

Becoming friends

Establishing social relations in L2 business calls

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This conversation analytic study draws on a longitudinal corpus of landline phone calls. The material under examination comprises seven calls in English made between 1987 and 1991 between J (English L2 speaker), a European spare part provider, and T, a representative of a British company. Over the years in the course of these conversations, the character of the calls changes: J and T not only conduct business but also build a strong personal relationship. Through changing practices for (1) opening the calls and transitioning to the reason for the calls, (2) producing and responding to laughter tokens, and (3) using personal address terms to accomplish closings, the calls become more personal, knowledge is shared, and the two participants maintain conversational topics other than routine business. Unlike in other recent studies in the field, the changes cannot be traced back to trouble in the talk and its solutions but emerge in the slow building of shared experiences and personal knowledge over time.

Keywords: interactional competence, conversation analysis, laughter, phone call openings, phone call closings, language learning in the wild

1. Introduction

In his seminal work *Cognition in the wild*, Edwin Hutchins (1995) documented the collectively organized processes of problem-solving and learning in navigating a ship and showed that these are not induced by any individual's cultural background, nor do they reside in anyone's individual brain. Rather, they arise out of collaborative social practice, participants' coordination and mutual adaptation in action. This means that cognition is researchable as distributed and socially situated in its natural habitat, i.e. people's activities in the real world (see also e.g. Lave, 1988; Maynard & Clayman, 1991; Suchman, 1987).

This perspective has gradually been adopted in applied linguistics and second language acquisition (SLA) research. It was a crucial element in the epistemology

behind Firth and Wagner's (1997) call to broaden the SLA database and their invitation to direct the lens towards everyday social activities rather than to the classroom, and to look at second language (L2) learners as language users rather than somehow defective non-native speakers. Under the umbrella term of conversation analytic SLA (CA-SLA), this has led to an increase in studies investigating L2 learning as situated social practice, starting from Markee and Kasper (2004), and social process over time, starting from Brouwer and Wagner (2004). Since then, we have seen a growing number of examples of how L2 learning is a matter of developing interactional competence – i.e. changing methods for accomplishing social actions (for a recent overview, see e.g. Pekarek Doehler & Eskildsen, 2022).

Becoming an accomplished L2 speaker, however, means more than achieving interactional competence for participating in social practices. It is about building social relations with people, creating personal and joint histories in and through the L2. The data used in this paper, phone calls between business colleagues, give a rare perspective on what lies behind L2 learning: forming relations with other people through the medium of the L2. This process requires growth of interactional competence, and in the case of our specific data, it goes deeper than *doing being collegial* (Reddington et al., 2021).

With this article, along with the other contributions to this special issue, we scrutinize how the building of social relations with other people over time is locally constituted and how it plays into interactional competence development. Language learned may be transferable across contextual borders (Larsen-Freeman, 2004), but not always without adaptation. In that sense, language is not learned as an abstract resource for interaction, but as a resource for interacting with very specific people, bearing traces of specific interactions over time in interactions with the same or other co-participants. The relation between L2 learning and sociality – that is, L2 learning as *also* a matter of nurturing social relations (Brouwer & Wagner, 2004) – is a recent emergent interest, as an increasing amount of SLA research, particularly CA-SLA, is drawing on longitudinal data involving the same participants (e.g. Eskildsen, 2025; Greer, 2018; Pekarek Doehler & Berger, 2019).

We will describe the data in detail in Section 3, but we would like to mention at this point that we are working on a classic set of data consisting of business phone calls. These data have played an important role in our understanding of L2 interactional competence, but apart from presentations at conferences in the early 2000s, we have not used these data in publications. We went back to these data to dig into something we noted earlier but never investigated methodically, namely how two business contacts develop their professional relationship into a personal one resembling friendship. Our analysis will highlight the mutually constitutive nature of L2 learning and social relationship building.

Our data are from a time when phone calls were made through landlines, and when fax and telex supported the phone interaction in systematic ways (Firth, 1995). In analyzing landline phone calls, we build on a firm CA tradition, as telephone conversations were the prime data in the early years of CA. Recordings of phone calls gave access to social settings without the researchers being present. Phone calls were rich data sources for studies of language use. As Schegloff (1992) writes, Sacks started his analysis of conversation with noting down bits and pieces of talk he overheard, before he “came across stenographic transcripts, and then the tapes, of the telephone calls to the Suicide Prevention Center of, or about suicidal persons” (1992:XVII). Sacks’ first lecture from 1964 deals with an analysis of telephone openings (Lectures 1992:2–11). From that point on, recordings of telephone interactions became the central resource on which early CA was built (Schegloff, 1968, 1979).

2. Longitudinal studies of social interaction and interactional competence

Longitudinal conversation analytic work has been a growing enterprise for two decades. There is a widening and deepening understanding in interaction research of the usefulness, if not necessity, of investigating how people’s conduct in and through social interaction changes over time and across contexts (see Deppermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2021; Pekarek Doehler et al., 2018). A particularly fruitful subset of longitudinal CA can be found in the form of longitudinal CA-SLA, which has conceptualized L2 learning as development of interactional competence (Pekarek Doehler, 2018; Pekarek Doehler & Berger, 2018; going back to Hall, 1995; Hall et al., 2011; He & Young, 1998). Interactional competence is understood as consisting of methods for accomplishing specific actions, and longitudinal CA-SLA has been concerned with how such an interactional competence in an L2 changes over time. This research has documented change in L2 speakers’ methods for managing turn-taking, task openings and disengagements, storytelling and responding to storytelling, repair, requesting, complaining, informing, topic management, sequence organization, and word searches (e.g. Hellermann, 2008, 2011; Kim, 2016; König, 2020; Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004; Nguyen, 2011, 2018, 2019; Nguyen & Malabarba, 2024; Shively, 2015; Skogmyr Marian, 2022). The starting point for longitudinal research into L2 interactional competence development is a specific action or course of action (e.g. initiating repair, disagreeing with others, opening a storytelling, complaining), and the research has produced central insights: L2 interactional competence development involves the emergence of semiotic resources for managing the orga-

