreover, the original opening of the conversation relies on background knowledge they share, enabling them to make and understand this type of jokes. At the same time, the above fragment shows that new communication technologies can be viewed as a means of increasing intimacy in that they provide the right environmental conditions for jokes of this sort to be performed. Additionally, the offence to which the apology refers to demonstrates the closeness of their relationship and each other's expectations of contact with one another. The apology itself was triggered by the proffering of a joke and by a four hour lapse in the communication between the two friends. That such a period of time had elapsed without a response becomes noticeable and Georgina's lack of response accountable for not keeping in touch with Cassy to show that she is thinking of her while physically apart. In sum, not responding to a text message symbolises disconnection during periods of interactional absence and hence less emotional involvement, therein lies the offence.

The main purpose of this call was to arrange the travel to work the following day. It concludes with Georgina and Cassy agreeing to meet the next morning at the university so that Georgina, who plans to go into university earlier, can give Cassy the parking permit. This communication is followed by four text messages referring to the TV program they both seem to be watching after the call. These are then followed by a quick mobile call which takes place the next morning and is made by Georgina who is in her car, while Cassy is in her office (C.22: 03/05/07, 09:47 - 30sec):

```
01          Ring, ring-ring, ring-ring
02   Cas:   Hello
03   Geo:   Hello good morning darling. I'm parked outside in
04          front of Polly.
05           (.)
06   Cas:   Oh fantastic. I will come right out and (.) deliver
07          you with the goods.
```

The first sequence type of summons and answer (lines 01-02) is followed by Georgina's greeting and stating location (lines 03-04). While the greeting is accomplished with saying hello, the phrase "good morning darling" is an optional expansion of the greeting. While "good morning" marks the communication as the first one of the day, the address form "darling" adds an intimate note to the greeting. This additional greeting as well as Cassy's enthusiastic uptake "Oh fantastic" can be interpreted as tokens of extra attention indicating that the friends are pleased to hear each other.

Cassy's uptake is followed by a turn construction unit describing future actions (lines 06-07) agreed in the previous call. An interesting feature of this call is that even though it constitutes the first communication of the day, its function is to finalise arrangements made during previous interaction. Hence, the purpose of the call does not become apparent to the analyst from what is said in lines 03-04, nor from the uptake in 06-07. The interpretation of this conversation can only be accomplished in the larger context of the ongoing communication between Georgina and Cassy. At the same time, this call reflects the closeness of their relationship, the way in which their lives are intertwined and their shared knowledge and understanding that facilitates communication.

These two 'mobile' calls we examined are characterised by a reduced opening sequence. On the one hand, this is due to technological features of mobile (and also many landline) phones making turns devoted to identification redundant. On the other hand, both openings refer to a previous interaction and previously made arrangements. They reflect a high degree of both speakers' awareness of the other person's availability and the activities they are engaging in at the time of the call.

4.1.4 Synchronous Communications: Instant Messaging

Instant messaging (IM) is another form of synchronous communication used by Cassy and Georgina during the day while they are in the office. While establishing the identity of the participants is redundant in this medium, establishing the availability of the other person is a recurrent element of the openings of IM communications.

IM communications are similar to e-mails in that they consist of written messages directed to a specific addressee. Unlike e-mails these written messages require an immediate response and span over a series of responses. Hence, the person initiating an IM communication does not need to identify the recipient of the first message, nor is there any need for self-introduction as the identity of the messenger is automatically conveyed. However, although being online and having an IM application switched on requires the user to state their availability, signalling availability to a potentially high number of connected users who may be online at the same time is problematic. As Georgina and Cassy use IM while they are at work, being contacted by an unpredictable number of people is even less desirable. Hence, an element characterising the openings of their IM communications is establishing the availability of the person who might appear online as busy or absent, but be available to particular people, as in the following communication (C.42: 08/05/2007, 13:39 to 14:00).

```
01 13:38:58      Cassy      Hello hello, are you hiding?
02  13:39:42     Georgina   hehe
03  13:39:43     Georgina   yep
04  13:39:47     Georgina   hello angel
05  13:39:51     Georgina   how aeya
06  13:39:57     Cassy      Ha, I'm wise to yur tricks now!
07  13:40:04     Georgina   :D
08 13:40:08      Cassy      hehe
09  13:40:17     Cassy      Good thanks honey, how's your day been?
```

```
10  13:40:24      Georgina    ok ta
11  13:40:34      Georgina    not really done any work yet tho
```

Basically, the first turn of an IM communication can be treated as a summons. It can be ignored – just as the ringing of a phone. In the above opening, the summons takes the form of two greeting formulae and an inquiry about Georgina's status which seems to be showing as 'absent.' Cassy's guess that Georgina may be hiding is confirmed by her response. Again, irrespective of the contents of the first response to a first IM message, this response functions primarily as an answer to the summons. However, Georgina's response is delivered after a long pause of 44 seconds which is presumably the time taken for her to notice the incoming text from Cassy. The fact that her response is in four parts may also indicate failure to attract Cassy's immediate attention: after laughter in line 02, confirmation in line 03, greeting in line 04 and a 'how are you' in line 05. The beginning of IM sequences may be delayed in this way until mutual attention and full synchronicity is established over the channel.

