"I can't talk now, I'm in a fitting room": Formulating availability and location in mobile phone conversations

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to begin to investigate the ways in which participants in mobile phone conversations orient to each other's location, activities and availability. Through looking at data consisting of recorded mobile phone conversations, a conversation analytic approach is used to make initial observations regarding the character of mobile phone conversations. It is found that the frequent question "What are you doing?" sometimes worked as getting a location as part of the answer, which shows how location, activity and availability are strongly related. The participants thus got information about location, when this was considered relevant, through asking about activity. Location seemed especially relevant if it could give information about a future meeting. In some conversations where there seemed to be things going on where the called party was located, the caller attended to this by initiating the topic using a strategy giving the called a chance to end the conversation.

[O]n each occasion in conversation on which a formulation of location is used, attention is exhibited to the particulars of the occasion. In selecting a 'right' formulation, attention is exhibited to 'where-we-know-we-are', to 'who-we-know-we-are', to 'what-we-are-doing-at-this-point-in-conversation'. A 'right' formulation exhibits, in the very fact of its production, that it is some '*this* conversation, at *this* place, with *these* members, at *this* point in its course' which has been analyzed to select *that* term; it exhibits, in the very fact of its production, that it is some particular 'this situation' which is producing it.

Emanuel A. Schegloff, Notes on a conversational practice: formulating place, 1971

You can read the world out of a telephone conversation.

Harvey Sacks, Lectures on Conversation, 1992/1995

Introduction

At the time of Sacks and Schegloff's investigations of the particulars and peculiarities of telephone conversations, a telephone was something fixed to a particular location. When calling someone you could have a fairly good idea of where that person was located, which meant you could draw some conclusions about the activities in which they might be engaged. Thirty years later, with the introduction of the mobile phone, you can call someone up and reach her or him in situations and locations you cannot predict - even, as the title of this paper suggests, you can call someone in a fitting room. Because of the unpredictability of where the called is in mobile phone conversations, the assumption is that conversationalists often need to establish a mutual understanding of each other's location, as well as their availability for having a conversation.

The main issue of this paper is to begin to investigate the ways in which participants in a mobile phone conversation orient to each other's location, activities and availability. This study will present the analysis of recordings of naturally occurring mobile phone conversations, looking at the issue of

expressing location, or formulating place, in the words of Schegloff, over the mobile phone. While there is a widespread notion that mobile phone conversations are opened with "where are you", is it really true that the first thing that conversationalists do in a conversation is establish location? And if this is so, how is this done? Somewhat surprisingly, in the mobile phone conversations considered in this paper, 'what are you doing' is the most frequent opening question. This paper will examine in detail this question, focusing on what can be accomplished with such a question. Also, it is discussed whether these initial observations on location work in mobile conversation can have anything to say about the ways in which the use of the mobile phone potentially transforms what it is to be in a place.

The paper is outlined as follows. First, there is a presentation of Conversation Analysis and the analysis of fixed telephone conversations, along with an introduction of studies of mobile phone usage. Then follows the analysis, where I present and discuss fragments from the mobile phone recordings. The paper ends with a discussion on location work in mobile phone conversations as well as some ideas on how to continue this line of research.

Related Work

This paper is based on work which originates in two fields of research. The first is Conversation Analysis (CA), the study of naturally occurring conversation originating in the work of Sacks and his colleagues. In particular we will consider CA work relating to telephone calls. The second body of work is the growing number of studies of the use of mobile telephones. In this section, these two fields of research will be presented.

Telephone Conversations and Conversation Analysis

From the very beginning, conversation analysis has been closely linked to the analysis of telephone conversations. Sacks began his now famous Lectures on Conversation with looking at the openings in telephone calls to a suicide prevention center. One practical reason why telephone conversations were the focus for early research in conversation analysis was that telephone calls were particularly suitable for CA methods. By making audio recordings of both ends of phone conversations the researcher would get access to much of the same interactional resources as the participants, since they also are only connected through audio rather than using other interactional resources. Most important to this is that, on the phone, participants have no visual access to each other.

The phone call has thus been in focus since the very beginning of the analysis of conversations. In particular in CA work there has been considerable attention given to the *opening sequences* of phone conversations. Schegloff's PhD thesis, for example, consisted of analysis of the sequencing of conversational openings; its focus was the first five seconds of telephone conversations (Schegloff, 1967).

In Schegloff's paper Identification and Recognition in Phone Conversation Openings (1979), he deals with the issue of how participants identify and display recognition of each other. One important finding is that in his data, the answerer (A) often do not self-identify explicitly by name rather they rely on the caller (C) to recognize him or her by a 'voice sample'. This can look something like this, as seen in an instance taken from Schegloff's paper. (1979:35)

A: Hello
C: Hi
A: Hi

Schegloff argues that the first greeting (Hello) is an answer to the *summons* – the ringing of the telephone. The answerer's second greeting then (Hi), is seen as a claim that the answerer has recognized the caller (1979:35).[1] One important point to make is that conversation analysis originally looked primarily on North American data. This means that the rules identified were based on a somewhat limited and homogenous group of speakers. Especially in the case with identification and recognition, it is obvious to readers from other parts of the world that this pattern seems to differ from how Schegloff describes it. As the data collected for the present study was by Swedish conversationalists, studies of Swedish phone calls are of particular interest. In Lindström's 1994 paper Identification and Recognition in Swedish Telephone Conversation Openings it is argued that Swedes seem to orient to the same issues as Americans in the opening section. However, the main difference is that self-identification by name is the most common way of answering the phone in her data (1994:238). As we saw above, this differs from what Schegloff claims about American phone calls. In the American phone calls the callers seldom self-identify, rather they rely on the other part to recognize them[2].

