

English version of chapter published in L. Lugli & M Mizzau (Eds.), *L'ascolto* [Listening].  
Bologna, Italy: Il Mulino.

## Experimental Microanalysis of Addressees in Face-to-face Dialogue

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In the view of many scholars, face-to-face dialogue is the basic form of language use (e.g., Bavelas & Chovil, 2000, 2006; Bavelas, Hutchinson, Kenwood, & Matheson, 1997; Chafe, 1994; Clark, 1996; Fillmore, 1981; Garrod & Pickering, 2004; Goodwin, 1981; Levinson, 1983; Linell, 2005). For example, Chafe (1994, p.41) assumed “that there is one particular use of language—ordinary conversation—whose special status justifies treating it as a baseline from which all other uses are deviations.” In addition to being the language of ordinary conversations, we would point out that face-to-face dialogue is a child’s first language developmentally, and it must have been the first language of early humans as they evolved.

Our research group studies the unique features of face-to-face dialogue. What makes this particular format different from other forms of communication, such as written text, public speaking, or electronic communication? In this chapter, we will focus on two related differences. First, the speaker is talking to someone in particular. Schober and Clark (1989) distinguished between two kinds of listeners: an *addressee* is the person whom the speaker is addressing directly and who can interact with the speaker. Listeners who cannot interact with the speaker are *overhearers*. There are listeners in many other settings (e.g. television, radio, lecture halls, courtrooms, and parliaments), but these are overhearers; only in dialogue is there an addressee. Unlike an overhearer, the addressee is an immediate

and essential part of any dialogue because the speaker is talking specifically with the addressee and for the addressee. Moreover, in Clark's (1996) *collaborative model* of language use, the addressee is a full partner in creating the dialogue.

The second way in which face-to-face is unique is that the speaker and addressee can see as well as hear each other. Speakers also have addressees in other settings, such as email or the telephone, but they cannot see each other. In face-to-face dialogue, they have visible as well as audible means of communication available at all times. The addressee can interact with the speaker without interrupting by using facial displays, gaze, and even hand gestures, in addition to words or brief vocalizations. In this chapter, we will review what our research has revealed so far about what addressees are doing that makes them so important in a face-to-face dialogue. First, however, we will provide an example of a speaker and an addressee in a face-to-face dialogue that illustrates everything covered in this chapter.

*"The Sleeper": Example of a speaker and addressee during a narrative*

It would be best to show a video of this dialogue, but only a transcript is possible here. The participants were two female university students who volunteered to be in one of our studies, where they met each other for the first time. One of them was randomly assigned to be the speaker (*S*) and the other to be the addressee (*A*). The speaker's task was to tell a personal close call story, which is an experience that could have been dangerous but that turned out all right in the end. The addressee had no other instructions but to simply listen to the story. When reading the transcript, it is important to know that the speaker was a lively story-teller, constantly using her gestures, face, and vocal variation to illustrate and animate her words. Also, like most of the other speakers in this study, she emphasized the humour as well as the drama of her story, depicting the possible danger but also laughing at it because she was not harmed after all. First, here's her story without the addressee's responses:

S: "Uh, I have a single bed with a headboard on the back of it. And I got a light for Christmas, a lamp that you clamp on to the headboard. And it's got like a, um, you know, a reading lamp or

whatever. And--for at night when you're in bed and you don't feel like getting out of bed. It's just attached right to your headboard. And I guess I left it on. And it's got a really, really strong hot light, like the, the light really heats up. You, you can put your hand really close to it and feel heat coming off the light. I guess it was on for-- I don't know how long it was on for. But it was facing down towards my pillow. It started burning a hole in my pillow. And I--my head is like THIS far away from the light, right? Burning a hole, burning a h-hole. Then it starts to catch on fire. And I still don't, I--like I'm still sleeping. And it's like, you know, right like, you know, my head's on the pillow like this and it's just right there. And my mom smelled the smoke in her room. And she came in, and she's going--“

A: [*interrupting*] “So it--the room was starting to get full of smoke?”

S: Yeah [*laughs*]. And I didn't even wake up. And like it could have gotten on fire, might—

A: [*interrupting*] You couldn't feel the heat or anything?