nization of interaction, e.g. floor-holding and response elicitation, and it may happen in the form of *both* diversification *and* routinization of procedures for action (see Pekarek Doehler & Eskildsen, 2022 for a recent overview). Diversification refers to a development from one recurring, more or less standard method towards a more diverse set of resources for accomplishing a given action. This enables L2 speakers to become increasingly fine-tuned to co-participants' conduct in the form of increased precision in turn-taking, the organization of preference structure, prefacing, etc. Routinization, on the other hand, refers to the other side of the coin, namely when an L2 speaker starts with a range of imprecise methods for carrying out an action and increasingly settles on one very relevant and efficient way of doing it (Pekarek Doehler & Balaman, 2021). It may also be that an L2 speaker, through repeated use, routinizes a way of carrying out an action even if it consists of an idiosyncratic, nonstandard pattern (Eskildsen, 2015, 2020).

In this paper, we follow the same participants over time, and we notice that changes and routinization are not only individual changes on the part of the L2 speaker. For example, to create and expand a new element in the opening sequence of phone calls, the co-participant needs to go along and change their practice equally. By building joint practices, both speakers develop “conversational routine(s) by which the speakers longitudinally work to come together as conversation partners” (Skogmyr Marian, 2022: 172). In other words, language is initially learned as a resource for interacting with specific people in speakers' local-social worlds. Similarly, Greer (2018) traced the socialization of a Japanese exchange student into a pre-dinner ritual of saying grace in a Mexican immigrant family in Australia. Revealing how the student went from peripheral to central participant in the ritual, the study focused on changes in his interactional competence and the ongoing mutual adaptation on the part of all participants as the student's participation status changed. Pekarek Doehler and Berger (2019) showed an L2 French speaking au pair changing methods for accomplishing word searches in the host family setting. The au pair went from using an explicit word search marker to elicit help, *comment on dit*, to using it as a floor-keeping device while attempting to complete the ongoing word search herself. The authors argued that this change was rooted in the establishment of familiarity between the au pair and her host family members and in her gradually becoming accepted as an epistemic equal. Eskildsen (2025), reporting on three cooking sessions and dinner table conversations with the same L2 speaking participants over two months, showed how the participants' emergent social relationship was a vehicle for word searches, storytelling, reference-making, and the accomplishment of assessments. The documented vocabulary learning and development of interactional competence was shown to be woven into the fabric of the relationship as it was being formed and nurtured by the participants. Finally, in a rare study

of L2 interactional competence development in text chats, Malabarba (2022) showed how an L2 English user's methods of accomplishing requests directed at the teacher developed in concord with their evolving joint social-interactional history. All in all, these studies underscore the mutually constitutive nature of social relationship building and development of interactional competence (Kasper & Wagner, 2014).

In this paper, we draw on the notion of interactional competence to investigate changing methods for opening phone calls, for laughing together, and for accomplishing closings using address terms. We consider our empirical findings in the light of an evolving relationship between our two participants. Our focal interest, then, is in the relation between relationship building and interactional competence in data where verbal language is the primary vehicle of interaction, i.e. in data where the speakers do not have visual access to each other when they speak.

3. Data

With the above in mind, we have revisited a database of business phone calls from the late 1980s to early 1990s. This set of data has been given to us by our colleague Michael Svendsen Petersen. All calls were made by or to J who worked in a large Danish metal factory. Shortly before the first call in the corpus, he had been promoted from a blue-collar job to oversee and handle the spare part acquisition for the factory. At the beginning of our longitudinal corpus, J was not only new to his job but also had little experience with the languages he needed to use to call his business contacts, English and German.

The database consists of 30 phone calls in English and 37 phone calls in German and can be found at TalkBank.org. In both the English and the German corpora, J calls some business partners several times, while other partners appear only once. Which specific contact he calls depends on the spare part he is looking for and the company that can provide it, but we have no ethnographic information about these contextual aspects of the calls. The data were collected by J himself over four years as his own personal resource for going back over the calls for understanding, remembering, and learning. At the time of recording, J listened to and reviewed the calls and received linguistic advice from Svendsen Petersen. J did not keep all his calls, so the existing corpus is not a complete collection of all his phone conversations.

Our primary focus in this paper is a subset of the data from the English corpus consisting of seven calls between J and T, an employee of a British spare parts dealer. Table 1 provides an overview of these calls, with the numbers indicating

identification number in the database and year (e.g. ENG3/87 indicates that it is call #3, carried out in English, and recorded in 1987). T is the business partner J calls most frequently. J not only calls T, but the two visit each other during the period when the calls were collected, to get to know each other's company better. Over the five years of data collection, J and T developed a different kind of relation than the relations between J and his other business partners. In this paper we document how the nature of (aspects of) the calls changes over time.