Here is an opening sequence from Lindström's Swedish data, where the answerer (A) offers a greeting and then self-identifies, the caller (C) also provides a greeting and self-identifies, and the answerer then provides a

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1 There are of course other aspects to this interaction discussed in his paper, but for the purpose of the present study, this is the main argument.
2 With the exception of business calls where this can be different; the answerer often provides a name or company name.

second greeting, which according to Lindström works as "claim that recognition has been achieved" (1994:238).

A:	Hej de e He:nri:k	A:	Hi 't's Henrik
C:	Ja hej de va mormo:r?	C:	C: Yes hi 't was (maternal) grandmother
A:	->Hej,	A:	Hi

Lindström found that in the cases where the caller did not identify by name, the caller and the called had a close relationship, e.g. husband and wife or mother and child. Leaving out the explicit identification in the first turn by the caller, was thus a way of "doing being intimate", Lindström argues. Another noteworthy thing is that Lindström finds that the question "How are you?" in the opening section is very rare in the Swedish data, whereas this is very common in American sequences (1994:238). Lindström also points out that Swedish phone identification sequences have a lot in common with the Dutch, which has been investigated by Houtkoop-Steenstra (1991). In both Dutch and Swedish, speakers overwhelmingly identify themselves by name.

Opening up to the rest of the conversation

Schegloff identifies nine ways in which the second turns in the phone call (the caller's first turn) are constructed in his data. Of specific relevance for the present study is the second turn formulated as a "question or noticing concerning answerer's state". For instance, this can look like this:

A: Hello
C: Hi can you talk

Or

A: Hello
C: Hello. You're home.

This deals with issues of availability for having a conversation, as well as recognizing where the answerer is located. Of course, in the second case above, the fact that the caller knows that she or he is calling to a residence home, a landline phone, is obvious. If someone answers this call at all, the caller can be certain that the called is home, where the phone is located[3]. This is obviously different in the case with mobile phone calls.

Having taken a closer look at the openings of the conversations, it is now time to move on to what happens after that point in the conversation. In the words of Sacks, "how beginnings work to get from beginnings to something else" (Sacks 1995: vol2: 15).

Button and Casey (1984) report on a phenomenon relevant when considering how availability is established in telephone conversations. They show how questions about what the co-participants are doing, thus an "inquiry into immediately current events", what they call *topic initial elicitors*, occur after the identification and recognition section. They argue that the fact that these topic initial elicitors "make a display of availability for further talk but without, themselves, introducing topic material provides the opportunity for, as a preferred next activity, a newsworthy event reported in a next turn". (1984:172).

Taking a yet larger perspective on the telephone conversation, another study by Button (1991) deals with how a conversation is organized as part of a series of conversations. He found that *arrangements* may be oriented to as a "special status topic", which is specifically used to place the

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[3] An exception is when the home phone has been redirected to another phone, which now a days could be a mobile phone. In these cases, there is often an audible click, and a slight change in the ring signal, which can reveal that the call is being redirected, and the caller can then, if aware of this, assume that the called person is somewhere else than on the location of the landline phone called to.

conversation on a closing track" (1991:251). One way of doing this is through "projecting future activities", for instance, talking about whom should call a third person and make arrangements, etc.

Another study by Schegloff is also relevant for the present study, although it is not explicitly focusing on phone conversations. Schegloff (1971) has studied how people formulate place in conversations. He wanted to know why a certain place term is selected, rather than another. He argues that "the selection of a location formulation requires of a speaker (and will exhibit for a hearer) an analysis of his own location and the location of his co-conversationalist(s), and of the object whose location is being formulated (if that object is not one of the co-conversationalists)." (Schegloff, 1971:100). Also, as Schegloff points out, one of the things speakers have to attend to in conversation is 'where-we-know-we-are'. The interactional work needed in order to establish the 'where-we-know-we-are' in a conversation can be assumed to differ in talk where the participants are dislocated and communicating through a mobile device, as opposed to when participants are co-located (as in face-to-face interaction) or using stationary landline telephones.

Mobile phone studies

The previous section has dealt with a well-established field, conversation analysis of telephone conversations. A lot of work has been done within this field. When it comes to *mobile* telephone conversations, it gets more difficult. To my knowledge, there are very few (published) CA or CA inspired approaches to mobile phone conversations. Apart from the newness of mobile telephone technology, one of the reasons why this is so, is likely

to be because it is relatively difficult to get recordings of mobile phone conversations. In general, it is more difficult to gather naturally occurring data about the use of mobile telephones.

One of the few available studies of mobile phone use based on recordings of such conversations, has been made by Laurier (1999). He investigates the ways in which mobile office workers talk about location when traveling by car. He seeks to explore "why people say where they are during mobile phone calls". His argument is that this is a question of location used to establish a mutual context in communication, between participants who are dislocated. The formulation of location in mobile phone conversation is tied to the business that needs to be done between the two people, and the place descriptions are thus doing a lot more than just formulating place. Several of Laurier's findings will be discussed when looking at the data in this paper, as he deals with similar issues and his arguments can shed light on what is going on in the conversations.

Other authors also expand upon the "Where are you?" question. In discussing monitoring and accountability in mobile phone relations, Green (2002) argues that this question provides a means of "[m]onitoring of location and activities in this instance [which] serves both to cement personal or intimate relationships, but also to make an individual's activities transparent, visible and accountable to both co-present and tele-present others" (2002:32). In some relations it would be difficult to refuse to provide an answer to where one is at the moment.