S: No. I just sleep really, soundly— [*shaking with laughter*]

Because the speaker and the addressee were strangers, there would seem to be nothing that the addressee could contribute. Yet, as Table 1 shows, she was far from passive, responding with hand and facial gestures (*in italics*) as well as words (in quotation marks). In Table 1, we have inserted the addressee's responses in square brackets immediately below what the speaker was saying at that moment. For example, precisely while the speaker was saying “left it on,” the addressee began to look concerned; she stopped smiling, raised her eyebrows and rounded her mouth. This format for linking speaker and addressee actions reveals and emphasizes that most of the addressee's responses were simultaneous with the speaker's words. Only when the addressee spoke up at the end of the story did their interaction resemble a turn-taking dialogue. The addressee's actions in the background illustrate almost everything that we have found in our research on addressees in dialogue. Therefore, we will return to it frequently in this chapter, using excerpts to give life to the findings of our experiments.

### *Mixed research methods*

Although we will be describing experimental findings in this chapter, the studies do not fit neatly into one category of research. Our research ignores the boundary between qualitative and quantitative methods and combines several features from each side of this divide (cf. Bavelas, 1995). Our essential tool is *microanalysis*, which is the detailed and reliable examination of observable communication

sequences as they proceed, moment by moment, in the dialogue (Bavelas, McGee, Phillips, & Routledge, 2000). The time scale of microanalysis is very small, focusing on events that often occur within a one- or two-second interval. This time scale is necessary because of the speed and precision of the participants' actions. For example, the entire Sleeper story above was 1.25 minutes long, and most of the addressee's responses were around one second or less, yet each was precisely timed to points in the speaker's narrative.

Unlike most microanalysts, we do formal laboratory experiments, but unlike most experimentalists, we study dyads consisting of two real participants rather than one participant who was talking to the experimenter or to a confederate. It is also unusual in experimental work to study phenomena that are intrinsically qualitative in nature. In the Sleeper story, the addressee made a wide variety of responses (e.g., "m-hm," smiling, nodding, looking concerned, or gesturing), which differed from each other qualitatively rather than differing in degree; none fit on a parametric scale. However, we also incorporate quantitative methods in two ways. First, we require high inter-analyst reliability, preferably around 90% agreement between independent analysts. Each of these decisions is qualitative (at the nominal level of measurement), but we usually convert them into frequencies, then into rates per minute for statistical analysis. It is important to add that, although we ultimately test statistically expressed hypotheses, we always start inductively: Rather than starting from the literature, we learn directly from the data itself what is happening in a dialogue (e.g., Bavelas, 1987).

We record the dialogues on video and do all analysis directly from the video, not from the transcript. Face-to-face dialogue consists of words, prosody, hand gestures, facial displays, and gaze—all tightly synchronized in both timing and meaning (Bavelas & Chovil, 2000, 2006). For example, when the speaker in the Sleeper story said "my head is, like, THIS far away from the light" (line 15), she demonstrated the distance by holding her hands about 15 cm apart precisely as she was saying "THIS far

away from the light.” The timing and meaning of her gesture were completely synchronized with her words, and the addressee understood their integrated meaning: When the addressee later asked, “You couldn’t feel the heat or anything?” (line 28), she held her hand about the same distance from the side of her own face.

### *How is an Addressee Different from a Listener?*

It is important to acknowledge Clark’s (1996) collaborative model of dialogue, which has become an important framework for our studies. Recall that Schober and Clark (1989) introduced the term *addressee* in order to distinguish between someone with whom the speaker is interacting and someone who can simply overhear the speaker but who cannot interact with the speaker. They proposed that the interaction between a speaker and addressee is a special kind, because the two of them have, not just the opportunity, but also the obligation to collaborate in order to ensure mutual understanding. Thus, speaker and addressee participate together in a moment-by-moment process that Clark and Schaefer (1987) called *grounding*. In each utterance, they collaborate to ensure that the addressee has understood the speaker sufficiently for their current purposes (see also Clark, 1996, Ch. 8). Grounding sequences are occurring constantly in the background of all dialogues. They are cyclical, three-step micro-sequences in which the speaker presents information, the addressee indicates understanding (or not), and the speaker indicates (explicitly or implicitly) that the addressee has understood (or not). For example, in line 1 of the Sleeper story, the speaker presented the first new information, (about her bed and headboard), and the addressee indicated that she understood this by saying “mm,” “hm,” and nodding. In line 2, the speaker implicitly accepted that the addressee had understood her by continuing to build on this information (“and I got a light for Christmas”). This new information also started a new cycle. The addressee indicated her understanding of this new information with a nod, and again the speaker built on the grounded information (in line 3), and so on throughout the story.

