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# Telephone call behavior in films and language textbooks

Donna Tatsuki

Telephones and telephone calls are a regular feature of modern life so it is understandable why they are commonly included language learning textbooks. Even in an EFL context it is plausible that learners will someday need to make or receive a telephone call in English. Furthermore, telephone calls are frequently observed in films and other broadcast media—all of this exposure makes telephoning an apparently familiar activity. Telephone dialogues have also been a popular topic of research certainly in part because of their ever-presentness and also because they are generally compact, self-contained events.

This study compares the structure of telephone conversations found in English language teaching textbooks with those found in feature films and those found in conversation analysis (CA) research. Reflecting the methodology of a similar study carried out by Wong (2002), this investigation: 1) points out some of the ways that textbooks differ from the structures reported in CA research and 2) explores the possibility that films may be useful supplements to textbooks in order to compensate for apparent textbook shortcomings. The comparison of findings from empirical studies with film dialogue presents a long-needed theory-based critical analysis of the practice of using video and digital products as language input.

Such comparisons are timely and, as Wong puts it, “find resonance with scholars who address issues in discourse and language

education” (Wong, 2002, p.37) for a number of reasons. Candlin (1994) and McCarthy (1991) before him, promote interdisciplinary research to better understand language teaching materials for the advancement of language teacher education. Therefore, in this investigation, as in Wong’s 2002 study, a corpus of textbook telephone dialogues will be examined to determine whether the opening canonical sequences described in conversation analysis of real American English telephone conversations are successfully reproduced in textbook dialogues. This is of importance because the input that textbooks provide to learners for use as possible models for their own production should faithfully reflect the types of sequences and discourse patterns found in realistic telephone calls.

Furthermore, there has been generally an uncritical acceptance of film and television language as natural and realistic, “a vast up to date linguistic resource of accents, vocabulary, grammar and syntax, and all kinds of discourse, which shows us language in most of its uses and contexts—...it also shows how people live, and think and behave...” (Sherman, 2003, p.2). According to Eken (2003) films are most useful as supplementary materials in the classroom in light of the move from grammar/ structural to task based syllabi. One notable exception to the otherwise uncritical, unchallenged acceptance of film and broadcast media as realistic models of language is the 2001 study by Grant and Starks (summarized and discussed more fully later). Their careful study of conversational closings concluded that “language teachers would be well advised to look at locally screened soap operas or dramas for examples of authentic-sounding conversation that is pragmatically appropriate and imitates real-life language” (p.49). In response to the evident dearth of critical examinations of films and broadcast media, this study will also endeavor to put telephone dialogues in a corpus of films under the same kind of scrutiny as those in language textbooks.

## Understanding telephone sequences

Some of the earliest and most comprehensive work on telephone sequences was done by Schegloff (1968, 1979, 1986, 1993). Schegloff identified a four-part set of sequences apparently generic to telephone dialogues: “summons-answer sequences, identifications, greetings and how-are-yous” (Schegloff, 2002, p.250). As Wong states in the opening pages of her study, “[T]he opening of a telephone conversation is not to be viewed as something which just happens or as merely the segment of talk that is preliminary to an interaction....” (2002, p. 39). A telephone opening is a co-constructed event that takes mutual effort and alignment in order to arrive at a place where a first topic is realized (Schegloff, 1967). Consider extract (1) which is adapted from Schegloff (1986).

(1) [#247. R stands for the recipient / answerer and C for the caller]

- |    |   |  |  |                                     |
|----|---|--|--|-------------------------------------|
|    |   | Ring   |  |                                     |
| 01 | R | Hallo  |  | summons-answer sequence             |
| 02 | C | Hello, Jim?                                  |  |                                     |
| 03 | R | Yeah   |  | Recognition-identification sequence |
| 04 | C | It's Bonnie.                                 |  |                                     |
| 05 | R | Hi,  |  | greeting sequence                   |
| 06 | C | Hi, how are yuh                              |  |                                     |
| 07 | R | Fine, how're you,                            |  | how-are-you sequence                |
| 08 | C | Oh, okay I guess                             |  |                                     |
| 09 | R | Oh, okay                                     |  |                                     |
| 10 | C | Uhm (0.2) what are you doing new Year's Eve? |  |                                     |