Table 1. Overview of the calls

Eng3/87	Eng10/89	Eng11/89	Eng16/89	Eng25/91	Eng26/91	Eng27/91
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4. Analysis

In this section we analyze the openings of the phone calls and the transitions to the reason for the call over time (4.1). We then turn to the production of laughter tokens and the conditions for the emergence of co-laughing between the two participants (4.2), and to the way they use address terms to accomplish closings (4.3).

4.1 Call openings over time

In our corpora, most calls to and from companies are usually answered by and transferred from the reception/switchboard. Therefore, these calls have two openings, one with the switchboard and one with the intended addressee. In call openings with the switchboard, J typically responds with a standard phrase. The turns shown in Examples 1 to 3 are responses to the switchboard operator taking the call (note that none of these examples are from the seven calls listed in Section 3):

(1) (ENG1/86)

1 OP: Braillefour

2 (Ø.7)

3 J: hhh this is from en: bee cee product divisions in Denmark.

4 ·hhh can I speak to mister Breath:..

(2) (ENG4/87)

1 OP: dee dubbelju ee:; good afternoo::n?

2 J: ts ·hh good afternoon:n, this is from the en bee cee products in Denmark.

4 J: ·hhh can I speak to Samanta Ralph (.) please.

(3) (ENG30/91)

1 OP: 'noon

2 J: ·hhh good morning. This is from en bee cee products in Denmark.

3 (0.3)

4 J: ·hh can I please speak to mister (0.3) James Bro:w.

The opening routine with switchboards is very stable. Extract (1) was recorded in 1986, and Extract (3) was recorded about four years later in the final call of the corpus. The core of the opening routine with the switchboard is J's self-presentation as a company representative, but as seen in Extracts (2) and (3), it can be embellished by other elements, e.g. a greeting.

When the call has been forwarded, we see different openings, depending on whether J and the call-taker have previous experience with each other. Extract (4), from the beginning of the data collection (1987), and Extract (5), from the middle (1989), illustrate this (note that both Extracts (4) and (5) are from our focal collection):

(4) (ENG3/87)

17 T: good afternoon, sfa:les;

18 J: ·mt ·hh good afternoon:n, this is Jorgen from Denmark.

19 en bee cee product divisons.

20 ·hhh e:h you have sent us a telex from the twenty seven (.) in

21 August month: .hh

22 (0.3)

23 T: yeah.

In line 17, the call is picked up with a greeting and an identification of the sales department. J responds with a greeting (l. 18) and, in contrast to the interactions with the switchboard, he presents himself with first name and location (*Jorgen from Denmark*). It is a familiar self-identification of a caller who expects to be recognized by these tokens. The unit is delivered with turn-final intonation and could, in principle, be answered by another greeting or a token of recognition, but there is no response, and J adds more material to his presentation (the name of his company, l. 19). T is still not responding with any sign of recognition, and J moves to the identification of a document which is the reason for his call. T's first minimal response token in line 23 does not show any sign of recognition of J. Although he addresses J later in the call twice by name, he may at that time have noticed the name in the document. In this call T indicates no specific recognition or familiarity with J.

The call opening in call 10 from 1989 is very different (Extract 5):

(5) (ENG10/89)

17 T: morning Travis Tenner.

18 J: hello: Travis Tenner. that is Jorgen from en bee cee products Denmark.

19 T: hello Jorgen. how are you.

20 J: hallo:o o:hw it is really wɑ:m today. we have:=eh twenty four degrees,

21 (.)

22 T: ah well it's been (.) s- superb here, its- it's just starting to break up;

23 it's g't a bit dull and overca:st and cloudy, but we've had excellent

24 weather,

25 (.)

26 J: (hh[ɛ])

27 T: [you 've got it over there now. †then

28 (.)

29 J: owkay, hh hhe ·hh e:h Travis. miste:::r Terry:: Percival Smith has sent

30 me a fax from the twenty.

When the switchboard has forwarded the call, it is picked up by T with a neutral self-identification (l. 17). J responds with a lengthened *hello:* and a repeat of T's first name and family name (l. 18). The repeat of the call-taker's full name is unusual in our data, and J does this only with T. By virtue of the *hello:* which may be heard as a more recognitional greeting than T's *morning*, we hear J's use of T's full name as an indication of recognition but not one that calls on first name use. There is no immediate recognition by T forthcoming and J adds more material to his self-identification, going from the personal identification by name to his company to his country of origin. At any point, T might have indicated recognition in overlap with J's talk (see Extract 7). We see J's response as balancing between two positions: the familiar *hello:* indicating that J recognizes T and pointing back to earlier calls, and his standard opening indicating that he does not hear any recognition sign from T and therefore delivers more information than would be needed in a call between familiar speakers.

However, T's response to J's opening line with a recognitional second greeting (*hello*), followed by J's name and a *how-are-you* (l. 19), aligns with J's tokens of recognition. Note that T – as did J earlier – repeats the self-identification, but since J only identifies by his first name, T shifts from addressing by full name to addressing by first name which sets the standard for the following talk (see l. 29).

J's next action could be a response to the *how are you* conventionally, e.g. with *fine* and another *how are you*. But in line 20, J repeats the informal greeting, upgraded with even more lengthening (and a German sounding vocalization) *hallo:o*, followed by an announcement (*o:hw*) and a telling about the weather (ll. 20–21). In his next turn (ll. 22–24), T picks up on the weather report and adds

his side. There is only a laughter token forthcoming from J (ll. 25–26), and T continues with addressing J's side again (l. 27). J does not respond to T's expansion of the weather topic. Instead, he acknowledges and pre-closes the sequences with *owkay* and after a laughter token, he moves to the reason for the call.