Many authors claim that the mobile phone privatizes public space, as it enables people to have private conversations in public places. For instance,

in discussing mobile phone culture in Finland, Puro (2002) maintains that: "as someone talks on the phone, one is in her or his own private space. Talking on the mobile phone in the presence of others lends itself to a certain social absence where there is little room for other social contacts. The speaker may be physically present, but his or her mental orientation is towards someone who is unseen (Puro, 2002:23).

However, previous field studies of mobile phone use show how in some situations, conversationalists include co-located others in the mobile phone communication, rather than withdrawing to have private conversations. One example of this is related in Weilenmann and Larsson's (2002) fieldwork of mobile phone use among teenagers in public places in Sweden. We show an instance where four girls all take part of a mobile phone call received by one of them, and how they also relate to the caller what is going on in the group at their end. From this field study it seems clear that the young people studied do not exclude their co-present friends when talking on the mobile phone, they remain attentive to the ongoing event as well as that on the phone.

Murtagh presents another ethnomethodologically inspired field study of public use of mobile phones (2002). He shows how non-vocal responses and body movements are used to regulate mobile phone use in public space. Drawing on Goffman's notion of civil inattention, Murtagh suggests that looking away while receiving a phone call could be a strategy for avoiding the potential embarrassment of having a private conversation in public.

A more theoretical approach to the mobile phone is provided by Cooper, in examining how theoretical concepts from sociology can be used to

understand the use of mobile phones (2002). In doing so, he emphasizes the need for such theoretical development to be tied to empirical research: "theoretical work carried out in isolation from the study of the practicalities of situated mobile use can easily go astray" (2002:19). For instance, the private/public distinction is a theoretical one, which is only one way of thinking about the significance of the mobile phone in some settings. Cooper suggests instead that the mobile phone should be thought of as an 'indiscrete technology', because "it has the capacity to blur distinctions between ostensibly discrete domains and categories, or more precisely to take its place among a number of social and technical developments that have this capacity: not only public and private, but remote and distant, work and leisure, to name but a few." (2002:24). What is particularly interesting with his argument, is how it shows the need for theoretical investigations of mobile technologies to be empirically grounded.

As the present study deals with data from a young teenage girl, it can be relevant to emphasize that young people in many countries are now heavy users of mobile phones. Several studies focus specifically on young people's phone usage. The before-mentioned study by Weilenmann and Larsson (2000, 2002) shows how teenagers use mobile phones collaboratively, in local interaction, and not just for communicating with dislocated others. Similar results are presented in another study of mobile phone use among teenagers (Taylor and Harper, 2002). Here the sending and sharing of text messages and other phone mediated practices are considered as gift giving rituals, which have impact on the ways in which young people conceive of mobile phones.

In Japan, mobile phones are commonly used for many purposes other than calling, as the mobile phone operators offer a large number of features and services, among them the NTT DoCoMo's I-mode services, and Japanese teenagers are said to be the driving force in much of the use of mobile phones (Mitsuoka et al., 2001). In sum, many studies show the great immersion of mobile phones among teenagers, and point to the importance of this device in the life of this age group.

Data collection

The material presented here consists of naturally occurring mobile phone conversations. Both ends of the conversations have been recorded, making it possible to see how the participants orient to each other's location, activities and availability. Making recordings of mobile phone calls it not easily done. There are both technical and ethical problems which need to be resolved. In this section, I will shortly relate how I attended to these difficulties.

A special recording device was built in order to make initial data collection. One person was recruited to have her calls recorded - an 18-year-old girl, living in a small suburb to Göteborg, Sweden's second largest city. She attends the last year in the local high school (*gymnasium*), where her studies are specializing in the media. As part of this media program she is involved in making local television, an activity which involves considerable organization and coordination, for which she often uses her mobile phone.

For this study I made sure that the informant would feel that she was in control over what was recorded. I would only get the conversations she agreed on letting me have. The data was recorded on a minidisk recorder, over which the informant had control. That way, she had the possibility of

deciding which phone conversations to give to the researcher. After having recorded a conversation, she herself could delete it if she did not feel she wanted it to be used for the study. She was told to let her friends know that she would be part of this study, so that those who did not want to be recorded could say so. A few of her friends then chose not to be recorded. All names of persons and places appearing in the conversations have been changed.

A few technical aspects are relevant to know, as they effect what sort of data was collected. The informant had to use a headset when talking. She did not normally use a headset, which means that this was somewhat unnatural for her. Also, she had to carry with her the minidisk recorder in her purse or pocket. Every time someone called in or she was about to make a call, she had to push the record button. This meant that it took extra time to answer the phone. These things may have affected the opening sections in the conversations. Of course, it would be ideal to have a voice activated recording, so that the informant could use the phone more naturally. Or even better, to have all the traffic from and to her number automatically recorded via the operator. With current technology I was restricted to this clumsy set up, although in the future, I hope to be able to find a better means of making recordings.

When discussing the results it is important to keep in mind that this is a limited set of data, and as such this analysis should be seen as an initial investigation into which questions are of relevance when studying mobile conversations, rather than as a final analysis. However, in taking a CA stance, I emphasize the interest in particularistic features of specific

naturally occurring conversations, rather than attempting strongly generalizable results.