(Schegloff, 1986, p.115)

### Summons-Answer Sequences

Summons-answer is the first part of an “establishing contact” functional phase (ten Have, 2002, p.235). The summons is usually accomplished by the ringing (blinking or vibrating) of the telephone

and the first thing that is said by the person picking up the phone functions as the answer to the summons. The typical answers include *yeah*, *hello*, *hi* and self-identification. According to Schegloff (1979) *hello* is a minimally graded recognition, preferred for accomplishing mutual identification of the parties, although in rare cases when the call is expected, the answer might be “it’s me” or may even start with a preemptive caller identification (e.g., if the call is expected or if the recipient’s phone has a caller-id system). Schegloff (1968) claims that there is a “distributive rule for first utterances” in that the recipient of the call speaks first. This occurs even though it is the caller who knows his/her own identity and may very likely also know the identity of the recipient.

### **Recognition-Identification**

The answer utterance also has other functions—it provides a voice sample by which the caller might identify the recipient and it (re)establishes the relationship between them. Greeting sequences and recognition-identification sequences may overlap considerably since the typical greetings *hello*, and *hi* provide voice samples that may aid identification-recognition. If the pair on the telephone are intimates or acquaintances, their relationship may be reestablished merely by the recognition of each other’s voices or through explicit identification coupled with a greeting and perhaps a *how-are-you* sequence leading to the first topic in the call or to a reason for the call if they are less well acquainted. If the pair is not acquainted, more interactional work ensues to establish identities, relevant membership categories leading to an explanation for the call. If self-identification or “pre-emptive identification” (Schegloff 1967) occurs, the caller has one less piece of interactional work to perform.

The use of self-identification answers vary cross-culturally. For example, Houtkoop-Steenstra (1991) described the Dutch convention of explicit self identification even on home telephones and suggested that it would be considered impolite in the Dutch context to rely on voice

recognition alone (except for close intimates). In fact, it was suggested that in a Dutch context, the use of a simple "hallo" when picking up the phone may be interpreted as hiding one's identity. Similar observations have been made about calls in Swedish (Lindstrom, 1994) and Japanese (Park, 2002; Yotsukura, 2002).

### **How-are-you Sequences**

According to Schegloff, (1995, cited in Wong 2002) *how-are-you* sequences are reciprocal and that callers often utter the first of the *how-are-you*'s (Schegloff, 1986) to which the recipients have a choice of three possible response types: positive, negative and neutral (Sacks, 1975). Neutral responses include such things as *good, fine, okay*, etc followed with a reciprocal *how-are-you*. This is of benefit to the caller who then has the possibility to segue into the first topic or the purpose of the call. Of course, if the recipient replies in an exaggerated way either positively or negatively (e.g., *terrible, awful, great, terrific*, etc) the sequence continues with some talk regarding these feelings until a first topic or a purpose for the call emerges.

## **Previous textbook research**

### **Telephone dialogues**

As mentioned earlier, Wong (2002) used findings from conversation analysis literature to evaluate telephone dialogues in ESL textbooks. According to her findings, ESL textbook telephone dialogues displayed the following weaknesses:

- \*Only 10% contained complete summons-answer sequences.
- \*Ringing of phones were rare, cut off or cut short
- \*It was hard to know who the caller is and who the receiver is in many cases.
- \*If the S-A sequence is missing, the dialogue lacks an initial voice sample of the receiver.
- \*It seems strange that in calls that are supposedly between friends;

the interactants do not recognize each other by voice sample alone.

\* Sometimes in the textbook in phone calls between the same dyad the receiver recognizes the caller by first name only and yet on another occasion they address each other by both first and last name. Thus the social relation-power / distance is not consistent.

\* Only 13% of the dialogues have *how-are-you* (HAY) sequences, and only 4% of these are reciprocated.