Thus, an important distinction between addressees and overhearers is that only an addressee can participate in grounding; an overhearer cannot. If grounding ensures mutual understanding, then addressees should have an advantage compared to overhearers. The next section describes Schober and Clark's (1989) experimental test of whether the ability to participate in grounding really makes a difference.

#### *Addressees versus overhearers*

To test their theory that addressees were a special kind of listener, Schober and Clark (1989) conducted two experiments that demonstrated the difference between addressees and overhearers. In these experiments, the participants could hear but not see each other; they were separated by a partition. The speakers' task was to give verbal directions about how to do a task correctly. Each speaker had two different listeners who were doing the task: an addressee (who could interact with the speaker) and an overhearer (who could not). Thus the independent variable was whether the person receiving the speaker's directions was able to interact with the speaker or not. The dependent variables were how accurately and quickly the addressees and overhearers were able to complete the task. If all that mattered was the quality of the speaker's directions, then there would be no difference, on average, between how well the addressees versus the overhearers did the task because they heard the same information. However, if the ability to collaborate through grounding is important, then the addressees should do better than the overhearers.

Both experiments showed that the addressees did significantly better on their task than the overhearers. The addressees' advantage could not have been due to the quality of the speaker's directions or to simply listening carefully to the speaker, because these were the same for the overhearers. The same directions that led the addressees to achieve near-perfect scores did not work as well for the overhearers. Note that each overhearer not only heard the same directions as their matched

addressee, they even heard the grounding sequences between the speaker and the addressee. However, they could not participate in their own grounding sequences with the speaker. Without the ability to ground, the overhearers could not indicate to the speaker what they did or did not understand; they could not tell the speaker what they had done, in order to identify or clarify misunderstandings; and they could not indicate to the speaker what information would be most helpful to them.

### *“Passive” addressees*

There is an apparent limitation on generalizing Schober and Clark’s (1989) results to other kinds of dialogues. Their task was inherently collaborative, because the speaker and addressee were working together on a shared goal, which was to get the addressee to do the task correctly. Moreover, the addressee had information that the speaker needed, namely, what the addressee was doing in response to the speaker’s directions. In contrast, the speaker and overhearer shared neither goal nor information: The speaker was not tailoring his or her directions for the overhearer, and the overhearer could not provide the speaker with any information about what he or she was doing with those directions. So, one could argue, perhaps the difference that Schober and Clark found between addressees and overhearers would only apply to explicitly collaborative tasks. We doubted this limitation and tested the importance of grounding with an addressee who was in a much more passive role.

Bavelas, Coates, & Johnson (2000) conducted two experiments in which the speakers told an addressee (whom they had just met) about a personal close call (e.g., a car or skiing accident, oversleeping and almost missing a final exam) they had experienced in the past. This task (which was the same narrative task as in the Sleeper story) differed from Schober and Clark’s task in the two ways described above. First, there was no shared goal; the speaker was to tell a story, and the addressee was simply to listen. Second, because the two participants did not know each other, the addressee could not

contribute any valid information to the story. On the surface, at least, these addressees were as passive as we could make them.

To test the effect of an addressee who was merely present and listening to someone else's story (i.e., acting more like an overhearer), we randomly assigned some of them to an experimental condition that distracted them from the story. For example, in one experiment, we asked half of the addressees to count the number of words that the speaker said that began with the letter *t*. These distracted addressees were listening intently, but not to the meaning of the narrative; they were listening for and counting particular words. The other addressees were just listening normally, as illustrated in the Sleeper story, above.

Distracted addressees had two measurable effects on the speakers. First, the speakers with distracted addressees did not tell their stories well. Independent raters (who were not aware of the experimental condition) judged these stories to be significantly more poorly told than the stories told to addressees who were not distracted. Second, a subsequent microanalysis of the story endings revealed that, at what should have been the climax of their close call story, the speakers with distracted addressees faltered. They were significantly more likely to become disfluent and to justify or over-explain their stories than were the speakers with normal addressees. (See example in Bavelas, et al., 2000, p. 949.)