In Extracts (4) and (5), the participants' turns are not very well fitted to each other, indicating that the call opening between J and T is not a routine. J does not seem confident that he will be recognized; when he has produced *hello: Travis Tenner.* with falling intonation, T might already respond at that point. The same could have happened after J's name and again after his company name, but it actually does not happen until after the country identification. So J's incrementally builds a string of recognitional elements that gives his co-participant the possibility to produce recognition, but J does not signal expected recognition by inserting gaps at possible transition-relevance places.

Equally, T's *how are you* is not handled as a routine. It does not receive a standard second pair part from J. Indeed, it is the first time a *how-are-you* is used in the data. It is also the first time where weather talk appears as part of the call opening, and J's sequential transition into and out of the weather talk is far from smooth. He uses weather talk to answer the *how are you*, but when, in return, T finishes his aligning response to the weather talk with an on-topic question, J does not answer but moves instead abruptly to business and the reason for the call.

In two other calls, Extracts (6) and (7), Travis is the caller. In both calls, T and J are doing relationship work in the openings of the calls. At the time of the recording of the call from which Extract (6) has been taken, J has visited T's company, and in the upcoming call they will talk about T visiting Denmark. Here J is the call-taker. When he responds to the call (l. 14), he does not present himself but other-identifies the caller and follows up with a *how are you*.

(6) (ENG16/89)

14 J: '↑afternoon Travis? how are you?

15 T: o::w:h not to bad ↑thank you,

16 T: absolutely pouring down with rain there

17 J: it is rain? o[u:w?

18 T: [↓ye:s

>>>> 58 lines omitted <<<<

76 T: now anyway uh:m:: (0.3) when I come over on:: (0.4) whow when is it now.=

77 J: twentyfif::.

78 T: yeah

79 J: hhe ↓hhe ↑hhe hhe.

80 T: two wee:ks: on Saturday. yeah.

81 J: y↓e:s?

- 82 (.)
 83 T: looking for'd to that?
 84 J: [°mhm°]??
 85 T: [·hhh]h uh:m: (1.2) I jus' wondering what we would be ɔdoin:g.

In call 16, T and J clear the last details before T takes off for a visit to Denmark. The opening lines resemble Extract (5), apart from the first line. Following his other-identification in line 14, J launches a *how are you* sequence to which T responds with a conventional second pair part (*not too bad*) before he gives a report of the local weather. Obviously the two participants take in this talk time to talk about other things than ordering spare parts. First after 60 lines of pleasantries and a lengthy exchange about the weather and the company's recent successes, T introduces his reason for the call. Compared to Extract (5), the turn-taking in the weather talk is done less abruptly and more fluently and with a higher degree of alignment. When the reason for the talk is eventually introduced by T (l. 76), three insertion sequences are shot into the turn (ll. 77–79, 80–81 and 83–84) before the turn construction is finished.

In this call, J is acting in an increasingly context-sensitive and recipient-designed manner. His interactional resources become increasingly adequate and well-suited for what he is accomplishing, making the talk smoother and more efficient. In comparison to earlier calls, J is better at matching language behaviours to the situations he and T engage in. In addition to the appropriately used *how are you*, this is also evident in the follow-up question to T's weather report (l. 17, Extract (6)) and in the collaborative completion at the beginning of the reason for the call (l. 77, Extract (6)). This development, we argue, is rooted in the level of familiarity between J and T: it is in the previous interactions between them – not between J and others – that we trace development in J's interactional competence. Development of social relationships is the fabric of the local-social world in which L2 speakers learn the target language (Eskildsen, 2025).

Two years later, J calls T about a work emergency (Extract (7)). The point of interest is the lack of alignment following the self-identifications in lines 32–33.

(7) (ENG25/91)

- 32 T: g' afternoon Travis Tlenner,
 33 J: good afternoon Travis Tenner. that is Jorgen Gade from [Denma]rk.
 34 T: [o:h.] hello
 35 Jorgen. [how are you.]
 36 J: [sorry-]
 37 (.)
 38 J: o:h we d- we have a (.) bad luck today.
 39 T: toh rɔeally,

We showed in Extract (6) that a certain familiarity had arisen between T and J. J's use of Travis's first and last name and his self-presentation with his own last name may indicate something out of the ordinary. T, however, responds in overlap with a heartily recognition (*o:h. hello Jorgen*) and proceeds into an exchange of *how-are-yous*. In overlap, at the earliest possible point (ll. 35–36), J starts speaking and produces *sorry*, an element that indicates that he will not return T's recognitional work. Instead, he moves to the urgency of his upcoming request and reason for the call. This is what Jefferson (personal communication) has called an 'opening short-cut' where she argues that there are resources that allow callers to minimize the opening sequence and rush to the reason for the call.

The structure of the conversation has changed since T and J's first call. In the openings of later calls, we find indications of mutual familiarity. We see that sequences are inserted between the caller identification and the reason for the call. We find *how are you* sequences, talk about the weather, their work, and their local time. Sequences prior to the reason for the call are systematically inserted and smoothly accomplished through timely and aligning responses in the later calls. Notably, these sequences are absent when the caller has urgent business and moves forward to the reason for the call as in Extract (7). All in all, we see increasing smoothness and context-sensitive conduct (Pekarek Doehler, 2018) in J's turns. J behaves more competently the more familiar he becomes with T. Routinization of recurring practices, familiarity between J and T, and J's competence are built together and depend on each other. The routinization that we see is not a matter of constructing a correlation between a linguistic resource and the accomplishment of a social action (Eskildsen, 2020; Eskildsen & Kasper, 2019; Pekarek Doehler & Balaman, 2021), but a reflexive relation between building the sequential interactional architecture of talk and a maturing social relationship. A similar process is reported by Skogmyr Marian (2022), who documents a routinization of greetings and talk about the weather at the beginning of interactions between recurring participants in French L2 conversation groups (for weather as a topic in small talk in service encounters among changing participants, see Kim, 2023).