Cassy does not provide a second pair part to the greeting in line 06, which might suggest that the greeting formulae she used in line 01 has already fulfilled this function. Before she responds to the 'how are you' in line 09, she comments on Georgina's hiding strategy in line 06, to which both respond with (indication of) affiliative laughter in lines 07 and 08. Cassy then reciprocates the 'how are you' sequence in line 09 and this receives a second from Georgina in line 10, who then starts the first topic in line 11.

Generally, apart from the fact that the summons sequence consists in establishing the addressee's availability, the structure of this IM opening bears resemblance to a canonical phone call opening. However, with regard to the way in which the two friends interact, this IM opening is clearly longer and more intimate than the landline call openings found in the data. This is related to the purpose with which IM sessions are used by the two friends, which is different from the purpose with which they call each other. While landline calls are made for practical reasons, such as agreeing on a time of leaving the office, IM communications are mainly made as a distraction

from ongoing work and to catch up with each other. Therefore, much of the talk is devoted to joking and laughter as a way of doing intimacy. The very fact that Georgina and Cassy are available to each other, while they are 'hiding' from others illustrates the close character of their relationship and re-enacts the close bond between them vis á vis the one they have with others with whom they also communicate with via IM.

4.2   Closings

Unlike the openings which are omitted in some of the media and appear in a shortened or condensed form in others, closings tend to be rather elaborate across all media. This reflects the importance of interactional cessation in reassuring relationship continuity and the amount of relational work that goes into that.

4.2.1   Asynchronous Communications: Email and SMS

While the emails exchanged between Georgina and Cassy tend not to include any elements associated with the opening lines of e-mail communications, all of them have closing elements. The minimal terminal element appearing in all ten e-mail messages is a row of crosses indicating kisses – a non-verbal way of greeting and parting between people in close interpersonal relationships. Seven of ten e-mails also include various formulae anticipating a future interaction, such as "Laters my lovely" (C.11: 02/05/07, 11:06) or "See you in a bit dude" (C.7: 02/05/07, 09:05). The formulae deployed by Georgina and Cassy in their e-mails contain endearing terms showing affectivity and helping to further seal the strong bond between them.

While expressions pointing to future interaction bridge the current communication with the next one, the e-mail data also include three formulae indicating that the person uttering them cares about what the other person does while they are apart, such as "have a good drive home" (C.26: 03/05/07, 11:17) or "Enjoy your grub!" (C.8: 02/05/07, 09:26). The intimacy of the relationship between Georgina and Cassy is also reflected in assurances of affection such as "Love ya" (C.9: 02/05/07, 10:37) – used by each of them once in their e-mails. While all these closing formulae emphasise the continuous character of their relationship, there is only one parting formula "Ba!" which appears in the following context: "Speak to you when you get back darling! Ba! Gxxxx" (C.5: 02/05/07, 08:46). While this closing seems to indicate a longer interruption of communication between Georgina and Cassy, the data show that 'getting back' refers to Cassy leaving the computer in order to have breakfast. The data also show that three more e-mail messages are exchanged before she finally does leave for breakfast.

The fact that both e-mails and text messages are forms of asynchronous communication is the main reason why there are great similarities in the way these communications tend to start, namely in medias res. Since most of them take the form of a series of messages, openings are often omitted. Another constraint on text messages that can be expected to lead to brevity and omission is their standardized length of 160 characters.

In view of this, the fact that all 26 text messages found in the data contain formulae closing the communication similar to those identified in their e-mail interactions, is indicative of the import of interactional cessation for relationship maintenance and of the closeness of their relationship. All the types of closing elements identified in the e-mail communications also appear in the SMSs, and they do so with higher frequency. Rows of crosses representing kisses appear as a terminal element in all 26 text messages, thus showing heightened affectivity (cf. x v xxxxxxxx). Expressions anticipating a future encounter were observed in 17 SMS. The expressions deployed (e.g. "Can't wait to catch up with ya darling" (C.35: 07/05/07, 22:04) and

"I'll be seeing you in da morning honey!" (C.21: 02/05/07, 22:17) underlie the participants' state of 'being a-part'and include endearment terms, thus displaying heightened affectivity.Similarly, formulae wishing each other "Sweet dreams" (e.g. C.37: 07/05/07, 23:00) and expressions such as "Have a lovely wkd angel!" (C.29: 04/05/07, 15:54) occur eleven times in the SMS data. Both types of formulae tend to be accompanied by a wide range of endearing forms of address, such as "honey bunch", "sweet pea", "my lovely" or "gorgeous." There is a total of 13 endearing terms, emphasising the closeness of Georgina's and Cassy's relationship and re-enacting the intimacy between them.

Their eagerness to stress the special status of their relationships is further reinforced by the use of expressions through which they assure each other of their fondness and affection, such as "Miss you!" (C.29: 04/05/07, 15:54) and "Love you darling!" (C.59: 12/05/07, 22:30). As was already the case with the e-mail communications, there is only one text message which contains a word that can be interpreted as a parting formula and it appears in the following closing: "I'll see you in the morn! Night! Gxx" (C.39: 07/05/07, 23:10), with the parting being for the duration of the night.