These results extended Schober and Clark's (1989) findings beyond tasks that are overtly collaborative. Even when a narrative might seem to be a monologue, it requires an addressee who is responding to and with the speaker. We propose that because the distracted addressees were disengaged from the narrative and were not contributing to it, they were reduced to overhearers. Taken together, these two sets of experiments demonstrated the difference between addressees and overhearers. The rest

of this chapter examines exactly what addressees are doing. What is the nature of their unique influence on the speaker?

### *What Addressees Do*

#### *Generic and specific responses*

Before conducting the two experiments just described (Bavelas et al., 2000), we watched many videos of story telling similar to the Sleeper story and sought to understand, through inductive observation, what the addressees were doing. We studied virtually every response the addressees made and soon excluded two kinds of responses from further analysis. We did not include smiles when they were not combined with other actions, because there are so many different kinds of smiles (e.g., Ekman, 1985) that distinguishing among them would be a project in itself. Also, in this region of Canada, the baseline expression tends to be a smile. For both reasons, the sheer number of smiles could overwhelm all other addressee responses! The other responses excluded were occasions when the addressee became the speaker (e.g., lines 25 and 28 at the end of the Sleeper story). We will return to these responses later in this chapter.

Still, there was a wide array of other addressee responses to examine, and we soon noticed an interesting difference. Some of their responses were familiar and ubiquitous; e.g., saying “m-hm,” “yeah,” or nodding are stereotypic addressee responses in English Canada. We called these *generic* responses because they are not unique to any particular narrative. In the Sleeper example in Table 1, the addressee made generic responses such as nodding and variations on “m-hm” in lines 1-6, 10-11, and 22.

In contrast, after the speaker began to hint at what the danger would be (starting at line 7), the addressee’s face and gestures began to depict concern, alarm, or amusement, which were highly specific to particular, precise points in the speaker’s narrative. We therefore called these *specific* responses; they

would definitely not fit just anywhere. For example, exactly when the speaker described the light as “really strong” (line 8), the addressee bit her lip. When the speaker went on to say that it was a “hot light,” the addressee conveyed (by smiling and looking alarmed at the same time; line 9) that she had begun to anticipate what the close call might be. Neither of these responses would have made sense if they had occurred earlier or at other points in the story. For example, when the speaker was simply providing background information, such as “I got a light for Christmas” (line 2), it would have been bizarre for the addressee to bite her lip or look alarmed--there is nothing inherently alarming about getting a light for Christmas! Each specific addressee response was shaped for the particular point in the speaker’s narrative where it occurred. We developed detailed operational definitions for distinguishing between generic and specific responses and applied these in new experimental data. Using these definitions and working independently, two new, naive analysts were able to agree on 95% of their distinctions between generic and specific responses.

Other observers had also noticed both kinds of responses, in both experimental (Krauss et al., 1966, 1977) and non-experimental (Goodwin, 1986; Yngve, 1970) data, although they gave them different names. For example, Goodwin (1986) had used the terms *continuers* and *assessments* for what we called generic and specific responses. He also noticed that they tracked the speaker’s overall narrative (pp 214-215). We tested this observation statistically in both of our experiments and confirmed that specific responses occurred significantly later than generic responses. The Sleeper example in Table 1 illustrates this pattern. The addressee made exclusively generic responses from the beginning of the story, when the speaker was setting the scene, until the first hint of what the close call would be (at “left it on”; line 7). After that point, virtually all of her responses were specific, providing vivid illustrations of both the danger and the humour in the climax of the story.

In the next sections, we will look even more closely at specific responses, examining the many resources addressees have available for their active and essential role in a face-to-face dialogue.