4.2 Laughing and co-laughing

Jefferson (1979, 1984, 2010) has demonstrated that laughter is a complex and highly organized interactional phenomenon. Laughter may have to do with something 'funny' or 'playful' (Holt, 2010), but often laughter indicates 'delicate' issues or shows trouble resistance (Jefferson, 1984). Laughter points to a laughable in the talk or in the environment. In accord with the extensive laughter research in CA, we distinguish between self-initiated and other-initiated laughter, and between

laughter that invites a co-participant to join (e.g. laughter celebrating a joke) or not to join (e.g. laughter in troubles tellings; Jefferson, 1984). Other studies have shown that laughter in L2 talk can relate to trouble with the talk (Jacknick, 2013; Sert & Jacknick, 2015; Wagner & Wilkinson, 2024).

In this section we trace laughter and investigate how it is used over time in the seven calls between J and T. Table 2 displays an overview of instances of laughter in the calls. Overall, we find 27 instances, with more than half of them produced in the lengthy call ENG16 where J and T prepare T's visit to Denmark. At this point in time, J has already visited T in Britain, and both have built mutual rapport and personal knowledge about each other.

Table 2. Laughter instances in the calls

Eng3/87	Eng10/89	Eng11/89	Eng16/89	Eng25/91	Eng26/91	Eng27/91
1	2	4	14	0	2	4

In most instances the laughter is initiated by J. Only in two cases does T laugh first. Laughter tokens are produced in connection with specific practices. Laughter occurs frequently in connection with delicate actions and jokes. In the first case, we do not find changes across the corpus while laughter emerging from jokes or funny situations appears late in the corpus and seems to build on joint interactional history.

4.2.1 *Laughter in delicate actions*

The first delicate situation happens in J and T's initial call (Extract (8)). J's company needs a certain spare part urgently and T's company expects eight weeks delivery time. J inquires whether a speedier delivery is possible (l. 77).

(8) (ENG3/87)

77 J: ʤe:::h (0.3) is that possible to have it a little bit before.

78 (.)

79 T: uhm

80 J: hhe hhe.

81 T: uhm I'm not familiar with the job at the moment but I'll I'll the:

82 ·hh I'll do my best to: ↓what yeah speed it up

J's formulation is cautious. It is not just a request. The hedging (*a little bit*) makes it appear as a plea and the laughter in line 80 might point back to the delicacy of asking a favor. T's response initiation (l. 79) is delayed and the first token, *uhm*, projects a sequentially dispreferred, non-affiliating response to J's inquiry. J's two laughter tokens (l. 80) may indicate his understanding that his request will not be

granted. Interestingly, in T's response we find a laughter token as well (l. 81). It is placed after two self-repairs and precedes his promise to try 'to speed up the job.' T might also be indicating the delicacy of the situation when he is not able to give the preferred answer to a customer who apparently is pressed for time.

Laughter tokens in delicate environments do not invite co-laughter, but, as in Extract (8), both participants can orient to delicacy in their individual turns. In Extract (9), J follows his self-deprecating comment with a very long sequence of laughter tokens (l. 256), but T resists joining the laughter and instead, in overlap with J's laughter, assesses J's reported efforts to improve his English. In this way, T does not address or respond to the self-deprecating first part of the turn, only to the fact that J takes English lessons.

(9) (ENG16/89)

255 J ·hhh you know Traver my English is very: badly so I must have some lessons:,
 256 hhe hhe [hhe hhn hhn] [hhn hhn] hhn hhn [hhn "hhn hhn"] hhn hn hn hn hn hh
 257 T: [xx xx xx] [excellent] [excellent]

Laughter by Self in the environment of delicate topics is found across the corpus, and we do not see any development in the way it is produced. This is different in another environment where laughter tokens are found, namely jokes and fun talk.

4.2.2 *Having fun*

While laughter by Self in connection with delicate situations is already found in the initial call, co-laughing only appears much later. Extract (10), approximately two years into their developing relationship, shows J and T co-laughing for the first time. The topic is J's upcoming visit to Britain and how T's colleague who will pick up J at the airport will be able to recognize him. In lines 20–21, implicitly referring to prior knowledge about J's luggage, T reports having informed his colleague that J will be carrying company-branded baggage.

(10) (ENG11/89)

20 T: ·hh and I've told him that you'll be- carrying a case with en bee cee.
 21 so hopefully you'll meet. [(hhe)
 22 J: [😊 yes. 😊 [a little logo, hhe=hhe=[hhe=hhe hhe hhe
 23 T: [hhe hheh. [ehhhhh
 24 J: ·hh also on my bag I have a little logo.