One might ask if Wong's corpus (30 dialogues from 8 textbooks) was sufficient to make fair comparisons with the research literature—in contrast, Schegloff (1968, 1979, 1986, 1993) bases his observations on a corpus of more than 500 telephone calls. However, in explanation of the limited number of telephone dialogues, Wong counters that that “It was difficult to find ESL textbooks which contained telephone dialogues” and that her results are “intended to be suggestive and not definitive” (p. 44). She later notes that the results in her 2002 study “reconfirm an earlier investigation of a similar nature involving 21 dialogues (Wong, 1984)” (p. 44). Wong's assertion about the scarcity of telephone dialogues may be an unfair criticism of ESL textbooks—as will be seen later, the number of dialogues she found (30 dialogues in 8 textbooks) is a better rate than the number of dialogues collected for this study (64 in 23 EFL textbooks).

### **Conversations and speech acts**

Previous research has investigated the relationships between dialogues created for use in instructional materials and authentic language / language used outside the classroom. Typically researchers have found that authentic language is more complex, has more elements, and includes incomplete utterances. For example, Vellenga (2004) looked at four ESL and four EFL textbooks to assess the pragmatic information they included. She found that there were virtually no examples of explicit treatments of speech acts, few instances of explicit metapragmatic information and the accompanying teachers manuals gave little if any supplementary information or instructions.

Furthermore, based on a teacher survey Vellenga found that teachers rarely supplemented their lessons with outside materials related to pragmatics. In another study, Myers-Scotton and Bernsten (1988) compared direction giving and requests in naturally occurring data with textbook direction giving. They found that directions typically begin with openings, and as a response to a request for directions. They also contained orientation checks, or parenthetical comments, and they were full of fillers such as *let's see*, *um* or *okay*—none of which appeared in textbooks.

Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford, Mahan-Taylor, Morgan & Reynolds (1991), found similar discrepancies between naturally occurring discourse and instructional materials in their investigation on closings—in natural settings a pre-closing is observed before the actual closing—none of the instructional materials included this phenomenon. Griffee (1993) investigated authenticity in textbooks by examining conversation openers and direction giving. He also found authentic data from role plays by NSs are generally longer with more turns and include conversation management strategies such as repair, back-channeling which did not appear in instructional materials.

Although research has been done to assess the effectiveness of using video / films for the learning of cultural practices and products (Herron, Cole, Corrie & Drubeil, 1999, 2000; Kitajima & Lyman-Hagar, 1998) so far, few have systematically compared the dialogues in films or video media with those found in textbooks. One exception is the earlier mentioned study by Grant and Starks (2001) who compared the conversational closings in textbooks with those found in television soap operas. They found that although soap operas and textbooks rarely closed every topic or conversation that was opened, soap operas did a better job of giving examples of the components typically encountered in closing sequences. According to Grant and Stark, "Because textbook conversations are often taught in isolation, they do not consistently provide examples of the stages involved in closing a conversation. Regarding the soap operas, of the 54 recorded



closings, 31 or 57 % followed Schegloff and Sacks' (1973) description in that they closed with a pre-closing and a terminal exchange (p. 45)." Grant and Starks conclude that, "While soap operas do not always provide examples of complete conversations, they do provide examples of a variety of functional conversational English that is considered both 'natural' and appropriate by the viewing audience" (p. 48).

Some work has also been done to compare dialogues in instructional materials with those found in films and other data sources. Tatsuki (1992a&b) compared initial interactions (conversations between people meeting for the first time) depicted on videos (Hollywood films and ELT videos) with "natural" elicited data collected by Kellerman, Boetzman, Lim and Kitao (1989). The studies found that although there were strong similarities in topic choice and sequence between films and natural initial conversations, the initial conversations in ELT videos started well, yet developed few if any topics in the mid-part of the conversation. Furthermore, films and ELT videos seldom showed how the conversations would end. Empirical studies of this kind indicate some of the shortcomings of instructional materials whether they are textbooks or instructional videos.

Other researchers have speculated (but not specifically illustrated) that film uses language which is closer to that of real life when compared with textbooks (Takahashi, 1995) and the majority of teachers who use films as instructional materials seem to have made the assumption that the language used in films is authentic (e.g. Michaelides, 2002; Trombly, 1999). Shimakawa (1995) analyzed the grammatical forms used in three films (*Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*) with those found in high school English textbooks. Although no data is presented directly in the article, the author claims that the movies include all the English patterns that appear in English grammar textbooks in high school. With these issues in mind it is time to turn to the current analysis.