### *Facial displays*

In the Sleeper story, the addressee's specific responses (lines 7-9, 12-13, 16-19, 23, and 27, were often facial actions, such as raising her eyebrows, dropping her mouth open, or widening her eyes. A member of our research group, Nicole Chovil, conducted the first broad systematic analysis of facial actions in dialogue (Chovil, 1989; 1991/92; Bavelas & Chovil, 1997). Chovil examined the facial actions of both the speaker and the addressee in dyads who were doing a variety of conversational tasks. (For reasons similar to those given in the previous section, she also excluded smiles.) One of her findings was that, although the speakers' facial displays were more numerous and varied than addressees' faces were, the addressees' faces still served several functions in the dialogue. Chovil found three common functions: First, facial displays provided *back channel* information (Yngve, 1970) to the speaker, indicating whether and how well the addressee is understanding. For example, the addressee could look attentive, interested, puzzled, or "blank," and each of these provided different back-channel information to the speaker. (Brunner, 1979, had shown that smiling can also be a positive sign of understanding.) Second, the addressee's face could convey the addressee's *personal reaction* to what the speaker was describing, for example, displaying disgust when the speaker described a food that the addressee disliked. Third, the addressee could also portray how the speaker might be reacting, for example, wincing when the speaker described being injured. The latter response, in which the addressee displayed a response that was appropriate to the speaker's situation rather than his or her own situation, was historically called *motor mimicry* (Bavelas, Black, Lemery, & Mullett, 1986; see also Bavelas 2007)

The face is an excellent resource for the addressee for several reasons. First, participants in a dialogue apparently do not consider the addressee's facial actions as interruptions or as taking over the

turn. Indeed, the fact that addressees' facial contributions are usually simultaneous with the speaker's speech raises interesting questions about the utility and viability of the concept of "turn." Second, this simultaneity with the speaker's speech can be very precise because of the potential speed of facial actions. The addressee can start and stop a facial action in synchrony with a single phrase or even a single word. For example, when the speaker first described the light in her lamp, she said it was a "really strong, hot light" (lines 8 and 9). The addressee bit her lip in a grimace with "really strong." Then, as the speaker said "hot light" (less than one second later), she began to smile.

Notice that we are describing the *information* that a facial display can provide to the speaker, rather than any emotion that it might express. Both Chovil (1989; 1991/92) and Ekman (1997) distinguished between facial actions that express an individual's emotional state and those that display information to the other person in a dialogue. (See also Bavelas & Chovil, 1997; Bavelas & Gerwing, 2007.) To stress this distinction, we have adopted Kraut and Johnston's (1979) terminology: *Facial* (or *emotional*) *expressions* reveal information about what the individual is feeling, whereas *facial displays* convey information to another person in the dialogue. One of the main differences between facial displays and facial expressions is how each is timed. As shown in the Sleeper example, a conversational facial display is synchronized with the speaker's speech, changing quickly and precisely in relation to what the speaker is saying at a particular moment. For example, the addressee looked alarmed at line 17 when the speaker said "Then it starts to catch on fire." Then in lines 18 and 19, when the speaker started to make a joke of sleeping through the fire, the addressee immediately started smiling. An emotional expression would be timed to the individual's emotional state, which could be initiated by the speaker's words but would thereafter be independent of them. It is unlikely that emotional states change as frequently and rapidly as the facial actions of the participants in a dialogue. In this example, if the

addressee was feeling fear or alarm when the speaker said “catch on fire,” then that emotion would presumably run its course. It would not change to a smile within 2 seconds, as it did.

Chovil (1989; 1991) also conducted an experiment that demonstrated the social nature of addressees’ facial displays in dialogue. She randomly assigned the participants in her experiment to listen to a close-call story in one of four different conditions: (a) face to face; (b) on the telephone; (c) in the same room but separated by a partition; or (d) on a tape recording. Addressees made significantly more facial displays in person (i.e., when the speaker would see their display) than in the other three conditions, when the speaker would not see it. Chovil also obtained independent rankings of how social each situation was. The face-to-face condition was considered the most social, then the telephone, then the partition, and finally the tape recording, which was the least social condition. As the conditions became less social, the frequency of facial displays also declined. The frequency of addressees’ facial displays was significantly inversely related to how social the situation was.

Research on facial displays in dialogue is still relatively rare (cf. Bavelas & Gerwing, 2007), having been dominated by interest in emotional expressions. Yet these displays are an important part of the addressee’s repertoire. To ignore them is to ignore how closely and constantly the speaker and addressee are interacting.

### *Gaze patterns*

Once we had started studying what addressees do in dialogue, we became curious about the timing of their responses (Bavelas, Coates, & Johnson, 2002). Why did they respond at one time rather slightly before or after? An examination of the pattern in Table 1 suggests that the addressee usually responded when the speaker had just presented a new piece of information, i.e., as part of a grounding sequence. However, there were exceptions, such as the periods of continuous nodding early in the story (lines 5 and 6). Also, the pieces of information that the speaker was presenting did not correspond

precisely with grammatical sentences or clauses (e.g., lines 9 and 10), so syntax was not the main cue. We approached this question inductively, examining the precursors of all addressee responses in several of the close-call stories that formed our pilot study. The answer was surprising: the speaker and addressee seemed to be coordinating the addressee's responses by their gaze.