Analysis

The main focus of the analysis was to investigate the ways in which location features in mobile phone conversations. In particular there was an interest in investigating the notion that mobile phone conversations are opened with "Where are you?", and that location is something inevitably and explicitly discussed in mobile phone conversations. In the instances I have looked at, "What are you doing?" is the most frequent opening question, after the greeting and identification sequences. In this section, I will show examples of how this question comes about, how it is treated in the interaction, and what sort of work it seems to be doing.

However, I will begin by taking a quick look at the ways in which the conversations are opened: how are identification and recognition carried out over the mobile phone? Then, I will continue to investigate what happens after this opening section; how the participants move from this part of the conversation to the topic.

In the analysis, the person who has the recording device on her phone is called Nicky. The caller is abbreviated C, and the answerer as A. The translations from Swedish to English have been made by the author, and with focus on content rather than on correct English. For details about the transcription notation, see Appendix 1.

Identification and recognition

In some of the instances of the mobile phone calls, the identification and recognition sequences are similar to the ways in which Lindström (1994) describes Swedish landline phone conversations openings. Below are two examples from the mobile phone data.

Excerpt 1

A:	a de e Nicky	A:	yeah it's Nicky
C:	hej Nicky de e Fred	C:	hi it's Fred
A:	he:j	A:	hi

Excerpt 2

A:	a de e Nicky	A:	yeah it's Nicky
C:	he:j	C:	hi:
A:	he:j	A:	hi:

In excerpt 1, the caller answers with her name, thus explicitly identifying herself. The caller greets her and identifies himself by name. The "hi" in the second turn by A, can then be seen as recognition of the caller. In excerpt 2, the caller does not identify himself. It seems here that caller is relying on that the answerer recognizes the voice, as previous studies have found (Sacks, 1992, Schegloff, 1984). This seems to be unproblematic; that Nicky recognizes the caller is evident in her "hi:", as in the argument for excerpt 1. In these two examples, there seems that nothing much is going on that makes mobile conversations differ from stationary ones. However, in other instances, there is evident that there is something going on where the answerer is located, which effects the opening section.

It is important to remember that features of technology have impact on how identification and recognition is dealt with in telephone conversations. The mobile phone (often) makes it possible to see the phone number of the person calling, or the name of the person, if this had been registered in the

address book. Also, some phones have the possibility of choosing ring signals specific to a group of people, or just one person. Thereby it is possible to have a unique ring signal for e.g. ones best friend or ones husband, and be able to tell already from the summons, the ring signal, who is calling. In some of the instances collected for this paper, it is likely that technology features such as caller ID and ring signals play a part in the opening sections, as we will see later.

However, it is what happens after the opening sequence, when the first topic is introduced, that is more interesting, as it bears upon the mobility and unpredictability of the participants' location and availability. The remainder of the analysis deals with what happens after the identification and recognition has been done.

Checking availability using a pre-topic initiator

In the following two excerpts, the caller uses a similar strategy to initiate the topic; after the greeting sequence, and before getting to the reason-for-the-call, the caller says "you". For non-Swedish speakers this might seem like a peculiar use of the word; it might be that it is specific for Swedish conversations.

In both instances where the use of "you" occurs, it is apparent that other things are going on where the called is, and it might be that the caller is orienting to the answerer's potential unavailability through using a strategy that allows for the answerer to end the conversation.

Excerpt 3
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((Ring))
((Voices are heard in the background))
A:   a de e Nicky                    A:   yeah it's Nicky
C:   hej Nicky de e Fred             C:   hi Nicky it's Fred
A:   hej                             A:   hi
C:   du::                            C:   you::
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A:	a:	A:	yeah:
C:	de: e möte idag de vet du va?	C:	there's a meeting today you know that right?
A:	ja:::: du har sagt det fem gånger	A:	yes:::: you've said that five times

In the opening of this conversation, presumably, the caller can hear the voices in the background, and therefore draw the conclusion that the answerer is in a group of people, or in a place where others might compete with him for her attention. Therefore he might be anxious to know her availability and interest in having a conversation with him. What comes after the greeting could then perhaps be a way of checking the answerer's availability. After the identification and greetings the caller says "you:::", in a prolonged manner. Although there is not a question intonation, the "you" gets a "yeah". This seems to be a "yeah, continue". The caller goes on with the topic, the reason for the call, which is to check whether Nicky knows about the meeting later today. I want to suggest that "you" here works as a sort of topic initiator, thus a way of moving into the topic, in the words of Button and Casey (1984) "make a display of availability for further talk but without, themselves, introducing topic material provides the opportunity for, as a preferred next activity, a newsworthy event reported in a next turn". (1984:172).

Also, it is noteworthy that her reply "you've said that five times" indicates that they have been talking previously about the same topic. There is actually a phone conversation earlier on the same tape, probably from the same day, where they talk about this meeting. It is therefore possible to see this conversation not just in itself, but as a part of a series of conversations between the same people.

In the next excerpt, excerpt 4, there is a similar pattern going on. The caller does the "you", which gets a yeah, and the caller then presents the topic.