## Method

### Data Collection

For this analysis, 57 telephone dialogues were extracted from 23 currently popular Japanese Ministry of Education (Monbukagakusho or Monkasho for short) approved ELT textbooks. All textbooks have been published in 2002 or later. Of these textbooks 5 did not have at least one telephone dialogue. Only dialogues with roles explicitly marked by speaker names or letter denotations of speaker role (e.g., speakers A and B or M and F) were included for this analysis.

From a teacher-selected corpus of 20 films (see Tatsuki, 2005 for description of how this corpus was assembled) a total of 63 telephone dialogues were identified and transcribed. All audible telephone exchanges found in these films were considered for analysis. In the case that a character was seen on the phone but that the conversation was indistinct (or part of background scene setting) such a dialogue was not included for consideration. The dialogues were viewed and transcribed unless a commercial screenplay version was available. A complete list of films and textbook sources is in the appendix.

### Analysis

In keeping with the tendency of most previous literature on telephone dialogues to be preoccupied with openings and closings (Schegloff, 2002), this study will focus on: 1) overall sequence structure, 2) core sequences in telephone openings and, 3) presence or absence of closing sequences. Although it would appear that rather a larger emphasis has been placed on the examination of openings rather than closings, this too is in keeping with the relevant literature. As Schegloff states, “openings have been studied more commonly than closings in part because they have a physically determined determinate beginning, and start from the same starting point (acoustic mutual availability), whereas closings can pose immediate issues of where to start (where *they* start)...” (p.274).

## Results

### Summons-Answer Sequences

There is a marked difference in regards to summons answer sequences in films, Monkasho textbooks and Wong's ESL textbooks. The largest contrast is that the telephone dialogues in Wong's ESL textbooks contained no complete summons answer sequence 90 percent of the time whereas telephone dialogues in film and Monkasho textbooks contained no answer summons sequence only one third of the time (see Table 1) though to be fair to Wong's data, it is not reported what is the nature of the summons-answer sequences without an explicit ring. However, this does not mean that Monkasho textbook telephone dialogues are equal to those in film in all respects—film has some definite advantages. For example, more than half of all film telephone dialogues begin with a ringing (or blinking or visibly vibrating) phone. Only two Monkasho textbook dialogues explicitly indicate the ringing of a phone (see dialogue extracts 2 & 3).

(2)

- |   |        |                                      |
|---|--------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 |        | R r r r r . . .                      |
| 2 | Diana: | Hello                                |
| 3 | Megu:  | Hello? This is Megu. Is Diana there? |
| 4 | Diana: | It's me, Megu.                       |
| 5 | Megu:  | Hi, Diana.                           |

(3)

- |   |                 |  |
|---|-----------------|--|
| 1 |                 | R r r r r . . .                            |
| 2 | Kevin's Mother: | Hello.                                     |
| 3 | Diana:          | Hello. This is Diana. Can I talk to Kevin? |
| 4 | Kevin's Mother: | Hold on, please.                           |
| 5 | Kevin:          | Hi, Diana.                                 |

*Columbus 21 1*, p. 89

One might ask why it is important or even necessary to include an

explicit depiction of the ringing of the phone—surely all people in the modern world know that phones ring and people answer them. However, by excluding the ring the Monkasho textbook writers have made it less easy to figure out who is the caller and who is the recipient in a call, especially since on occasion the caller speaks first as is the case in extract 4. This is tricky for the learner as it seems to suggest that callers can speak first—that is if the learner is able to figure who actually is the caller. Such a dialogue goes against what Schegloff calls the “distributive rule” that the recipient of the call speaks first.

(4)

- 1 Takeshi: Hi, Kate. It's Takeshi calling from Tokyo.
- 2 Kate: Takeshi. Nice to hear your voice. What's the weather like over there?  
...(call continues)

*Sailing 1* p. 33

As mentioned earlier, typical answers to the telephone ringing summons include *yeah*, *hello*, *hi* and self-identification and that according to Schegloff (1979) *hello* is a minimally graded recognition, preferred for accomplishing mutual identification of the parties. *Hello* is the answer for 55 percent of Monkasho dialogues in contrast with only 36 percent in films. Put another way, films offer more variety in the types of telephone answers such as *yeah* or *hi* which may indicate that film script writers may more attention to the relationships between the interactants than do textbook writers. There was also one case in which the Japanese words *moshi-moshi* were used in the textbook.

