WITHHOLDING EXPLICIT ASSESSMENTS IN TOURIST OFFICE TALK

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Plan

- Recap: conditional relevance
- Absences
- Withholding assessments
Adjacency pair (AP)

- **Adjacency pair**: fundamental unit of interaction
  - Links turns at talk together and indicates what is expected next

- **Features of minimal, unexpanded form**
  - A sequence of two utterances
  - Produced by different speakers
  - Adjacent
  - Ordered as first pair part (FPP- initiating turn) and second pair part (SPP- responsive turn)
  - Typed (greeting/greeting; invitation/acceptance/declination; question/answer etc)
Minimal APs

A  What time is it?   FPP: Question
B  It’s noon.  SPP: Answer  FPP: Invitation

A  Why don’t you come and see me sometime.  SPP: Acceptance
B  I would like to.

A  Would you like some tea.  FPP: Offer
B  Yes please.  SPP: Acceptance

- Response (turn B- SPP) fitted to the type of initiating action (FPP)
- Same form (interrogative) but different functions (actions)
“Given the recognizable production of a first pair part, on its first possible completion its speaker should stop, a next speaker should start (often someone selected as next speaker by the FPP), and produce a second pair part of the same pair type.” (Schegloff, 2007)

Upon recognizable production of a FPP, a/the relevant second part is immediately expectable and is made relevant by the FPP (sequential implicativeness, Schegloff & Sacks, 1973) (e.g. I love you)
Two parts: two types of relationship

- **AP relationship: prospective relationship**
  - FPP (initiating action) makes relevant a limited set of possible *relevant* responses
  - Sets up a context (e.g., constraints) for the production of the next turn/action
  - ‘Context-shaped’ and ‘context-renewing’ (Heritage, 1984)
Next turns and displayed understandings

- **Adjacency/nextness:** *backward* relationship
  - SPP (responsive) displays understanding of just-prior turn and embodies action responsive to it as it was understood
    - Next-turn proof procedure

- **Alternative** types of SPP to some FPPs (Preference organisation)
  - invitation $\rightarrow$ acceptance/declination
  - Request $\rightarrow$ acceptance/rejection

- **Preferred & dispreferred responses handled in different ways:**
  - design of response embodies speaker’s stance towards FPP

- **APs:** fundamental significance for how mutual understanding (intersubjectivity) is accomplished and displayed in talk
Normative character to relationship between turns at talk

Adjacency pairs: framework that is accountably implemented

Production of a FPP proposes that a particular type of response should relevantly and accountably be produced next

- FPP speakers hold recipients accountable for not producing the response that was ‘due’ (e.g. pursuit) or...
- recipients of a FPP may account for not providing the response made relevant
‘Upon recognisable production of a FPP, a/the relevant second part is immediately expectable’

- Normative constraint on the next speaker to produce a relevant SPP

- Whatever comes after a FPP is inspected for how it could be a relevant response

- If not produced, then officially missing/absent
  - inferences will be drawn and/or efforts made to pursue a response
Relevant absences

(8)
1A: Is there something bothering you or not?
   Est-ce qu’il y a quelque chose qui t’embête ou pas?
2   (1.0)
3A: Yes or no
   Oui ou non
4   (1.5)
5A: Eh?
6B: No
   Non

(9)
1Ch: Have to cut these Mummy.
    Faut les couper Maman.
2   (1.3)
3 Ch: Won’t we Mummy
    Faut couper Maman
4   (1.5)
5 Ch: Won’t we
    I faut
6 M: Yes
    Oui
Assessments as a restricted activity

- Explore the notion of interactional restriction through two sequential environments making assessments relevant and their subsequent withholding in tourist office (TO) talk.