Excerpt 4
((Ring signal – the Simpson's tune))

A:	jajaja käft (0.3) ee::		A:	yes yes yes shut up (0.3) ee::

((answers phone))

A:	hej!		A:	hi!
C:	he:j		C:	hi:
A:	ee: hej (.) ja?		A:	ee: hi (.) yes?
C:	hej (.) du:?		C:	hi (.) you:?
A:	a		A:	yeah
C:	eh: kan du få med dig Pete idag		C:	eh: can you get Pete with you today

In this excerpt, Nicky has problems with the phone before answering. After pushing the record button on the minidisk, it takes her some time to answer the phone. Meanwhile, the Simpson's tune is heard. It is possible to choose a ring signal specific to certain persons. This might be the reason why no identification using names occur here. However, it might be that it can be embarrassing to have a less conventional ring signal in some situations. I am not sure what is going on here, whether her "yes yes yes shut up" is designed for the co-present or perhaps even for the researcher listening to the tape. When she finally answers, she does this in an exclamatory way. Her second turn is interesting. She makes a funny noise "ee:" before her second greeting, and then a "yes". Perhaps this rather strange turn makes the caller assume that there is something else going on where the called is.

Before getting to the reason for the call, which is to ask Nicky if she can get a third person to come to a meeting, he initiates this topic with a "you?" asked with a question intonation. As in the above fragment, this could be a way of getting down to business.

The difference between these to examples of the use of "you" is that the first one is prolonged, whereas the second is quicker and demanding. However, they are both responded with a "yeah", and continued with the topic, suggesting that they are doing the same work – initiating the topic without providing any information about the topic itself. Also, the fact that in both these situations it is possible to hear other people in the background, it could be argued that this strategy is used to give the answerer the chance of getting out of the conversation, before getting to the reason for the call. It might be then that the "you" is a way to check the answerer's availability. More data is needed to investigate whether this is so, and it would also be interesting to compare with the use of "you" in fixed telephone conversations.

"What are you doing?" – Activity and availability

Moving on to a different way of checking availability, we will look at an excerpt where the caller asks what the caller is doing. By asking this, the caller gets both the activity and availability status of the answerer. In this case, it turns out that the boy Nicky is calling is in the middle of a class.

Excerpt 5

C:	hej![4]	A:	hi!
A:	he::j	A:	hi::
	(.)		(.)
C:	vad gör du	C:	what are you doing
A:	jag har lektion: men det är ingen fara hhh	A:	I'm having a class: but it's no problem hhh
C:	okej h:	C:	okay h:
	(.)		(.)
A:	ha::	A:	well::
C:	du	C:	you
A:	ja:	A:	yes:
C:	ikväll	C:	tonight
A:	ja:	A:	yes:
C:	nä:::r eh::blublub får vi nån mat?	C:	whe:::n eh:: blublub do we get anything to eat?
A:	nej	A:	no

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4 It is unclear here why the caller utters the first turn, the initial "hi". I am not sure whether there had been some interaction prior to this; this is all that is available on the tape.

C:	inte?	C:	we don't?
A:	nej	A:	no
C:	hepp (.) då får jag äta nu då	C:	okay then (.) then I'll have to eat now then

Here we can see how the caller is informed that she has called someone who is in class at the moment. However, the answerer claims that his being in class is not a problem, thus displaying availability. He does this in one turn "I'm in class but it's no problem". It is interesting that on the question "what are you doing?" he does not just answer that he is in class, he also says that it is not a problem. Probably this is because many of us would actually see this as an activity where one is (or should be) unavailable for talking on the phone[5], and he therefore needs to state that he is not one of these people. Presumably, it could be a problem for other people in his immediate surroundings, e.g. the teacher. Perhaps this is also a way then to "be cool", to show that he can do as he pleases.

The way that the conversation unrolls after he has said where he is, is peculiar. There is a long sequence with one word turns before she initiates the topic. This can be because she does not really have a topic, and comes up with one as the call develops. It could also be because she is orienting to him being in class, she might find this more problematic that he pretends to do. Therefore in initiating the topic step by step in short turns, she gives him the possibility of saying that he cannot talk. This argument is supported by the fact that she is hesitating and rephrasing her question about whether they will get anything to eat. She is perhaps searching for a way to formulate herself so that he does not have to give a lengthy answer, given the presumed inappropriateness of having a mobile phone conversation in class.

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5 It is forbidden in this school to use the mobile phone during class.

This excerpt also provides some insight into the larger issue of whether the introduction of the mobile phone and with that the possibility of being called anywhere, changes the notion of what it means to be in a place. A classroom traditionally is a place for activities related to learning. The mobile phone in this environment could be seen as competing for attention with this activity. That this is seen as a risk by some is evident in the many schools which prohibits mobile phone use during class, the school Nicky goes to being one of them. In this conversation, Nicky and the person in the classroom struggle with what it means to be in a class room, and what sort of activities are appropriate in such a place. On the one hand, the called says that it is not problem for him to have a conversation during class, on the other hand, the conversation enrolls in a way which seems sensitive to place and situation.

"What are you doing?" – A question about location?

In excerpt 6, "what are you doing?" is asked by the caller right after the identification and recognition part of the opening. Here, the question gets a location, rather than an activity.

Excerpt 6

A: a de e Nicky	A: yeah it's Nicky
C: he:j	C: hi:
A: he:j	A: hi:
C: vad gör du?	C: what are you doing?
A: e:: ja e i skolan nu	A: eh:: I'm in school now
C: osch: h:	C: osch: h:
C: >va bra< <u>jag</u> kommer jag tar fyrtitretåget för de har blivit nå <u>strul</u> i morse då va	C: >great< I'm coming I'm taking the forty-three train because there was some <u>trouble</u> this morning then
A: mhm	A: mhm
C: men du har ju minidiscen kan inte du börja lägga in det ljudet	C: but you have the minidisc can't you begin to do that sound

The question "Where are you?" is responded with a location; Nicky answers that she is in school[6].