To understand the pattern we were proposing, some background is necessary. Kendon (1967), Cook (1977), Duncan and Fiske (1977) and others had found that, at least in North America and Europe, the addressee tends to look fairly constantly at the speaker, but the speaker does not stare back. More often, the speaker looks slightly away from the addressee, with occasional glances at the addressee. Because the addressee is likely to be looking at the speaker, it is the speaker's glances that create mutual gaze (eye contact). In our pilot data, virtually all of the addressees' responses occurred during these brief periods of mutual gaze, which we called *gaze windows*.

We (Bavelas et al., 2002) tested this hypothesis formally with nine of the control condition dyads from the t-counting experiment (Bavelas et al., 2000) in which the addressees were listening normally. First, independent analysts located all of gaze windows. They then located the precise onset and offset times of each gaze window. Inter-analyst agreement on both dependent variables was high; 100% and 84 – 87% respectively. After resolving any disagreements, the analysts matched the generic and specific listener responses identified in the original experiment with these gaze windows and calculated the probability that these would coincide by chance. This probability test was necessary because if either the gaze windows or the listener responses were occurring often, then they could occur at the same time simply by chance. The test showed that they occurred together far more often than chance would predict. The addressees' responses were significantly more likely to occur within a gaze window than outside it. When the speaker glanced at the addressee, the addressee responded with a specific or generic response. This result was true not only for the whole sample but also for each dyad; it was a

strong, reliable finding. We have not indicated the gaze windows in Table 1, but the pattern was true for this story as well; all of the addressee's responses occurred in gaze windows.

The other finding was that, although the speaker initiated the addressee's response by looking at the addressee, the addressee had a role in closing the gaze window. The addressees' responses did not occur just anywhere within the gaze window; they were significantly more likely to occur in the latter half. We interpreted this to mean that once the addressee had responded, the speaker glanced away again. On the less frequent occasions when the speaker continued looking at the addressee, the addressee continued to respond until the speaker looked away. For example, in lines 5 and 6, the speaker continued to look at the addressee as she explained the reason for the lamp's placement, and the addressee nodded continuously.

In summary, the statistical analysis confirmed that the speakers and addressees collaborated very closely, using their eye gaze to coordinate the precise placement of their respective actions. This does not mean the pattern is universal. It is likely that this pattern would change in different contexts, such as when dyads are seated side by side, when they both need to look at something they are talking about, or when their culture regulates eye gaze differently (e.g., labels it as rude). Any of these contexts would be an interesting new line of research.

### *Formulations*

Recall that our analyses of addressees' responses so far have not included those occasions when the addressee began speaking up. As Yngve (1970, p. 568) pointed out, distinctions between having the turn and not having the turn (i.e., between being the speaker or being the addressee) are fluid rather than fixed. For example, at the end of the Sleeper story (lines 25 and 28), the addressee changed the pattern of her behaviour and interrupted the speaker, apparently to ask two questions. We propose that these are

not questions but *formulations*, which Garfinkel and Sacks (1970, p. 350) defined as utterances that describe, explain, characterize, explicate, translate, or summarize what the speaker has said.

We propose that formulations are another way for addressees to play a part in the second step of the grounding sequence. At the end of the Sleeper story, the addressee indicated that she understood what the speaker had said by stating her understanding explicitly (instead of by a short generic or specific response). In line 23, the speaker had said “And my mom smelled the smoke in her room.” Shortly afterward, the addressee said “So it—the room was starting to get full of smoke?” The speaker had not said explicitly that the burning pillow had filled the room with smoke. The addressee’s formulation explicated this dramatic point, verbally stating her understanding of what the speaker implied. The speaker completed the grounding sequence by confirming the addressee’s understanding (“Yeah,” line 26). She then continued with her story, “And I didn’t even wake up. And like it could have gotten on fire.” Again, the addressee formulated the implication of what the speaker was saying by stating it explicitly: “You couldn’t feel the heat or anything?”, and the speaker confirmed this inference. Formulations often have the intonation pattern of a question. However, the addressee is not asking for *new* information; instead he or she is asking whether their formulation is correct. It is interesting to note also that, in these examples, the addressee’s formulations added dramatic details to the speaker’s story—details that the speaker had not included. The addressee at these points became the co-narrator of a story she had never heard before.