Another difference between films and Monkasho textbooks is in the use of pre-emptive self-identification (PSI) by the call recipient. Two examples of PSI in the Monkasho textbooks were recitations of the recipient's telephone number (see dialogue extracts 5 & 6) whereas in films the recipients usually announced a name (their own or the

business identity):

**Table 1. Summons-answer sequences in film and textbooks**

	Film (n=20)	Textbook (n=23)	Wong (n=30)
SA-Hello	21 (33)	2 (4)	3 (10)
SA-Hi	6 (10)	0	0
SA-PSI	3 (5)	0	0
SA-H-PSI	3 (5)	0	0
*SA-Hello	2 (3)	29 (51)	?0
*SA-Hi	0	2 (4)	?0
*SA-PSI	3 (5)	2 (4)	?0
*SA-H-PSI	0	4 (8)	?0
*noSA	22 (35)	17 (30)	?27 (90)
Other	3 (5)	1 (2)	?0
total	63	57	30

\*no ring or other explicit summons

Percentages in parentheses

(5)

1 Kate's mother: 012-34-5678. Hello.

2 Kate: Hello. It's Kate, Mum. How are you?

(6)

1 A: 012-34-5678

2 B: Mr. Smith, it's Jane. Can I speak to Tom?

3 A: Mr. Smith speaking/

This is Mr. Smith/

Mr. Smith here/

*Expressions 1* pp. 9-10

### Recognition-Identification Sequences

As mentioned earlier, typical greetings *hello*, and *hi* provide voice samples that may aid identification-recognition but self-identification can be done to assist the recognition process. A number of odd or inconsistent recognition-identification sequences were observed in textbooks. Take for example the opening of this telephone dialogue:

(7)

- 1 Mrs. Baker: Hello? Is this Nick?  
2 Nick: Yes, Mom?  
3 Mrs. Baker: Yes. How are things at home?  
4 Nick: Fine.

*Columbus 21 1 p. 84*

First of all, the “distributive rule” that Schegloff refers to (i.e. the recipient of the call speaks first) has apparently been flouted—Mrs. Baker is the caller, yet she speaks before Nick. Another explanation is that the textbook writers have neglected to include the summons-answer sequence for some reason. Secondly, there is a big difference between saying—as the caller’s first utterance to answerer—“Is this Nick?” as opposed to “Nick!” According to Schegloff (2002) “the first can be heard to display a serious problem of recognition; the second need not, but can be used to provide an opportunity for the *answerer* to recognize the *caller*... This can be especially serious if—as in this case—the persons are close, and can expect to be recognized by each other, indeed are *entitled* to be so recognized; ...” (p. 262). Most will agree that mothers and sons can expect to or are entitled to be recognized so a violation such as this weakens the realism of the dialogue. Here is another similar example.

(8)

- 1 Tom Hello. This is Tom. Can I speak to Emi?  
2 Emi Hello, Tom. This is Emi.  
3 Tom Can you come to a party next Saturday?  
4 Emi Yes, I can. Can I bring a friend?  
5 Tom Okay.  
6 Emi What time does it start?  
7 Tom At six o'clock in the evening.  
8 Emi Good! Goodbye now.

*active.comm 1 p. 44*

Once again there is no explicit summons-answer sequence—the reader gets the impression that it is the caller who is speaking first which is another infraction of the distributive rule mentioned earlier. The caller launches straight into what Wong refers to as a “switchboard request” (2002, p.42). One implication is that the caller does not recognize the voice of the person who answered the phone if we assume that the summons answer sequence is simply missing from the script. That is certainly odd considering that the characters are party-going friends.