There is possibly a laughter token at the end of T's turn in line 21. In overlap, J confirms T's implicit assertion with smiley voice and moves into laughter which is joined by T. Post-positioned free-standing laughter tokens as seen in line 22 give Other the opportunity to join the laughter, but as seen in Extract (9), this is not the case in trouble-prone or delicate environments. The shared laughter in

Extract (10) points to the *little logo* as a funny and laughable comment. In a sense, *a little logo* can be heard as a paradoxical upgrade of T's *en bee cee*. A graphical logo may be more noticeable than just three letters – but then again, if it is just a little logo, it may not be visible. In any case, J's turn affiliates with and builds on T's prior expression of hope that the process of picking J up at the airport will be successful. The interactional resources, then, are deeply rooted in their emergent friendship, and this talk – and the laughter – would not have unfolded without the friendship.

The next two Extracts, (11) and (12), contrast two parallel formulations. In the first case, co-laughing is noticeably absent, while in the second both participants laugh together.

(11) (ENG11/89)

43 T: ·h a::nd=eh then you can (.) ·h h h h once you've sort o' s (Ø.3) got yourself
 44 sort of e:h (Ø.4) ·h h h h washed and pressed hhe hhe [hhe hhe hhe.
 45 J: [hm:↓:m?
 46 T: ·hhh e:::hm:: then we'll: we'll go out in the evening

Extract (11) is taken from the call where J and T talk about J's upcoming visit to Britain. Before the extract starts, they talk about the plans for J's arrival. J will be picked up at the airport and brought to his hotel where he can freshen up before they jointly go to dinner in town. The phrase T uses – J can get himself 'washed and pressed' – is productionally marked; it is preceded by a hedge, *sort of*, a speech perturbation and a pause, and followed immediately by laughter from T himself. The placement of his laughter invites co-laughter, but J does not join. In line 45, J produces a minimal acknowledgment token and does not orient to anything laughable. T then abandons the topic and moves on in line 46.

About six months later, we find a parallel instance (Extract (12)). T is going to visit J in Denmark and they prepare plans for T's visit. T is formulating a part of the plan that involves arriving at J's house and making further plans (ll. 441–444). Following an aligning response to the arrival time suggested by T (l. 445), J then continues with a repeat of the words from T that he apparently did not understand in Extract (11) (l. 447).

(12) (ENG16/89)

441 T: e:::hm, so one hour to (us) so we'll be at home say [by:]two::→
 442 J: [mm.]
 443 (Ø.4)
 444 T: to your house [by tw]o. we can perhaps talk then about what to do.
 445 J: [ye:s.]
 446 (.)

- 447 J: so you can be washed and pressed,
 448 (.)
 449 J: I remember your words=hhhe hhe [hhe hhe] hhe hhe [hhe hhe]
 450 T: [(hhe)] [perfect].
 451 J: ehh hhfe hhe hhje hh hh.
 452 T: washed and pr↓es[sed].
 453 J: [yeah
 454 T: hosed d↓own.
 456 J: hhe hhe hh[e hh[e hh[e hh[e. [·hhhhh
 457 T: [ehh [hhe [hhe [hhe [ehh hh hhe hh hh ·hhh

When T does not respond, J accounts for the quote (l. 449) followed by a long sequence of laughter tokens. In overlap, T laughs minimally and commends J for his use and recollection of the phrase. He then repeats the formulation in l. 452 and upgrades it in l. 454 (*hosed down*). J responds with further laughter (ll. 451, 456) and now T joins in (l. 457).

Since we know that J worked with his teacher on the tapes, it might be the case that J does not remember the phrase from the original call, but from an interaction about it with his teacher. Nevertheless, he talks the shared interactional history into being. His laughter in lines 449 and 451 is placed in a way so as to orient to his own remembering of T's words, but not to T's first funny formulation itself. Although the long laughing sequence invites T to join in, T does so only minimally at first (l. 450). T then does some work to create a new laughable. This time J treats T's upgraded formulation as a joke and T joins the laughter.

Most of the laughing sequences in the seven calls between T and J were initiated by J. In connection with delicate situations, the laughter by Self is not designed to be joined. This applies across the corpus, so we find no development in this respect. Joined laughter, on the other hand, appears late in the corpus and is rare. There are possibly two converging developments. One, J and T have accumulated knowledge about each other and built a shared interactional history. They have become more familiar, and laughing together is one of the things that happen in familiar relations. Second, J's interactional competence has grown, and he becomes more able to recognize jokes and to respond to them in proper ways.

The production of *washed and pressed* as a laughable was traceable in the shared interactional history of the two participants, so it is a very clear example of a laughable emerging out of a growing friendship. When J repeats it six months after the first occurrence, it is not only the phrase itself that is the laughable but also that J voices his recollection of the words spoken by T earlier. It is this comment that yields T's first response (*perfect*), the repeat (*washed and pressed*), the upgrade (*hosed down*) and then the co-laughter. Less obvious examples are

also contingent on the level of acquaintance of the participants; arguably, to navigate delicate moments, for example, interactional co-participants benefit from knowing each other, so a potential point for future research is to look more closely at how such moments are handled over time by the same participants.

4.3 Addressing each other by name

The third resource for building and indicating strong social relations, familiarity, and possibly ‘friendship’, is the use of first names in conversations over the phone. The early CA literature on phone calls has dealt with the use of names and their sequential relevance, especially in relation to the beginning of the call. The few studies that focus on personal address terms in interaction (e.g. Clayman, 2010, 2012; Günthner, 2022; Rendle-Short, 2007) have mainly investigated institutional talk (media interviews, healthcare interaction). Because of the differences in contexts of data collection, findings from these studies are not directly applicable to our findings.

When looking at the seven focal calls, we are struck by how often the co-participants address each other by first names. T addresses J by name in all seven calls. J does it in five calls. In this section we will describe the mutual use of first names in the focal calls and how it indicates familiarity and possibly even a kind of friendship between T and J.