On the whole the SMS communications tend to be more intimate than e-mail messages. One of the factors that clearly distinguishes the closings of text messages from e-mail closings is the context in which they are written. While e-mails are written during work hours and are usually followed by a shared ride back home, text messages are mainly written in the evenings and during weekends, in a private setting and when the friends have been apart for several hours.

Another factor making text messaging a suitable medium for maintaining close relationships is that this form of communication allows for intimacy as well as privacy. Text messages can be sent anywhere and under any circumstances, so that their recipient can become part of a variety of aspects of the sender's life. The fact that SMSs do not require the recipient to

be immediately available facilitates the sharing of any kind of information at any time of day and night.

Cassy and Georgina mainly use text messages to bridge what they consider longer periods of absence, with text messages often being the last form of communication of the day. This medium enables them to engage in the rather intimate activity of saying goodnight and wishing each other sweet dreams; an activity most commonly pursued by family members living together.

4.2.2   Synchronous Communications: Telephone Calls

While the call openings of landline and mobile calls we have discussed above have differed in that a recognition / identification sequence was necessary in the former and redundant in the latter, the differences between mobile and landline call closings reflect the different context in which these two modes of communication are used.

What all of the calls between Georgina and Cassy, whether they are landline or mobile calls, have in common is that their closings take an extended form. While the canonical closing proposed by Schegloff and Sacks (1973) consists of two adjacency pairs, one of the functioning as a pre-closing sequence and the other as a terminal exchange, most research has identified additional close components that occur between these two adjacency pairs (Button 1987).

The landline calls found in the present data, for instance, tend to include an additional sequence devoted to making future arrangements. This is not entirely surprising considering that they are all made at work, in the late afternoon or early evening, and with the purpose of agreeing on a leaving time suitable for both speakers. The following fragment comes from the closing of a call made from Cassy's work landline to Georgina's work landline at 18:40 (C.78: 16/05/07, 18:40 - 1min 26sec):

```
56   Cas:                                     [No that's cool
57          yeah that sounds brilliant yeah. now I can just
58          sort of check things through an' then (.) see you
59          at seven.y[es.
60   Geo:          [Yes. excellent.=
61   Cas:    =Okay dude.
62   Geo:    I['ll see you on the stairs.=yeah?
63   Cas:     [I'll-
64   Cas:    Yea:h that sounds great [I will meet you there.
65   Geo:                            [fab.
66   Geo:    Okay.
67   Cas:    Okay then. [by:e
68   Geo:              [by:e
```

The transcript starts with Cassy's evaluation of the arrangements made earlier in the call (lines 56-59). She expresses agreement in the form of an assessment "that's cool," which is then upgraded to "that sounds brilliant." She goes on to explain why the arrangements suit her by naming the things that will fill her time before she meets Georgina. In so doing, she offers Georgina a window into her current and planned activities while apart. She ends her turn by confirming the meeting time, thus making a closing the most relevant next activity.

Lines 60 and 61 constitute a possible pre-closing sequence, consisting of what could be called final assessments which provide an opportunity to close the conversation. However, both speakers feel the need to insert another sequence confirming the arrangements before ending the call. Georgina does so by naming the location in line 62. Since these arrangements refer to a highly recurrent activity, it is likely that she is merely confirming rather than suggesting the meeting point. At the same time, Cassy almost simultaneously attempts to produce a turn starting in exactly the same way as Georgina's, with the "I'll" indicating some future action related to the envisaged meeting. The turn is abandoned since Georgina's turn, with which it overlaps, already performs a similar action.

Hence, in line 64 Cassy produces a second pair part to Georgina's confirmation in the form of an assessment "that sounds great," followed by another confirmation of the location "I will meet you there." In overlap, Georgina produces yet another assessment "fab" and then proceeds by initiating a pre-closing sequence in line 66. Cassy provides the second pair part of this sequence and utters a goodbye in line 67, and Georgina reciprocates her goodbye in the final turn of the conversation.

This call closing shows that both friends are reluctant to terminate the communication without being absolutely sure that both parties are happy with the arrangements. This is not only reflected in the five positive assessments appearing in this short dialogue, but also in Cassy's lengthy turn in lines 56 to 59 which assures Georgina that she is happy to wait for her to finish her work, as well as in the inserted sequence in lines 62 to 65. The length of the closing sequence is noteworthy in the light of the fact that Georgina and Cassy usually meet in the same place and call each other to arrange a ride back home. It reflects the import of mutually coordinating closure without the risk that a turn at talk is still expected from one of the parties.