- 800+ telephone calls between clients and French TOs.
Institutional background

• **Institutional constraints impact upon:**
  
  a) overall shape of interaction between professional and layperson
  
  • (e.g., Zimmermann, 1992 on shape of calls to emergency services)
  
  b) range of interactional activities in which institutional representative may or may not engage
  
  • (e.g., Butler et al., 2009 advice in Australian child health helpline)

  □ TOs’ primary role: information providers
  
  • Fostering and promoting tourism within own geographical area
    
    → *intermediary* between tourism providers and public
  
  • Key principle: impartiality, but no formal interactional guidance
Assessments

- Previous work: pervasiveness of assessments in social interaction
- Assessments display participant’s stance towards assessable + access to it (epistemics)  
  (Pomerantz, 1984; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987, 1992)
- First assessments set up the normative expectation of second assessments (Pomerantz, 1984)
### Preferred responses: assessments

(Pomerantz, 1984)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>T’s- tshuh beautiful day out isn’t it? C’- C’est une belle journée, non?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Yeh it’s just gorgeous… Oui c’est magnifique…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>Isn’t he cute  Il est pas mignon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>O::h he::s a::DORable O::h il est a::DORable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**First assessments: normative expectation of second assessments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>She seems like a nice little [lady</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>[Aw::fully nice little person. Absolument charmante petite personne.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessments

- Support, affiliation, epistemics (priority & independence of knowledge) (Heritage, 2002; Heritage & Raymond, 2005; Raymond & Heritage, 2006)

- Range of actions accomplished by assessments (e.g., Lindström & Mondada’s (2009) special issue of ROLSI)

- Assessments contribute to shape of overall activity and to institutionality of the context
  (Clayman, 1998; Clark et al., 2003; Pillet-Shore, 2003; Lindström & Mondada, 2009)
Two ways in which assessments are made relevant in TOs

- Previous studies: assessments in assertions

- In TOs, assessments made relevant by enquiries (sequential environment of Q&A)
  1. ‘C’est bien’ type enquiries: ‘C’est bien’ (it’s good/nice), ‘c’est correct’ (it’s decent)
  2. ‘C’est comment comme X’ enquiries (how is it this X/what is it like this X)
In TOs, ‘c’est bien’ type enquiries with partially-rising intonation: routine way of enquiring about *quality of a service*

- Closed Qs in declarative format involving embedded assessments
- ‘claims greater epistemic access than interrogatives… whilst still assigning authority for confirming to recipient’ (Heritage & Raymond, frth)
- Not first position item (deictic ‘c (it))/often ‘et’ prefaced
- Invite confirmation and subsequent assessments

Formulation ‘c’est bien/correct…’ embodies presupposition to be confirmed and makes relevant further assessment $\rightarrow$ minimal confirmation insufficient

In TOs, *absence and avoidance of explicit assessments* in next turn after enquiries making them relevant, despite TOs’ epistemic priority $\rightarrow$ so what response?
1. [Chevalier- PTO.31.07.DW_A0144PR Delicacy food]

1 Clt ET:: >c’t est bien comme hôte((h))l¿
AN::D > it’s good this hote((h))l¿

2 Agt hh c’est un hôtel >qui fait partie< d’ la Cuisinerie
hh it is a hotel >that is part< of De↓licacy Food

3 Gour↓man:de il est propre eu ::::h <i::ls sont en train
it is clean u::::h <they:: are in the process of
de voir pour être labélisés au niveau des étoiles.>
considering being ranked in terms of stars.>

5 (.)

6 hh est-ce que vous avez Internet ?
(.). hh do you have Internet?

7 (0.2)

8 Clt hh eu::h ou:i((hh)).
hh u::h ye((h))s.

9 (0.2)

10 Agt hh alors en allant sur leur site,
hh so by going on their site,
((6 lines omitted about the web address))

17 Agt petit tiret de la touche six [Name] [web address]).
small dash on the number six key [Name] [web address]

18 hh vous allez pouvoir <le re*gard((h))er*>
.h↓you are going to be able to <*loo((h))k at it*>

19 Clt Ptk d’accord((h))rd.
Ptk riah((h))t.
2. [Chevalier- PTO.31.07.DW_A0144PR The Rocard]

20 Clt  Ptk d’acco((h))rd. (. ) et le le: Rocard c’est:: i c>’est vien¿<
  Ptk righ((h))t. (. ) and thee: the Rocard i::t’s it it’>s good¿<

21 (0.2)

22 Agt  Le ROCA:RD mes tarifs vont de soixantë-ui’ euros à quatre-vingt-
  The ROCA:RD my prices go from sixty eight euros to ninety
dix-sept euros = e[t c’est un-]
  seven euros= and (it’s a-)