Before we move on to the analysis of the focal calls, we need to clarify the role of personal references in our business corpora. In many calls, the identity of the person calling or taking the call is secondary, since caller and call-taker act as representatives of their department and their company. Reference to names is mostly given in connection with orders or when names can become relevant for future communication.

In a setting where the use of personal names is marginal, we are interested in understanding what T and J do when frequently addressing each other by first name. We find three environments where names are common: openings, closings, and topic changes/expansions. In the following we describe the use of names in closing sequences where they play a crucial role, especially in a developmental perspective. ENG 3 is the very first call between T and J. In Section 4.1 (Extract (4)) we have already seen the beginning of the call. During the call, T addresses J directly by name twice: first when he receives J’s order, and second when he moves into the closing of the call (Extract (13)).

(13) (ENG 3/87)

108 T: okay then Jorgen.
109 J: good,

110 (.)
 111 T: okay?
 112 J: yes
 113 (θ.4)
 114 J: thank you very much,
 115 T: thank you bye bye
 116 J: bye bye

Closings of telephone calls were analyzed in Schegloff and Sacks' (1973) seminal paper. Closings run off as a series of adjacency pairs that gives room for the insertion of any other business/topic. T initiates two pre-closings (ll. 108 and 111). In response, J does not take the opportunity to introduce a new topic but initiates a thank-you sequence in line 114 which leads to the closing proper. T gives his first pre-closing a personal touch by addressing J by first name. Apart from the calls between T and J, address by name in the closing sequence is very rare in our corpus. In those cases, the format used is *Mister Gade* (or *Mister Jorgen*). *Okay then Jorgen* (l.108) stands out from the other calls.

In their second call (in our corpus), ENG10, T and J prepare J's visit to Britain (Extract (14)). J initiates the first pre-closing with T's name (l. 94). T acknowledges (l. 95) and moves directly to a thank-you which in turn is acknowledged by J (l. 96) with a well-wishing that is responded to by T (l. 98).

(14) (ENG10/89)

94 J: oke:y Tra[vis.
 95 T: [yeħ ↑thanks a lot Jorgen,
 96 J: yeħ please have a good day.
 98 T: a:nd yourself.
 99 T: nice to hear from you again,
 100 J: godt ((Danish for 'good'))
 101 (.)
 102 T: [nice] to hear from you
 103 J: [yeħ]
 104 (θ.3)
 105 J: gut ((German for 'good'))
 106 (θ.3)
 107 T: bye bye now=
 108 J: =bye bye.

T then adds another conventional pleasantry which is not responded to in a conventional manner (ll. 99–100). T's repair by repeat in line 102 is not received

differently (l. 105) and T closes the call (l. 107). Compared to other calls in the corpora (including the other calls between T and J), in this call, several short sequences are inserted between the pre-closing and the closing proper. They are designed to be part of the closing and not as re-opening the call (as opposed to Extract (15)). We notice as well that T and J are no longer aligned. *Good/godt/gut* are not second pair parts to *nice to hear from you*. Given that J and T are in the beginning of what will become a shared interactional history, perhaps a friendship, and that J did not develop such a relationship with other business partners, it is not unlikely that this is unfamiliar territory to J.

With respect to the address by name, we notice that both co-participants use their counterpart's name in the pre-closing. This mutual personal address is not found in any calls between other partners in the corpora and can be taken as building and confirming a strong personal relationship between the participants. The mutual address by first name in the pre-closing is found in the later calls between T and J. In one of the last calls in the series, it is even found twice (Extract (15)). After the first pre-closing pair, initiated by T (ll. 57–58), T himself inserts a request that makes references to things in their shared history (*'the part numbers, I'll get into it'*) (ll. 59–60). The second pre-closing (ll. 64–65) is initiated by J and leads directly to the closing proper.

(15) (ENG25/91)

- 57 T: I'll J do: my best Jor[gen.
 58 J: [hh ·HH o:kay Travi[s.
 59 T: [xx (can) send me the
 60 the part number[s, xx be a] help,=
 61 J: [mmm]
 62 T: =and then=eh I'll go into it as soon? as soon as I can.
 63 (0.3)
 64 J: okay Trevor. thank you very much=
 65 T: =okay Jorgen=
 66 J: =ja? bye bye
 67 T: bye bye

After call #10 (Extract (14)), T and J seem to have found their personal format for closing sequences. They often contain thanks and sometimes well-wishings, but always mutual address by first name.

5. Discussion and conclusions

We have traced three practices across seven calls by the same participants. Contact initiation and recognition, laughter, and use of address terms in closings are three areas where increasing familiarity, the growth of social relationships and change in interactional practices can be seen. We are not postulating a causal relationship between specific moments in the calls and language learning or development of interactional competence on the part of J, the L2 speaker, but we do note that with growing familiarity between J and T, certain interactional practices become routinized and smoother over time. At the same time, some of these practices are also part of the glue that binds the growing social relationship together. Small talk about the weather is a resource in building relationships, as also reported by Skogmyr Marian (2022), and the use of first names illustrates the affordances of knowing each other for the accomplishment of the business at hand. In the interest of space, we chose to focus on the use of first names in closings, since there was a clear developmental tendency; however, J and T also used each other's names for other purposes, including topic shifts. We also saw how co-laughter is part and parcel of a developing friendship, and how J and T's interactional history led to a very concrete learning opportunity for J, as he re-used a (funny) phrase brought to the table by T in a call several months earlier.