The following landline call is different in that it does not end with agreeing on a future meeting but on the necessity of another call, thus postponing the meeting arrangements. However, the closing sequence is very similar to the closing of the previously discussed call, in that it is extended by conversational turns consisting of positive assessments confirming that both speakers are happy with what is being agreed on. The phone call takes place at 16:42 (C.53: 10/05/07, 16:42 - 2min 53sec), with Georgina calling Cassy:

```
115  Cas:          [Cool do you wanna just give me a little
116          ring when you're: when you're ready
117  Geo:    Yep
118  Cas:    Y[eah
119  Geo:     [Is that (alright/okay)
120  Cas:    >Fantastic<= no yeah that's great. .hh okay then
121          dude I'll see you in a little bit.=
122  Geo:    =Alright then darling.
```

```
123  Cas:    O[kay bye
124  Geo:     [Okay
125  Cas:    Bye.
```

In lines 115 to 116 Cassy summarises the outcome of the call by offering the first pair part of an arrangement. Even though it is Georgina who needs more time to finish her work, and only she can know when she will be finished, while Cassy is the one who adjusts her plans to her friend's needs, her request for action is voiced rather carefully. She uses the form "do you wanna" and downgrades the imposition of the request by using the hedge "just" and referring to the call as "little." Her suggestion receives a preferred answer from Georgina in line 117 and the matter seems to be settled with a closing third from Cassy in line 118. However, instead of being followed by a pre-closing, which then could lead directly to a terminal exchange, the dialogue is extended by inserting another sequence.

Georgina's "Is that alright/okay" in line 119 functions as a check making sure that Cassy is happy with what she is suggesting, which receives a preferred answer from Cassy, who first produces a slightly rushed "fantastic" and then a reinforcing "no yeah that's great" in line 120. She continues with a formula signalling a possible pre-closing sequence "okay then" accompanied by an informal term of address, but then extends her turn by another reference to their upcoming meeting, while using a minimising time reference "in a little bit."

It seems that this sequence, which receives a second pair part with Georgina's "Alright then darling" could classify as a pre-closing sequence, but that it rather functions as a sequence closing down the topic, since it is followed by another pair of 'okays' before the terminal exchange. This pattern confirms previous findings on call closings among familiars, where it is sometimes difficult to find a demarcation line between the last topic and the closing section (Pavlidou 2002: 203-204)

Cassy's "okay bye" in line 123 combines a pre-closing token with the first pair part of the terminal exchange. The "okay" overlaps with Georgina's "okay" in line 124, showing that at this

point they both agree on proceeding with the final pre-closing sequence, followed by another "bye" produced by Cassy. Cassy's turn in line 123, which combines elements of a pre-closing and a terminal sequence and her quick "bye" in the final line seem to speed up the end of the conversation, as if she did not want to take up more of Georgina's time so that she can finish her work.

What both land line phone call closings discussed here have in common is that the two friends manage to maintain a balance between the practical purpose of their call and the relational work they do. They seem to compensate for the matter of fact character of their call with a display of consideration and attention to each other's needs. The dialogue is extended whenever it seems necessary to ensure that both parties are happy with the arrangements and the conversation is closed down quickly once things are settled.

As the above fragments have illustrated, the main purpose of the landline phone calls found in the data is to arrange a convenient time for leaving the office and driving home together. The main factor distinguishing mobile phone call closings from landline ones is, therefore, the fact that mobile phones are not necessarily used for that purpose. The following call closing is taken from a phone call made from and to a mobile phone, which, however, takes place while both speakers are at home (C.17: 02/05/07, 21:15 - 8min 53sec):

```
321  Cas:     [(Cool)
322  Geo:   (Brilliant)=
323  Cas:   Right. We::ll I wi:ll speak to you:: tomorrow: hhh
324  Geo:   Yeah definitely. Have a lovely evening. And
325         [(              )
326  Cas:   [(              )
327  Geo:   Alright darling take care
328  Cas:   See you later (    ) by:e
329  Geo:   By:e
```

Similarly to the landline call closings, this closing is extended beyond the four-turn canonical closing. Although the two turns in lines 321 and 322 provide final assessments of the arrangements

made in the call and could serve as a pre-closing sequence, they are followed by another three adjacency pairs before Georgina and Cassy exchange bye-byes. In line 323 Cassy names the time of their next communication which is confirmed by Georgina (line 324), who also wishes Cassy a "lovely evening." Unfortunately, the next two turns are spoken in overlap and could not be made out, but the conversation then continues in lines 327 and 328 with what could be regarded as a new pre-closing sequence, in which the expressions "take care" and "See you later" lead up to the terminal exchange in lines 328 and 329. All these additional elements of the closing show concern and affection and constitute relational work bridging the time between this and the next communication.