23 Clt  [↓Ah ouais, c’est che((h)))r.
  [↓Oh I see, that’s expensi((h)))ve.

24 Clt  (0.1) [↓]

25 (0.1)

26 Agt  C’est un °deux étoï((h)))les°.
  It’s a °two sta((h)))r°.

27 (0.2)

28 Clt  D’accord.=Bah j’ vais app’ler pour \eu::h pour voir .= J’vous r’mercie
  Right.= well I am going to call to \u::h to find out. =I thank you

29 beaucou((hh)))p.
  very mu((h))ch.
3. [Chevalier HTO5.08.DW_A0076FC Medium category]

1 Clt .hhh et- et- et- et > sinon c’est bien le le: le: .hhh and- and- and- and > otherwise that it’s good the thee: thee: la- la- ( - - [ - ] )

2 Agt [> Je n’ connais pas person-nell’ment. < =
[> I don’t know (it) person-ally. < =

3 Clt = Ah bon d’a[ccord. = Oh really o[kay.

4 Agt [(on est) sur une catégorie médium hein. [(we are) in a medium category uh.

5 (0.2)

6 Clt N: d’accor:d,
N : ri:ght,

7 (0.1)

8 Agt O: Voilà.
O: there you are.

9 Clt D’accord.
Okay.

L2: Claiming lack of knowledge
L3: Treated as newsworthy
Clt’s orientation to agt’s greater knowledge
L4: minimal factual description
4. [Chevalier - HTO-09.08.WS320338BR Decent hotel]

1 Clt >[excusez]-[moi] d’vous déran/ger< .h euh:m (.) [ j’aurais vou↑LU SA/VOI:R (.) ↑LA-
≠>[ sorry to disturb you< .h uh:m (.) I am wan↑ting TO /KNO:W (.)↑THE-

2 LE: L’HOTEL LA REVE/RE:NCE¿
THEE: HOTEL LA REVE/RE:NCE¿

3 (0.2)

4 Agt oui,
Yes,

5 (0.1)

6 Clt c’est: CORREC comme hôtel oui:
It’s DECEN- this hotel o::r

7 (0.1)

8 Agt ptk ah oui, = c’t un trois étoile:les >do[nc< i (- - - ) ] <<et puis là
Ptk oh yes=, it’s a three star >so< it [(- - - ) ]<< and there

9 Clt [>c’est un trois é-
[>it’s a three s-

10 Agt c’est bien situé hein.=vous êtes p((h))as très loin du Vieux Bassin °donc euh:.°
it’s well situated uh.=you are no((h))t very far from the Old Harbour °so u:h.°

11 (0.1)

12 Clt n’>d’accord.<
n’ > right.<

13 (0.1)

14 Agt hm. ((non mais ) = y a pas] d’problème °Monsi[eur.°=
Hm. ((no but) = there’s no] problem °Si[r. °=]
SPP to enquiries with embedded assessments

- ‘Factual’ descriptions drawing on ‘external, objective information’ presented as relevant information for clients to make their decisions
  - Star ranking, prices, membership of external scheme, location etc
- But whatever comes immediately after a FPP is inspected for how it could be a relevant response
- Sequential positioning of these descriptions after enquiries that make assessments relevant
  - Descriptions not so factual and certainly not neutral/objective
  - Choice of alternative formulations (not assessments) heard to be doing evaluative work by virtue of their sequential placement
ET: >c’est bien comme hôte(l’)hôtel

AN::D > it’s good this hôtel

hh c’est un hôtel >qui fait partie< d’la Cuisinerie Gourmande
hh it is a hotel >that is part< of Delectacy Food it is

il est propre eu :::h <i::ls sont en train de voir pour être
considering being ranked in terms of stars>
clean u:::h <they:: are in the process of
labelélsés au niveau des étoiles.