If on the other hand it was the intent of the script writer that the caller speaks first (i.e., the caller speaks before the recipient has the chance to give a minimal “hello” or voice sample), the sequence is not following the conventions of typical telephone dialogues of any kind. One can not argue that this is a Japanese language transfer issue either. Although there has not been much research in this area beyond the level of prescriptive telephone etiquette (Jordan, 1987), it has been noted by Park (2002) that the exchanging of self-identifications is frequent in her Japanese data but that this occurs *after* an initial “hello” [moshi-moshi] or “this is X’s residence” (p.29) on the part of the call recipient in the case of calls in a non-business setting. Yotsukura (2002) observed that in business settings answerers will usually respond to the ring of the phone with a self-identification. This may be preceded by an acknowledgement of the telephone ring [hai] and that on in-house lines the call recipient will generally start with [moshi-moshi] and perhaps the call recipient’s last name. Park also observes in her Japanese data that “one of the most frequent contexts for self-identification is that is the switch-board request” and that “the preference for providing self-identification before asking to be transferred seems to be substantially stronger in Japanese openings” (p.32). Nevertheless, the lack of a complete summons answer sequence is what makes this dialogue problematic, not the possibility that the scriptwriter was transferring his or her L1 telephone conversational strategy.

Another example of an odd sequence involves a greeting answer by the call recipient with no return greeting from the caller. The recipient says *hello* but the caller moves directly to a self-identification and a switchboard request without a return greeting—certainly odd, and in some circles considerably rude (see dialogue 9).

(9)

- 1 Judy's mother: Hello
- 2 Hiroshi: This is Hiroshi. Can I speak to Judy, please?
- 3 Judy's mother: OK. Just a moment.

*New Crown 1*, p. 77

With respect to these switchboard requests (SWB-R), an apparent over abundance of them are seen among friends and intimates in Monkasho textbooks—close to half of the dialogues contain such requests in stark contrast to the single instance with intimates in films and twice in a business context (see Table 2). The occurrence of these request sequences in a business setting is about the same for both film and Monkasho textbooks—in both cases business settings are found for a very small number of the dialogues. Wong does not report frequencies in this area so comparisons can not be made with her data.

**Table 2. Switchboard and non-switchboard requests**

		Film (n=20)	Textbook (n=23)
Business	SWB-R	2 (3)	2 (4)
	Non SWB-R	0	2 (4)
Business	SWB-R	1 (2)	28 (49)
	SWB-R*	0	3 (5)
	Non SWB-R	60 (95)	22 (39)
Total		63	57

Percentages in parentheses

### *How-Are-You Sequences*

In the case of telephone dialogues in Monkasho textbooks, Wong's textbooks and films only 10 to 15 percent include *how-are-you*



sequences. There were no reciprocal *how-are-you* sequences. This is problematic since most of the calls presented are intended to portray personal calls between friends or acquaintances.

Table 3. *How are you* (HAY) sequences

	Film (n=20)	Textbook (n=23)	Wong (n=30)
HAY	8 (13)	3 (5)	4 (13)
HAY*	2 (3)	3 (5)	0
n-HAY	53 (84)	51 (89)	26 (87)
Total	63	57	30

\**how-are-you* equivalent expressions (e.g. *what's up? Howzit goin?*)

All of the responses to the *how-are-you* questions were neutral (*fine, good*) except for one in which the dialogue ends before and reply is made. This example (10) which includes a *how-are-you* sequence is a longer version of the dialogue presented in extract 7.

(10)

- 1 Mrs. Baker Hello? Is this Nick?
- 2 Nick Yes, Mom?
- 3 Mrs. Baker Yes. How are things at home?
- 4 Nick Fine.
- 5 Mrs. Baker What are you doing?
- 6 Nick I'm watching TV.
- 7 Mrs. Baker Did you watch "HOME ALONE" last night?
- 8 Nick Of course, I did.
- 9 Mrs. Baker Did you go to basketball practice this morning?
- 10 Nick No, I didn't. I overslept.
- 11 Mrs. Baker Oh, dear!
- 12 Nick But I cleaned my room!
- 13 Mrs. Baker Well done! What did you have for dinner?
- 14 Nick Sue cooked some pasta.
- 15 Mrs. Baker Good. Is Sue there?
- 16 Nick Hold on. Sue, it's Mom.