4.2.3 Synchronous Communications: Instant Messaging

Although both the phone and instant messaging are communication media Cassy and Georgina use in the office, they are used in different ways and for different purposes. While the phone is mainly used in order to make arrangements, instant messaging is treated as a way of distracting themselves from work and updating each other. Hence, while future arrangements may be mentioned in the closing section of IM sessions, they tend to be terminated by one of the parties stating the need of going back to work. Prior to the closing of the following IM session (C.42: 08/05/2007, 13:39 to 14:00), Cassy has been teasing Georgina about working long hours but not being productive:

```
01  13:54:57Cassy I'm so only kidding! You work so hard hun and
02               you've been doing the hours of a trojan lately
03               so don't feel guilty!!!
04  13:55:10Cassy (L)
05  13:57:06Georgina   ha haha the hours of a trogen and the work
06               quantity of a fruit fly!!
```

```
07  13:57:20Georgina    not the best combination

08  13:57:38Cassy hehe

09  13:57:51Georgina    :D

10  13:58:39Cassy Doh, no icons for fruit flies or trojans. So

11                     you will have to imagine!

12  13:58:42Cassy hehe

13  13:59:10Cassy Anyway sweetie, I've got to go and do a bit

14                     more in the lab before the exam so I'd better

15                     run. I'll call you when I'm done but so dont

16                     worry if you're already gone as it's no problem

17                     at all at all!!! xxxxxxxxxx

18  14:00:05Georgina    cheeers darling!! thats cool if you dont have a

19                     txt from me then give me a call!! have a good

20                     afternoon!!! xxxxxxxxxx
```

Once Cassy has ensured that Georgina has taken no offence and the joke is mutually brought to a close, Cassy produces a rather lengthy message which starts with the topic shifting device "anyway" combined with an endearing form of address and states the reason for the abrupt end of the communication thus introduced. This conversational turn is comparable to an email message, as it contains all the elements identified in email communications. Cassy explains why she has to end the communication, promises to call when she has finished her work and assures Georgina that she will not mind if Georgina is gone by then. In her response, Georgina suggests two alternative forms of their next communication and wishes Cassy a good afternoon. Both friends' messages are oriented to their future interaction, start with endearing terms and end with numerous kisses.

5   Discussion

5.1   Openings and closeness across media

The exclusive and continuous availability explicitly stated for IM sessions extends to all of Georgina's and Cassy's communications. One of the reasons why most of their e-mail and SMS messages start in medias res is that they interact so frequently that most of those messages do not start a new communication but continue an ongoing one and are representative of the way in which they maintain their relationship. The lack of openings in e-mail communications seems specific to the present data, that is, e-mails between best friends which do not necessarily represent the first communication between them but often comprise a response to a previous interaction realised in other media (cf. Waldvogel 2007, Davies et al 2007 for e-mail communication in institutional contexts where opening elements such as greetings are reported as frequent).

The lack of openings of text messages, on the other hand, confirms previous research (e.g. Spagnolli & Gamberini 2007). Spagnolli & Gamberini point out that the functions of the opening sequences of phone calls become superfluous in the case of SMS communication, where "attention, connection and mutual identification are secured in ways other than verbal: the channel is always open for message delivery, the message arrival is announced by various alert signs, the identity of the sender is displayed by the device" (2007: 351).

The SMS exchanges between Georgina and Cassy further reflect the extent to which the two friends are aware of the activities they are engaged in at a particular time, the mobile character of this medium allows them to share moments and activities while physically apart. IM sessions have a similar function in that they are used for primarily relational rather than informational purposes; they enable the two friends to catch up with each other, share news and problems that have occurred since they last saw each other and before they share the car journey back home. Consequently, the openings of IM sessions are longer and less focused than phone call openings. This, in turn, reflects the primarily updating purpose of the former and the mainly practical aim of the latter.

The landline call openings are not so much medium- as situation-specific. They constitute a recurrent routine which takes place towards the end of nearly every working day. The calls are made in order to make travel arrangements. Hence, the two friends proceed quickly through the various stages comprising a canonical call opening, while often combining two elements in one turn. However, a 'how are you' sequence is always used in order to ascertain that there are no more urgent matters to be discussed or obstacles to the envisaged arrangements, and if there are, to get these out of the way first.

While the landline calls between Georgina and Cassy have a mainly practical purpose and are made during working hours, mobile calls are made to briefly confirm, finalise previous arrangements. When at home, mobiles are used to keep in touch with each other and primarily oriented towards relationship maintenance, possibly as result of not having a landline phone or a computer with access to the internet where they could use IM or videoconferencing.

5.2   Closings and closeness across media

While the call openings found in the data tended to be contracted in landline phone calls and even more reduced in mobile phone calls, call closings, whether landline or mobile, were all extended beyond the canonical four-turn sequence. Although this canonical sequence is regarded to contain all the elements necessary to end a call (Schegloff and Sacks 1973), closing down a conversation is generally regarded as a delicate matter. It is therefore not surprising that extended call closings have been identified in previous research on various languages, such as Greek (Pavlidou 2002), German (Harren & Raiteniemi 2008) and in different varieties of Spanish (Marquez-Reiter 2011).

It has been suggested that call closings tend to go beyond the canonical four-turn closing sequence established in early CA work as it is an "*interactionally economical solution*, which pays minimal attention to the relationship aspect of communication" (Pavlidou 2002: 224). The call

closings in our data are very much in line with Pavlidou's findings, who has found that her Greek participants were extending the call closing by "construing agreement beyond any doubt," by stressing the familiarity of the relationship and the "continuation of their relationship, the partner's well-being etc." (ibid).