The documented change fits well with previous findings from L2 research, as described above. Eskildsen (2025) traces the natural histories of repairables in Danish L2 talk among the same participants over time and documented how linguistic items that were novel to one participant became part of her repertoire, akin to the emergence of *washed and pressed* in the present data. The routinized interactional architecture of sustaining openings and transitions to explain the reason for the call brings to mind Skogmyr Marian's (2022) findings from L2 conversation groups, and the increasing smoothness of the interactions achieved is parallel to what Greer (2018) reported in a study on abroad homestay as the exchange student was socialized into a pre-dinner ritual of saying grace, and what Pekarek Doehler & Berger (2019) showed in terms of an au pair achieving the identity of a member of the host family on a par with the other family members. The common denominator of the findings across the quite disparate settings is that the reported instances of interactional competence development is not the work of a sole individual but the accomplishment of two or more people as they co-adapt in and through talk in interaction (and other multi-modal conduct).

We would like to conclude by adding more perspective and empirical substance to J and T's becoming closer to each other. One of the main vectors in the shift from a business relationship between these two men towards a personal relationship was their mutual workplace exchanges as they visited each other.

not in the morning, it is in the afternoon). Either way, J seems to accept and invites T to continue (l. 445). T aligns with the invitation and starts the list in chronological order, from breakfast in the morning (l. 446) to dinner in the evening (l. 454). However, the list construction is collaborative, with J contributing *lunch* in the correct chronological position (l. 451). This contribution also recycles T's prior format (*then*, l. 450). The extract shows a tight-knit cooperation consisting of overlaps, co-completions and recycled formats. It also displays a topical alignment (discussion of meal terms) that we do not observe in interactions between business partners who have not forged a social bond. While the talk implicitly refers to common ground in their shared interactional history, as T knew that J was taking English classes at the time, the fact that they discuss this rather mundane matter in itself indicates that they are more than business partners.

Shortly after Extract (16), J initiates another topic where he draws on knowledge about T which he can only have acquired through their shared history, possibly in connection with his visit to Britain, as he asks T about his scooter (Extract 17).

(17) (ENG16)

490 J: and how goes it with your little scooter. Travis,
 491 are the brakes okay (.) at the moment?
 492 (0.3)
 493 J: ehhe [hhe hhe] hhe [hhe hhe] hhe
 494 T: [e:h] [yeah]

We see across the calls that the space for non-business-related talk grows and their mutual familiarity fuels a diverse array of topics. Familiarity comes from personal knowledge of each other, and in turn creates opportunities for further exchange of personal knowledge. This also expands the range of talkables. From the perspective of L2 use and learning, it therefore becomes obvious that getting acquainted with others, building social relationships, and possibly forming close friendships is crucial. Many, if not most, SLA theories and frameworks assume that interaction drives L2 learning, but without someone to interact with, this becomes a moot point. The access to the target language needed in order to learn how to speak it must be achieved in and through the new language. This is the challenge of newcomers to any community where they do not speak the local language. For J, learning English was not as straightforward as it is to most Danes nowadays given the widespread availability of the language. His access point was found in the wild as he made a friend in a British business partner. They built a social relationship rooted in a professional common ground as they constructed locally accomplished social practices and mutual coordination and adaptation in action.

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Transcription conventions

The transcriptions follow the system developed by Gail Jefferson with minor adjustments. Several instances of the same symbol indicates extension.

[]	point of overlap onset and end, i.e. when two participants talk at the same time
(.)	a short untimed pause, less than two-tenth of a second
(0.5)	pause/gap in tenths of seconds
=	latched talk, either by same speaker or next speaker
-	marks that the speaker 'cuts off' their speech
↑	the syllable following the <i>arrow</i> is relatively high-pitched
↓	the syllable following the <i>arrow</i> is relatively low-pitched
?	rising intonation
,	slightly raising intonation
;	slightly falling intonation
.	falling intonation: (final)
word	stressed syllable or sound
(word)	indicates transcriber's uncertainty about a word
wo:::rd	lengthening of the preceding sound
 word 	smiley voice
°word°	low speech volume
hhh	a hearable outbreath
·hhh	a hearable inbreath
hhe	laughter syllable

Résumé

Cette étude, menée dans le cadre de l'Analyse Conversationnelle, s'appuie sur un corpus longitudinal d'appels téléphoniques fixes. Le matériel étudié est constitué de sept appels en anglais, passés entre 1988 et 1991 à un fournisseur européen de pièces détachées. Dans ces appels, J. (locuteur d'anglais L2) s'entretient avec le même représentant (T.) d'une entreprise britannique. Au fil de ces années, le caractère des appels évolue : J. et T. ne se contentent pas de faire des affaires ensemble : ils établissent également une relation sociale solide. En modifiant les

pratiques (1) d'ouverture des appels et de transition vers la raison de l'appel, (2) de production et de réponse aux rires, et (3) d'utilisation de termes d'adresse personnels pour clore les conversations, les appels deviennent plus personnels, la connaissance mutuelle est rendue pertinente, et les deux participants abordent d'autres sujets que les discussions commerciales de routine. Contrairement à d'autres études récentes dans le domaine, ces changements ne peuvent pas être attribués à des problèmes conversationnels et à leurs solutions, mais émergent plutôt de la lente construction d'expériences communes et de connaissances personnelles au fil du temps.

Mots clés : compétence d'interaction, analyse conversationnelle, rires, ouvertures et clôtures d'appels téléphoniques, apprentissage des langues en milieu naturel

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