>it’s good<

Ptk d’accord(.). et le le: RoBar:card c’est:: i c>’est vienne<
Ptk right(.). and thee: the RoBar:card i::t’s it it’s good<

Le ROBAR:RD mes tarifs vont de soixante-dix euros
The ROBAR:RD my prices go from sixty eight euros to ninety

à quatre-vingt- dix-sept euros = e[t c’est un-]

seven euros= and (it’s a-)

>it’s a three s-

It’s DECEN- this hotel o::r

ptk ah oui, = c’t un trois étoiles >do[nc< i (- - - )] <<<et puis là
Pt k oh yes=, it’s a three star >so< it [- - - ] <<< and there

[>c’est un trois é- ]
[>it’s a three s- ]

> it’s well situated uh.=you are no((h))t very far from the Old Harbour °so u:h.°

Although implicit evaluative work, descriptions fall short of terms of initial assessments (e.g. ‘il est propre’, ‘fait partie de la cuisinerie gourmande’, ‘mes tarifs vont de..’, ‘il est bien situé’ in response to ‘c’est bien comme hotel’

-Not treated as positive evaluations because of disconnect between initial enquiries and formulations in agents’ responses
‘C’est comment comme X’ enquiries

- No embedded assessment, but assessments invited in return
- Make relevant two types of responses:
  a) evaluation (e.g. ‘c’est très bien’)
  b) description (e.g. ‘c’est un hôtel normand’)

- In TOs, no evaluations in next turns
- Agents produce ‘factual’ descriptions
5. [Chevalier -HTO 1.11.WS320490FC The Reverence]

1 Agt Office de tourisme Hougères Cassandra bonjourë¿

2 Clt ptk oui bonjour ma/dame un p’tit renseignement s’il vous plaît, = j’aurais

3 voulu savoir le::: ptk l’hôtel la Révérence c’est comment comme hôte:l,

4 (1.2)

5 Agt .hhh c’est un /hôtel qu’est classé trois étoiles,

6 (0.3) 7 Clt D’accord,

8 (0.2)

9 Agt oo (*Donc je crois*)oo de mém/oi:re òch’ vais vous l’oo (oo con- firm:oo)

9 oo (*So I think*)oo from me/mo:ry òI am going tooo (oo con- firm it for you:oo)

10 ((ruffling papers))

11 Agt .hhh (0.2) >\(\text{oui tout à fait}<< \text{c’est un hôtel qui (- - )} < \text{trois étoiles euh::}

12 Rue d’ la [Name.] .h

13 (0.1)

14 Clt Hm mh,=

Hm mh,=
5. [Chevalier -HTO 1.11.WS320490FC The Reverence] (continued)

15 Agt = Donc à deux minutes du:: bass- du Vieux Bassin::
=So two minutes from the:: har- from the Old Harbour::r
16 et euh:: (0.3) voilà.
and u::h (0.3) there you are.
17 Clt .hh et c’est bien comm[e hôtel¿
.hh and it’s good th[is hotel¿
18 Agt [ ( - - )
19 (0.8)
20 Agt Ou:i(h).
Ye:(h)s.
21 (1.6)
22 Clt D:’accord.
O:okay.

Following continuers , still no explicit assessment
Factual description (L15-16: location)
L16: ‘Voilà’ (end of contribution)

-‘L17: C’est bien’ enquiry as pursuit
L20: Delayed, very minimal confirmation
-L21: clt orients to more to be said
-Ex 1, 2,3 & 5: ‘C’est bien type enquiries’ often ‘and’ prefaced as part of ongoing activity
orient to prior information/listing as orienting insufficiently to quality
6. [Chevalier- HTO 1.11.WS320490FC Both nice] (pursuit)

57Clt  
Mai:s tous les deux c’est des hôtels bien?

But both of them they’re good hotels?

58  (1.1)

59Agt  
/ou:i.

/ye:s.

60  (0.4)

61Clt  
D’accord, (.) est-ce que:: ↑ya un restaurant: ↑ there a restaurant: in one

Okay, (.) i::s ↑there a restaurant: i::n one

6 2 des deux.

of them.