The closings of text messages, in contrast, do not seem to confirm previous research. Unlike Spagnolli & Gamberini's study (2007) where text messages did not have openings nor closings, Georgina and Cassy's do. They contain endearing forms of address, assurances of affection and expressions anticipating the next interaction. Similarly, while Georgina's and Cassy's e-mails tend to start in medias res, they do contain closing elements. Unfortunately, since most research on e-mail communication has been conducted on the basis of work e-mails, it is difficult to draw a comparison. However, even in institutional contexts, it has been noted that closings "enable the writer to express warmth or distance, expressions that are otherwise difficult to do in e-mail, and they are a strategy for personalizing messages as well as a means of reinforcing status relationships" (Waldvogel 2007: 458)

The closings of IM sessions seem to combine elements of phone calls and e-mails. They also reflect the nature of the communication Georgina and Cassy engage in when using this medium. Since it is mainly used as a means of having a short break from ongoing work, with the conversations generally turning into a relaxing and joking chit chat, it is equally easy to signal by one of the parties that they need to go back to work without much preamble. Rather than distributing the elements of a closing over several conversational turns, IM sessions make it possible to end the communication by means of one longer message, resembling an email.

5.3   Conclusions

In this study we have examined the openings and closings of 51 interactions between two best friends, across written and spoken media. The majority of interactions point backwards or forwards to previous or future interactions, confirming the long term nature of the relationship between participants and the intimacy with which they track each other's lives. This intimacy is further indicated by the high frequency of interactions between individuals throughout a working day, and by two general tendencies to shorten openings and extend closings across all media. Shortened openings demonstrate a range of factors which can be linked to intimacy: such as the expectation of calling or being called at a particular moment in the day; recognising the voice or coded identity of the calling party; anticipating the reason for calling or writing; and continuing a previous topic of communication. Extended closings demonstrate intimacy in others ways: showing a reluctance to end a communication; offering opportunities to continue talking; making arrangements to talk or write again; divulging future plans and movements; and demonstrating affection and appreciation.

Taken together, these two communicative strategies demonstrate intimacy just as powerfully as self-disclosure of personal information (c.f. Reiss & Shaver 1988). They indicate an awareness of relationship history, of previously disclosed information, and of communication preferences and availability. A similar expectation of reciprocation appears to apply to this kind of behaviour, as with self-disclosure. Failure to communicate at the right time, in the right medium and in the right way, resulted in forms of repair including accounts and apologies for absence or lateness of response. Asymmetric attention to the details of each other's lives was simply not acceptable to Cassy and Georgina in the study data.

Although there was a general tendency to shorten openings and extend closings across media, the form and extent to which this could be done depended on particular media properties. For example, the unusual properties of IM sometimes required participants to check whether their partner was hiding behind a 'busy' status or attending to textual input on the screen. This

lengthened the openings of IM exchanges compared with SMS and Email messages which could begin in media res with an automatic identity and time stamp. The properties of mobile and landline phones also affected the openings of telephone calls. These were longer in landline calls where the identity of the answerer or caller sometimes had to be established. While choice of medium was not an explicit focus of the analysis, it emerged that the participants tended to use the cheapest and most convenient technology to hand at particular times of day. Technology options changed significantly between work, mobile and home locations, opening up the possibility of landline phone, email and IM at work compared to mobile phone elsewhere. Movement between media was informed as much by a knowledge of where the other party was and whether they were available for synchronous interaction (e.g. Land, Lumkin & Frohlich 2008), as by a principled selection of the most appropriate medium for the message (e.g. Madianou & Miller 2012, Daft & Lengel 1986) or a preference to reply in the same medium (e.g. Laursen 2005).

In conclusion, we have found that the way in which two close friends re-establish their relationship with each other after periods of absence is to shorten the openings and extend the closings of subsequent interactions. This can only be done through close attention to the predicted details of each other's lives in the interim periods, and remembering previous topics and arrangements to communicate. This leads to a kind of *pragmatics of intimacy* in which the practical demonstration of care and attention for each other is done through linguistic behaviours which could not be done otherwise without that care. For example, for Cassy to begin an SMS message with 'Fuck me that was bad', after a pause in contact with Georgina of 36 hours, could only be done through knowledge of what TV programme Georgina was likely to be watching at the same time. Larger scale studies are now required to substantiate these findings and reveal further details of the connection between mediated communication and relationship maintenance.

Acknowledgements

References

Arminen, Ilka. 2005. Sequential order and sequence structure – the case of incommensurable studies on mobile phone calls, *Discourse Studies*, 7(6):649-662.

Arminen, Ilka and Alexandra, Weilenmann. 2009. Mobile presence and intimacy – Reshaping social actions in mobile contextual configuration. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41, 1905-1923.

Baym, Nancy, Yang Bing Zhang and Mei-Chen Lin. 2004. Social interactions across media. *New Media & Society*, 6, 299-318.

Begole J., Tang J.C. and Hill R. (2003) Rhythm modelling, visualizations and applications. UIST 2003. *Proceedings of the 16th annual ACM symposium on User interface software and technology*, pp11-20. New York: ACM Press.