In this excerpt, the caller treats the "where are you" as a question for where she is, rather then what she is doing, and it seems that this is how the caller meant it to be treated, as is evident in "great". There is not a follow-up question like "but what are you doing in school?", which would have suggested that he was actually interested in what she was doing. Also, that she is correct in answering with where she is evident taken that the caller then asks her to do something that she needs to be in school to be able to do (i.e. work on the sound with the minidisk). Therefore the "great" when the caller hears that she is where he hoped she would be, so that she could start doing the work before he gets there.

It seems then that her formulation of place, that she is in school, is relevant for the work that they are mutually engaged in at school. This idea is in line with Laurier's (1999) findings. He argues that the formulation of location in mobile phone conversation is tied to the business that needs to be done between the two people, and the place descriptions are thus doing a lot more than just formulating place.

Also, the caller explains that he is on his way, as well as the reason for being late, that "there was some trouble this morning". As Laurier (1999) has pointed out, "each actual occasion of lateness requires careful accounting for". When the caller says that he will be on the "forty-three train" he is orienting to "who we know we are" (Schegloff, 1971) – he shows that he sees her as a person for whom the "forty-three train" is

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[6] Note that this differs from the previous excerpt, where the answerer was in class. In Swedish at least, to be in school does not necessarily imply that one is in class; to be in school is to be somewhere on the school premises.

relevant. She knows what this can be taken to mean in terms of his arrival (cf excerpt 8).

Getting out of a conversation

In the next excerpt, Nicky gets a phone call in which she has troubles getting the caller to accept that she is unavailable for having a conversation. She is in a fitting room talking to someone else, when she answers the phone:

Excerpt 7

A:	jag tycker den va snygg a hej	A:	I think that was nice yeah hi
	((sound of door closing))		
C:	ha?	C:	what?
A:	hej	A:	hi
C:	hej hej	C:	hi hi
A:	men jag kan inte prata nu (.) för	A:	but I can't talk now (.) cause
	[jag e:: i en prov+		[I'm:: in a fitting+
C:	[nähä va ska jag göra åt det dåh	C:	[oh yeah what should I do about that then
A:	e:hehehe:	A:	e:hehehe:
C:	va gör du då?	C:	what are you doing then?
	(0.3)		(0.3)
A:	jag si+ ja <u>står</u> i en provhytt å provar kläder	A:	I'm si+ I'm standing in a fitting room and trying on clothes
C:	jaha:::	C:	oh yeah:::
A:	m	A:	m
C:	jaha:::	C:	oh yeah:::
A:	ja!	A:	yes!
C:	ja! (.) OCH?	C:	yes (.) AND?
A:	heh jag ringer dig sen	A:	heh I'm calling you later
C:	nä det gör du inte alls jag är inte hemma h	C:	no you don't at all I'm not home h
A:	nähe aja jag	A:	oh yeah oh well I'm
	[ringer dig imorron då		[calling you tomorrow then
C:	[du får ringa till mobilen då	C:	[you'll have to call the mobile then
A:	ja	A:	yes
C:	ja	C:	yes
A:	ja	A:	yes
C:	hej	C:	hi
A:	hej	A:	hi

One interesting thing with the opening in this excerpt is that the answerer's first turn seems to have multiple recipients. Nicky seems to orient herself to more than one listener. The utterance "I think that was nice yeah hi", has two parts. The first ("I think that was nice") presumably is meant for the other(s) present with her in the fitting room or in the shop.

The second part ("yeah hi") is presumably meant for the caller. However, it might be more complex than this. The fact that the caller can hear the entire first turn makes it possible for the caller to use this as a resource. In hearing "I think that was nice", the caller can draw some conclusions about the location and activity in which the called is engaged. It might also be that *the utterance is designed to give the caller this background information.* This could then be a way of showing that she is already engaged in a conversation with someone co-present, meaning that she is busy. Also, if she wants to get the conversation on a closing track from the beginning, letting the caller hear this piece of talk could be a strategy of displaying her unavailability.

After the greeting sequence, the answerer's first thing to say is that she "can't talk now". She thus tries to initiate a closing of the conversation in the beginning of the conversation. In line with the argument in Button, she is trying to "place the conversation on a closing track" (1991:251) by saying that she will call him later, thus making arrangements for the future. Button identified this specific topic as being one used to begin the closing of a conversation. However, the caller is not cooperative in this matter. It takes Nicky quite a few turns after having initiated the closing, before she can actually get out of the conversation, and end the call. She says explicitly that she is unavailable for having a conversation - "I can't talk now" and begins her explanation to why she cannot do this "I'm in a fitting room". The caller does not seem to hear her explanation; just that she cannot talk right now. The question "what are you doing then?" seems to imply that he wants a good explanation for why she cannot talk to him right then. The second time

she explains why she cannot talk; she does this by giving both location ("I'm standing in a fitting room"), and activity ("and trying on clothes").

She tries to end by promising to call him later. However, he takes her "I'll call you later" as "I'll call you *at home* later". It is difficult to say why this is so, but at least this discussion about when and where to call, postpones the ending of the conversation yet a little bit longer.

In the beginning of the phone call, Nicky seems amused by the fact that she is answering while being in a fitting room, but as the conversation develops and she has difficulties ending the conversation, she seems more and more annoyed. Although this caller might have been unusually unwilling to cooperate, it is interesting to see how *the called tries to get out of the conversation by saying what she is doing*, and how this is treated by the caller.