- 17 Susan Hi, Mom! How's everything?
- 18 Mrs. Baker Fine.
- 19 Susan Good! Is it cold up there?
- 20 Mrs. Baker Yes, it's snowing. But the view is breathtaking.
- 21 Susan Great! Don't catch a cold.
- 22 Mrs. Baker All right. You take care, too.
- 23 Susan OK. Say hi to Dad and enjoy your trip.
- 24 Mrs. Baker Thank you, dear. Bye.

As mentioned earlier, although there is no explicit summons answer sequence it can be assumed that the caller is Mrs. Baker. Mrs. Baker displays a lack of or uncertainty about the recognition of her son Nick when she says "I this Nick?" and then Nick confirms his identity and then displays an equal uncertainty about hers with his questioning intonation "Yes, Mom?" Mrs. Baker confirms her identity and initiates the first *how-are-you* sequence to which Nick replies neutrally "Fine." From this point on Mrs. Baker starts a question-answer sequence (some might consider it an interrogation) that only ends when she does a switchboard request "Is Sue there?" Sue completes the second part of the *how-are-you* sequence (returning the inquiry) when she comes on the line. This is one of the few conversations that proceed through topics and then shows a pre-closing and closing sequence. Unfortunately the lack of a summons-answer and the oddness of the greeting/recognition sequence weaken the dialogue.

### Closings

In order to understand closings in telephone dialogues it was necessary to go beyond a simple two way distinction (closing/no-closing) so a closing type categorization scheme was constructed (see Table 4). First of all, an explicit *hang up* action is the counterpart of the explicit *ring* of the summons at the opening. One could argue that telephone dialogues only officially close at the point of hanging up. However it soon became obvious that textbooks did not explicitly show (in

Table 4. Closing type categorization scheme

Hang-up		Goodbye	Pre-closing	End biz or topic	End scene
Closing	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-
Quasi-closing	-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+
Ambiguous	-	-	-	+	+
No closing	-	-	-	-	+
Transfer	-	+/-	+/-	+	-

pictures) or describe (in words) the act of hanging up whereas films for the most part did. Despite the lack of explicit *hanging up* actions, telephone dialogues did come to a close through various combinations of two or more of the following: the utterance of goodbyes (e.g., *goodbye, bye, ciao*), the use of pre-closing formulae (e.g., *talk to/see you later, I've got to go*) a closure of the purpose or business of the call (e.g., *that's all for now, ok thanks*) and the explicit end of the scene/dialogue. These were labeled as quasi-closings. However, if there was merely business or call purpose closure as a scene or dialogue ended this was considered ambiguous—the call may close conventionally with pre-closing and/or goodbye sequences or another topic might be nominated and the call may continue. If the scene or dialogue ended mid-topic or immediately after the opening sequence this was categorized as having no closing. In rare cases one person answered and then handed the phone to another so that was called a transfer.

Based on the categorization scheme, films frequently showed complete closings (67%) that included an explicit hanging up action. If quasi-closings are included films rise to 70% compared with 30% for Monkasho textbooks (see Table 5). Only 14% of film telephone dialogues ended ambiguously whereas 39% of Monkasho textbook dialogues did. Dialogues with no closing sequence were a mere 10% in films but accounted for more than one quarter of textbook dialogues. Transfers occurred at the same rate in both films and textbooks (5%).

**Table 5. Closings in films and textbooks**

	Film (n=20)	Textbook (n=23)
Closing	43 (67)	0
Quasi-closing	2 (3)	17 (30)
Ambiguous	9 (14)	22 (39)
No closing	7 (10)	15 (26)
Transfer	3 (5)	3 (5)
total	63	57

Percentages in parenthesis

### Discussion and Conclusions

In terms of overall structure it appears that films did a better job—they provided more complete opening sequences containing all four canonical sequence types and offered a higher rate of complete closings that did textbooks. The incompleteness of sequences found in Monkasho dialogues mirrored Wong’s findings. Wong theorizes that textbook writers omit or leave canonical sequences incomplete because they are “taken for granted” (Wong, 2002, p. 54) and she concludes that “native speaker intuitions about language are not necessarily sufficient for the development of naturalistic textbook materials” (p. 54). If native speaker intuitions are insufficient, then how can learners be expected to fill in the gaps when “there continues to be a substantial mismatch between what tends to be presented to learners as classroom experiences of the target language and the actual use of that language as discourse outside the classroom” (Yule, 1995, p. 185).