Button, Graham. 1987. 'Moving out of closings'. In G. Button & J. Lee (Eds.) *Talk and Social Organisation*, Clevedon, 101-151. Avon: Multilingual Matters.

Clancy, Brian. 2016. *Investigating Intimate Discourse. Exploring the spoken interaction of families, couples and friends.* New York: Routledge.

Collins, Nancy & Brook Feeney. 2004. An Attachment Theory Perspective on Closeness and Intimacy. In *Handbook of Closeness and Intimacy,* ed by Mashek, D. J. & A. Aron, 163-187.Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Daft, R. L., and R.H. Lengel.1986. Organisational information requirements, media richness and structural design. *Management Science,* 32, 554-571.

Davies. Bethany, Andrew Merrison and Andrew Goddard .2007. Institutional apologies in UK higher education: Getting back into the black before going into the red. *Journal of Politeness Research: Language, Behaviour, Culture,* 3,39-63.

Dindia, Kathryn.2003. Definitions and perspectives on relational maintenance communication. In *Maintaining relationships through communication: Relational, contextual, and cultural variations*, ed by D. J. Canary & M. Dainton, 1-28Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

DeFrancisco, Victoria. 1991. The Sounds of Silence: How Men Silence Women in Marital Relations. *Discourse Studies,* 2, 413-423.

Dourish, Paul and Victoria Bellotti .1992. Awareness and coordination in shared workspaces. *Proceedings of CSCW 1992*. New York: ACM Press.

Drew, Paul and Kathy Chilton. 2000. Calling just to keep in touch: regular and habitualised telephone calls as an environment for small talk. In *Small-Talk*, ed by J. Coupland , 137–162 London: Longman.

Duck, Steve. 1994. *Meaningful relationships: Talking sense, and relating.* Sage series on close relationships. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

− (Ed.) .1996. *Handbook of personal relationships: Theory, research and practice.* London: John Wiley & Son Ltd.

Fisher, Danyel and Paul Dourish .2004. Social and temporal structures in everyday collaboration. *Proceedings of CHI 2004*, 551-558. New York: ACM Press.

Fishman, Pamela. 1978. What do couples talk about when they're alone? In *Women's Language and Style*, ed by D. Butturff &E.L. Epstein, 11-22. Akron, OH: L&S Books.

− 1980. Interactional Shiftwork. *Heresies*, 2, 99-101.

Frohlich, David M. .1994. Interactions as turns: Some observations from the shadowing of individuals across workplaces. *Sociological Abstracts*, 42, 103.

− 1995. Requirements for interpersonal information management. In P. J. Thomas *Personal information systems: Business applications*. Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes, pp. 133-153.

Giddens Anthony. 1984. *The constitution of society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

−1992. *The transformation of intimacy. Sexuality, love and eroticism in modern societies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Grinter, Rebecca E., Leysia Palen and Margery A. Eldridge. 2006. Chatting with teenagers: Considering the place of chat technologies in teen life. *ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction*, 13, 423–447.

Harren, Inga and Mia Raiteniemi. 2008. The sequential structure of closings in private German phone calls. *Gesprächsforschung*, 9, 198-223.

Hutchby, Iain and Simone Barnett. 2005. Aspects of the sequential organization of mobile phone conversation. *Discourse Studies*, 7, 147-171.

Kaplan, Danny. 2005. Public Intimacy: Dynamics of Seduction in Male Homosocial Interactions. *Symbolic Interaction*, 28, 571-595.

Kiesler, Sara and Lee Sproull.1992. Group decision making and communication technology. *Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Processes*, 52, 96-123.

Kraut R.E., R. S. Fish, R. Root and B. L. Chalfonte .1990. Informal Communication in Organizations: Form, Function, and Technology. In *Human Reactions to Technology: The Claremont Symposium on Applied Social Psychology*, ed by I. S. Oskamp and S. Scacapan, 145-199. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Katz, James E. and Mark Aakhus .2002. (Eds) *Perpetual Contact: Mobile Communication, Private Talk, Public Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Knobloch Leanne K. and Denise H. Solomon. 2003. Manifestations of relationship conceptualization in conversation. *Human Communication Research*, 29, 482-515.

Land Victoria, Mary Lumkin and David M. Frohlich. 2008. Conveying availability and capability to communicate in naturalistic interaction. *Proceedings of HCI '08.*

Laurenceau, Jean Philippe, Luis Rivera, Amy R. Schaffer and Paula R. Pietromonaco .2004. Intimacy as an Interpersonal Process: Current Status and Future Directions. In *Handbook of Closeness and Intimacy*, ed by Mashek, D. J. & A. Aron, 61-78. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Laursen, Ditte. 2005. Please reply! The replying norm in adolescent SMS communication. In *The inside text: social, cultural and design perspectives on SMS*, ed by R. Harper, L Paylen & A. Taylor , 53-73. Springer Netherlands.

Liccope, Christian. 2004. 'Connected' presence: The emergence of a new repertoire for managing social relationships in a changing communication technoscape. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 22, 135-156.

Liccope, Christian and Julien Morel. 2010. Location sharing, proximity recognition and the production of interactionally generated encounters in mobile phone conversations. Presented at *ICCA10*, July 4-8,Mannheim: Germany.