Also, in line with the argument of the case of the conversation in the classroom, this excerpt gives insights into the notion of what type of activities belongs in a certain place. Nicky shows quite vividly that she does not consider a fitting room an appropriate place to talk. Therefore it could be argued that even though the mobile phone allows people to be reached in all locations on all occasions, people work to maintain a sense of what belongs where.

Location, mobility and 'being late'

In the next excerpt, the caller volunteers to describe her location, although it has not been asked for and is not treated as particularly interesting by the answerer. Nicky gets a call from someone who is on a bus, and is late for a meeting they both are going to.

Excerpt 8

Ring ring
Rin+

A:	a de e Nicky	A:	yeah it's Nicky
C:	hej de e Sandra	C:	hi it's Sandra
A:	hej	A:	hi
C:	du ska på mötet eller?	C:	you're going to the meeting or?
A:	va sa du	A:	what did you say
C:	du ska på mötet?	C:	you're going to the meeting?
A:	<u>jag</u> ska på mötet ja	A:	<u>I</u>'m going to the meeting yes
C:	a jag kommer väl jag kommer en kvart tjugo minuter sent bara så börja utan mig	C:	yeah I'm coming I'm coming a quarter twenty minutes late just so start without me
A:	okej a men de e lugnt	A:	okay yeah but that's cool
C:	jag sitter på bu+ jag sitter på bussen nu ja e alldeles framme vid Backaplan snart så att	C:	I'm sitting on the bu+ I'm sitting on the bus now I'm almost at Backaplan soon so that
A:	okej . de e lugnt	A:	okay that's cool
C:	bra	C:	good
A:	ah hehej	A:	ah h: hi
C:	he:j	C:	hi:

((Ends conversation))
Nicky ((to herself or co-present)):
men fan jag kan inte ta det kortet   but shit I can't take that card

The reason for this call is that Sandra is running late for the meeting. The caller gets to the point very quickly, right after the greeting and identification has been done. There is no pre-topic work going on here, as in the other excerpts. This might be because the caller feels that this is an urgent topic, and does not want to risk not being able to deliver the message should the answerer claim to be unavailable.

When Sandra says that she will be a quarter to twenty minutes late, Nicky seems to want to end the topic already. She says "that's cool", but Sandra continues to explain where she is. It is interesting that she continues, although Nicky has already indicated that it is okay. The caller goes on to give her location, that she is soon at Backaplan. Her location can be used by Nicky to understand the estimated time of Sandra's arrival to the meeting. Her location is thus relevant for the future activity, and this might be why it is provided even though it already has been said that her late arrival is not a problem. In fact, the words "so that" indicates that her location should be

taken as meaning something in terms of her arrival; something like "I'm almost at Backaplan soon *so that* means I'll be there in X minutes".

Laurier (1999), in discussing accounts for running late, argues that one reason for providing more information to the answerer, can be to give the answerer an account to then relate to other persons going to the meeting one is running late for. This might also be part of the answer to why Sandra goes on to make a second statement about her location; to give Nicky some information the she can use when saying that Sandra is late for the meeting.

In this way, Sandra provides her location to Nicky although she has already indicated that is okay that she is late. Actually, in the closing goodbye, Nicky laughs subtly, which might indicate that she found it amusing or irrelevant that Nicky was providing her location, or even calling at all to say that she was late.

One explanation to why Nicky does not display an interest in discussing further where the caller is, and what time she can be estimated to arrive, might be because Nicky is occupied doing something else when she gets the phone call. We are actually given more information in this fragment than what is in the actual phone conversation. Nicky forgets to switch off the recording machine, and it becomes evident from what she says after having ended the phone conversation, that she is standing in the line to the cash machine. Therefore, presumably, she wants to end the call before it is her turn, in order to be able to use the cash machine easier. This information is available to us, but not to the caller.

The mobile phone provides a tool to do just this sort of micro-coordination (Ling and Yttri, 2002); calling and saying that one is late for a

meeting. The possibility of making a call if one is late, might also lead to a *demand* to call and say if one is late.

Conclusion

The data presented in this study is limited, and before investigating a larger set of data, from several participants, it is impossible to make more than initial observations about the character of mobile phone conversations. However, I hope to have provided a few initial observations about what sort of issues seem to be attended to in mobile phone conversations, and consequently what issues are to be studied in the future.

The main issue of this paper was to begin to investigate the ways in which participants in a mobile phone conversation orient to each other's location, activities and availability. Caller and answerer's location, as well as their availability for having a telephone conversation, is more complicated now that the telephone no longer is fixed to a predictable location. As always, it is rewarding to look at the talk to see how these things are being done as practical ongoing accomplishments.

One of the characteristics of mobile phone conversations is that the participants cannot beforehand know where the other party is or what she or he is doing. One can be 'forced' to answering in the middle of an activity which it is impossible or difficult to continue at the same time as having a mobile phone conversation. This can be compared to standing in line for the cash machine, as in one of the examples in this paper, where the actual

physical activity of standing in line does not get more complicated because of a phone call.[7]

The caller then has to find out about the called's availability for having a conversation. In some cases, this involves finding out about the location of the answerer, as certain places are considered more or less appropriate for having mobile phone conversations. We have seen a few examples of how this is done, and what resources the caller has for knowing if the called is available for conversation. The caller can draw some conclusions about the location and activity in which the called is engaged from the background information. We have seen that the mobile phone users seem to use background noise, voices etc. Also, in one instance, where the called was in a situation where it could be presumed he was not available for conversation (although he claimed he was) it seemed that the caller attended to this by giving the caller a possibility of ending the conversation. In another instance, the caller answered the phone while still talking to someone else. This might be a strategy to give the caller background information of the activity of the caller, and show that she was really not available for having a conversation. In some conversations where there seemed to be things going on where the called was located, the caller attended to this by initiating the topic with "you". This might be a strategy to give the called a chance to end the conversation.