-L’est bien’ enquiry as pursuit
-‘but’ prefaced as contrastive with prior
Evidence of non-satisfaction in prior enquiry
L59: minimal confirmation after long pause
L60-61: Orients to more to be said
→ different trajectory
7. [Chevalier- RTO 1.11. WS320491FC- market]

1 Clt .hh et eu:::h c’est comment commë::: comm’marché. .hh and u:::h it’s how thi::s u:::h this market.

2 (2.4)

3 Agt Sont des maisons. (they) are houses.

4 (0.8)

5 Agt Des p’tits châlets. Little huts.

6 (1.7)

7 Clt >Oui=mais ch’ veux dire< au s:- en terme de c’qui es::t n:: euh:::m:::

>Yes= but I mean< in the s:- in terms of what i::s n:: u:h:::m:::

8 °disponible.<<enfin de c’qui est offer:t comme euh:: °.hh comme available. << well of what is on offer uh:: .hh the products

9 produits eccetera. C’es:*::t* c’est va[rié c’es::t eccetera. It i:*::s* it’s va[ried it’s:

10 Agt [Des produits régionaux. [ Regional products.

11 Clt N’accord,

Okay,
12 (2.0) Eu:::h tout c’qui va êt produits eu:::h (0.5) *bah* produits de- Noël,
U:::h all that is products u:::h (0.5) *well* Christmas- products,
14 produi::ts (0.4) .hhh des vêt- ments fin des écharpes eu:::h (1.0) des polaires,
pro::ducts (0.4) .hhh some clo- thes well scarves u:::h (1.0) fleeces,
15Clt Hm mh,
Hm mh,
16 (2.0) Et eu:::h tou- voilà. Tout c’qui:: *tient bien
£chaud hah*
And u:::h every- there you are. Everything tha::t *keeps (you)
£warm hah*
18Clt .hh e:t c’est bien comme marché. Ça vaut le: coup d’venir,
.hh and it ‘s good this market. It is wo:rh coming,
19 (1.0) Bah- oui. ouioui. C’est un beau marché d’Noël.
Well- yes. Yesyes. It’s a beautiful Christmas market.
21 (0.3) ((sniffs)) d’a:ccord.
((sniffs)) O:okay.
9. [HTO – 31.07WS320262BR- very good hotels]
1 Clt >/Bon:: bah c’est déjà pas < MAL << I SONT ↑BIEN D’FAÇONè = C’EST
>]/Goo::d well it’s already not< BAD << THEY’RE ↑GOOD ANYWAY? =IT’S
2 CORREC[T?
DECEN[T?
3 Agt [oui:, ah bah ouioui là °c’est du trois étoiles°
[yes:, oh well yesyes there/in that case °it’s a three star°
4 donc c’est quand même une euh::.
si it’s at least a u::h.
5 (0.2)
6 Clt B:on. .h[h ↑BAN ]
Goo:d. .hh ↑OKAY]
7 Agt [(De très bons)] hôtels. Heh.
[(very good) hotels. Heh.
8 Clt Eh ben j’vais leur téléphoner [ j’ vo]us r’mercie d’ vot gentillesse.]
Well I am going to phone them [Thank you] for your kindness.]
Conclusions: power of sequences

- Sequential environment of Q&A
- Enquiry about quality in 2 different formats making assessments relevant
  - Explicit assessments withheld
  - ‘Factual’ descriptions
- Seemingly neutral elements nonetheless interpretable as evaluative through their sequential placement and nature
- What a turn is doing cannot be understood outside of its sequential placement (position + composition)
- Power of sequential positioning in accomplishing action (implicit vs explicit evaluative work)
Concluding remarks: Absence

- Participants may *withhold* an official action (on the record), but find a different sequential way of achieving its import off the record through turn design.

- Absence: not just the *lack* of something, but related to the capacity for an utterance to make relevant but not deliver a particular action (evaluation).

- Absence: sequentially and interactionally meaningful.

- Agents’ responses treated as negative evaluations, as fall short of terms of initial enquiries.
Concluding remarks: Institutional import

Alternative formulations to explicit assessments= ‘professional’ answer

- Skillful implicit evaluative work, but not produced as overt recommendations (off the record)

- Withholding, distance and accountability: selection of external, third-party factors (ranking, prices etc) to avoid being heard as doing evaluation/personal opinion and avoid being held accountable for response provided and be challenged about it

- Epistemics: agts work to avoid showing what they know to accomplish the work of information provider vs doctors’ ‘zones of expertise’ (Sarangi & Clarke)- doing impersonal response

- Restriction: selection of a practice (avoidance of a practice: assessments) to accomplish both a principle of the organisation (impartiality) and its role as information provider and intermediary (selection of turn design)

  - Theme vs phenomenon