There are certainly implications for teachers and textbook writers to be drawn from this study. First, it is important to be more sensitive to how natural telephone conversations are constructed in order to “gain a sense of how participants construct, reconstruct and orient to social actions such as summoning parties, doing identification and recognition work, greeting, etc” (Wong, 2002, p. 54). This can be done by collecting and inspecting recordings of naturally occurring telephone calls and must be done to ensure that learners get proper models that

will enable them to develop the discourse and sociolinguistic competence they need. Secondly, teachers (and materials producers) should consider collecting and using telephone dialogues from films to supplement or even replace textbook dialogues until better ones can be produced. Teachers and administrators who make decisions on which textbooks will be selected for their schools have the right as enlightened consumers to demand that textbook writers provide evidence that they have collected or consulted natural data and show how this data was utilized in the development of new teaching materials. However, we would also do well to heed McCarthy's caution that "just because linguists can describe a phenomenon convincingly does not mean that it has to become an element of the language teaching syllabus" (1991).

There are a number of questions that remain unanswered by this study. For instance, we do not now how telephone dialogues are actually taught in the classroom and what kinds of input teachers actually use—many teachers might already be supplementing textbook materials. It is also not known how other newer telephone technologies affect dialogue sequences with the increasing use of cell phones, caller id, etc. For instance, Wong fails to account for how use of cell phones might affect the realization of the summons answer sequence—there is only one user so the caller knows who will answer. Furthermore, the caller id shown on the cell phone display monitor alerts the call recipient to the identity of the caller, thus affecting the way that recognition and identification is accomplished. Also, with the higher frequency of daily calling there may be a tendency to move directly into the purpose or business of the call without a how-are-you sequence. Finally, the effects and effectiveness of using film or authentic materials as pedagogical input and the degree of their appropriateness are yet to be fully investigated.

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## Appendix

Textbooks	# of dialogues	Films	# of dialogues
active.comm 1 (2003) Shubunkan	1	4 weddings and a funeral (1994)	0
active.comm 2 (2003) Shubunkan	3	American Beauty (1999)	2
active.comm 3 (2003) Shubunkan	4	As Good as it Gets (1997)	7
Columbus 21 1 (2003) Mitsumura Tosho	6	Back to the Future I (1985)	2
Columbus 21 2 (2003) Mitsumura Tosho	1	Dead Poet's Society (1989)	3
Columbus 21 3 (2003) Mitsumura Tosho	0	ET (1982)	1
Expressions 1 (2003)	3	Father of the Bride (1991)	3
New Crown 1 (2003) Sanseido	4	Forrest Gump (1994)	1
New Crown 2 (2003) Sanseido	0	Ghost (1990)	7
New Crown 3 (2003) Sanseido	0	Graduate, The (1967)	2
New Horizon 1 (2003) Tokyo Shoseki	4	Ground Hog Day (1993)	2
New Horizon 2 (2003) Tokyo Shoseki	1	Mrs. Doubtfire (1993)	6
New Horizon 3 (2003) Tokyo Shoseki	3	My Best Friend's Wedding (1997)	1
One World 1 (2003) Kyoiku Shuppan	7	Notting Hill (1999)	2
One World 2(2003) Kyoiku Shuppan	1	Philadelphia	3
Sailing 1 (2002) Keirinkan	4	Rain Man (1988)	7
Select 1 (2003) Sanseido	3	Truman Show	5
Sunshine 1 (2003) Kairyudo	0	When Harry met Sally (1989)	4
Sunshine 2 (2003) Kairyudo	6	Witness (1985)	5
Sunshine 3 (2003) Kairyudo	0	You've Got Mail (1998)	0
Total English 1 (2003) Gakko Tosho	1		
Total English 2 (2003) Gakko Tosho	3		
Total English 3 (2003) Gakko Tosho	2		
	57		63