Further, we have seen one example of how the called tried to get out of a conversation by talking about a future phone call. Making arrangements like this can be a way of placing the conversation on a closing track (Button

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[7] Of course, there might be other constraints for having a conversation in this location, e.g. if one does not want to have a conversation with others overhearing it.

1991:251). One way of doing this is through "projecting future activities", for instance, talking about whom should call a third person and make arrangements etc.

Location was particularly relevant if it could give any information about a future meeting. When there is a meeting or a place both callers are going to and one party is late, location seems to be attended to as an issue of what this means in terms of getting to the place where the meeting is.

The data presented in this paper also provide some intial ideas on the larger issue of whether the introduction of the mobile phone, and with that the possibility of being called anywhere, changes the notion of what it means to be in a place. For instance, when Nicky happens to call someone who is in a classroom, he says that it is not problem for him to have a conversation during class, but still the conversation enrolls in a way which seems sensitive to place and situation. Also, when Nicky received a call while trying on clothes in a fitting room, she shows quite vividly that she does not consider a fitting room an appropriate place to talk. It could be the case that even though the mobile phone allows people to be reached in all locations on all occasions, people work to maintain a sense of what belongs where. Thus, certain places are still tied to certain social activities (cf Crabtree, 2000). To be able to understand how the notion of 'place' changes with the mobile phone, we need to analyze more naturally occurring mobile conversations.

The convention to answer through self-identifying by name still seems to be attended to in mobile phone conversations. Regarding the identification and recognition, mobile phones have a few interesting features which might

affect the way in which this is done. One of these features is the caller identification function. This means that numbers can be preprogrammed into the phone, so that when someone calls, the name of the person appears on the display. In the data analyzed for this paper, there were no cases where the answerer explicitly attended to this by saying the name of the person who called. However, it is possible that in the cases where the caller did not state his or her name, the answerer could see the name on the display and the absence of a name was therefore unproblematic.

Also, some phones have the possibility of choosing ring signals specific to a group of people, or just one person. Thereby it is possible to have a unique ring signal for e.g. one's best friend or one's husband. This means that it is possible already from the summons, the ring signal, to know who is calling. In a sense, then, the first turn is already made by the technology, which provides an identification of the person calling. However, as previous studies of mobile phone use reveal (Weilenmann and Larsson, 2002) it is not always the person owning the telephone who uses it, so this way of identifying the caller might prove to be unsuccessful.

Another side of the technology is that it is possible to see phone calls that one has missed. Knowledge about who has tried to reach you previously that day, for instance, might be brought into play when answering the phone and identifying the person in the other end.

It is important to remember that mobile phone conversations can be just one form of communication between the conversationalists. The individuals who Nicky, the person we follow in this paper, speaks with are people that she spends time with, goes to school with, and thus interacts with in many

other ways than over the mobile phone. In the words of Laurier (1999) "they are speaking to one another because they do this day in, day out to co-ordinate their day's activities". He makes the interesting suggestion that this constant contact blurs the distinction between caller and called, in that it is not necessarily the caller that has to provide the reason for calling. As we have seen in this paper, in many of the conversations the topic is introduced in a manner which has us guessing that the speakers have talked about this previously. Topics are in a sense open for conversation, on the floor, and can therefore without much introduction be continued.

Therefore, one limitation with this way of collecting data is that we miss out on the chain of communication. It is not possible to see where a specific phone conversation is placed in relation to other communication, such as SMS (Short Message System) or landline telephone conversations, or face-to-face conversations. Thereby we sometimes miss out on how the conversations form part of a series (Button, 1991). Also, since the participant in this study was told to only give away the mobile phone conversations she felt comfortable with, this means that she probably had conversations which were not recorded.

For this particular study, I wanted to have access only to the data available on the tape, to use a CA approach. This was to make it more similar to CA studies of landline phone conversation. This meant that I did not do any interviews with the person whose conversations I recorded. I could have asked her about the particular conversations, and have her opinion about what was going in. A possible and interesting next step would be to include other types of data. For instance, to interview people and talk

to them about how they handle availability could be useful, as well as to use findings from fieldwork. When studying mobile phone use in public places it is possible to get only one end of the phone conversations, but in this there is still a lot of information to obtain about how people formulate place as well. In this paper, I have in a sense actually used some small ethnographic data in the analysis, and that was the information that was recorded on the tape but was not part of the actual conversations. This provided more information about what was going on before and after the conversations, and what issues the participants where dealing with. An example of this was when it became evident from the tape that the answerer was standing in line to use the cash machine. Without this information about the location, activity, and presumed unavailability of answerer, the analysis would not have been the same; it is therefore worth investigating how to combine methods for studying these issues in the future.

Appendix 1: Transcription notations

Based on Jefferson's transcript notation, as related in J M Atkinson and J Heritage (1984).

__	emphasis is indicated by underlining
e:hhh:	colon, indicates prolonged segment
(0.3)	a pause, timed in tenths of a second
(.)	a pause, shorter than one tenth of a second
?	rising inflection, not necessarily a question
!	animated tone, not necessarily an exclamation
Overlap []	simultaneous (overlapping) speech
+	interrupted speech

h	outbreath, unvoiced laughter
>what<	word or part of sentence spoken faster than surrounding
AND	words in capitals are spoken louder than surrounding talk

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