Madianou, Mirca and Daniel Miller. 2012. Polymedia: Towards a new theory of digital media in interpersonal communication. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 16: 169-178.

Márquez Reiter, Rosina. 2005. Complaint calls to a caregiver service company: The case of *desahogo*. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 2-5, 481-514.

—.2011. *Mediated Business Interactions. Intercultural Communication between Speakers of Spanish*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Mashek, Debrah J. and Arthur Aron. 2004. (Eds) *Handbook of Closeness and Intimacy*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Miller, Rowland S., Daniel Perlman and Sharon Brehm. 2007. *Intimate Relationships*. New York/London: McGraw Hill.

Nardi, Bonnie A., Whittaker, Steve and Bradner, Erin. 2000. Interaction and Outeraction: Instant Messaging in Action. Presented at CSCW'00, December 2-6, 2000, Philadelphia, PA.

Ochsman R.B. and A. Chapanis. 1974. The effects of 10 communication modes on the behavior of teams during co-operative problem-solving. *International Journal of Man-Machine Studies*, 6, 579-619.

Pavlidou, Theodossia S. 2002. Moving towards closing: Greek telephone calls between familiars. In K.K. Luke & T.S. Pavlidou (Eds.) *Telephone Calls. Unity and Diversity in Conversational Structure across Languages and Cultures.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp.201-229.

Perlman, Daniel and Beverley Fehr. 1987. The Development of Intimate Relationships. In *Intimate Relationships: Development, Dynamics and Deterioration*, ed by D. Perlman & S. Duck, 13-42.Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Piller, Ingrid. 2002. *Bilingual Couples Talk: The Discursive Construction of Hybridity.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Pomerantz, Anita. 1986. Extreme Case Formulations: A way of legitimizing claims. *Human Studies*, 9, 219-229.

Prager, Karen J. 1995. *The Psychology of Intimacy*. New York: Guildford.

Reis, H. T. and B. C. Patrick. 1996. Attachment and Intimacy: Component Processes. In *Social Pyschology. Handbook of Basic Principles,* ed by E. T. Higgins & A. W. Kruglanski, 523-563. New York/London: The Guildford Press.

Reis, H. T. and P. Shaver. 1988. Intimacy as an Interpersonal Process. In *Handbook of Personal Relationships*, ed by S. Duck, 367-389.Chichester: Wiley.

Rosewarne, Lauren. 2016. *Intimacy on the Internet: Media Representations of Online Connections.* New York: Routledge.

Sahlstein Erin M. 2004. Relating at a distance: Negotiating being together and being apart. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships,* 21, 689-710.

Schegloff, Emanuel. 1979. Identification and recognition in telephone call openings. In *Everyday Language: Studies in Ethnomethodology,* ed by G. Psathas, 23-78. New York: Irvington.

— 1986. The Routine as Achievement. *Human Studies*, 9, 111-151.

Schegloff, Emanuel and Harvey Sacks. 1973. Opening up closings. *Semiotica*, 8, 289-327.

Sexton, Richard E. and Virginia S. Sexton. 1982. Intimacy: A historical perspective. In *Intimacy,* ed by M. Fisher and G. Stricker, 1-20. New York: Plenum.

Sigman, Stuart J. 1991. Handling the discontinuous aspects of continuous social relationships: Towards research on the persistence of social forms. *Communication Theory* 1, 106-127.

Spagnolli, Anna and Luciano Gamberini. 2007. Interacting via SMS: Practices of social closeness and reciprocation. *British Journal of Social Psychology,* 46, 343-364.

Tyler J.R. & Tang J.C. (2003) When can I expect an email response? A study of rhythms in email usage. In *Proceedings of the Eight European Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work,* ed by K. Kuuti, E.H. Karsten, G. Fitzpatrick, P. Dourish & K. Schmidt, 239-258. Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Taylor, Ralph B. and Glenn Ferguso. 1980. Solitude and Intimacy: Linking territoriality and privacy experiences. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 4, 227-239.

Waldvogel, Joan. 2007. Greetings and closings in workplace email. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication,* 12(2), article 6.
http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol12/issue2/waldvogel.html

Warin, M. 2005.Transformations of intimacy and sociality in anorexia: Bedrooms in public institutions. *Body & Society*, 11, 97-113.

Weingarten, Kathy. 1991. The discourses of intimacy: Adding a social constructionist and feminist view. *Family Process,* 30, 285-205

Whittaker, Steve, David M. Frohlich and Owen Daly-Jones. 1994. Informal workplace communication: What is it like and how might we support it? *Proceedings of CHI 1994*, 131-137. New York: ACM Press.

Whittaker Steve, Jones Quentin and Lauren Terveen. 2002. Managing long term communications: Conversation and contact management. *Proceedings of the 35th Hawaii International Conference on Systems Sciences.* IEEE.

---

[1]At the time when the data were collected Twitter did not exist and, arguably, Facebook did not enjoy the popularity it now has, as evidenced, among other things, by its presence in the 2011 Oscars (i.e. The Social Network)