Addressees formulate in many other situations as well. For example, when giving directions, speakers often pause for the addressee to summarize or rephrase each new piece of information before the speaker continues. If the speaker receives only generic responses, he or she is not receiving the same level of evidence about whether the addressee is following the new information.

One particular context in which formulation is important is in psychotherapy or conflict resolution. In these contexts, formulations are often referred to as “reflecting” or “paraphrasing” the client’s words and are therefore seen as a way of responding neutrally. However, Heritage and Watson (1979) pointed out that formulations are not neutral. They inevitably preserve some of the speaker’s information, delete other information, and thereby transform the original statement, none of which are neutral processes. One of our research group, Bruce Phillips (1998, 1999), demonstrated these non-neutral effects of formulations by comparing them in two different approaches to conflict resolution. He found systematic differences in whether the mediators’ formulations preserved positive versus negative aspects of the clients’ statements, as well as differences in whether the formulations were open (leaving an opportunity for the client to confirm or correct it) or closed (with no opportunity for grounding or correction). Our current project (e.g., Bavelas, De Jong, & Korman, 2008) is comparing three different approaches to psychotherapy to reveal how therapists’ formulations of clients’ utterances help to co-construct these therapy sessions to fit the therapist’s theoretical approach.

### Summary

The studies described here support our proposal that the addressees’ moment-by-moment contribution to dialogue, particularly their role in grounding cycles, makes them quite different from other kinds of listeners. The details of these differences become apparent through a combination of experimental design and microanalysis of dialogue. Starting with Schober and Clark’s (1989) demonstration that addressees have an advantage over overhearers because of their ability to participate in grounding, our own program of research has gone on to reveal more details about their unique contribution to dialogue: When addressees are distracted from listening to the speaker’s close-call story and therefore cannot participate in grounding, they become mere overhearers. This change from addressee to overhearer not only influences their behavior, it also impairs the speaker’s ability to tell

what should be an exciting story. In contrast, addressees who are not distracted provide their speakers with both generic and specific responses. When listening to a narrative, they make generic responses (e.g., “Mhm” or nodding) at the beginning of the story as the speaker is giving background information. Then they change to specific responses at the more dramatic points of the story. These specific responses include vocalizations, facial displays, and even gestures, and they convey the addressees’ understanding of the meaning and importance of exciting (and often simultaneously humorous) specific moments in the story.

Other studies reveal more about the visible and audible resources available to addressees. Conversational facial displays are an often-overlooked way that addressees contribute to the dialogue while remaining in a background role. These facial actions are a rapid and versatile resource for providing moment-by-moment feedback to the speaker without interrupting. It is evidence of the communicative function of these displays that they are much more likely to occur when the speaker will see them. Another resource for collaboration is eye gaze: When the speaker looks towards the addressee, it creates a brief period of mutual gaze in which the addressee responds, then the speaker looks away. The speaker and addressee use these gaze windows to coordinate the timing of the addressee’s responses. Finally, addressees sometimes play their role in grounding by taking up the turn to verbally formulate what the speaker has been saying. Because formulations inevitably reshape the speaker’s utterance, they can have a major influence on the conversation.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate that shifting one’s focus away from the speaker reveals an active and influential addressee. Viewing the actions of speaker and addressee in their moment-by-moment relation to each other can be more informative than viewing each participant individually, in isolation from the other. The collaboration between speakers and addressees is evident and exciting, and there is still a great deal to be discovered about the details.

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## Table 1. The "Sleeper" Story

- 1 S: "Uh, I have a single bed with a headboard on the back of it.  
[*"mm"; "hm"; nodding; looking attentive*]
- 2 And I got a light for Christmas,  
[*slight nod*]
- 3 a lamp that you clamp on to the headboard.  
[*slight nod*]
- 4 And it's got like a, um, you know, a reading lamp or whatever.  
[*"m-hm" + slight nod*]
- 5 And, for at night when you're in bed and you don't feel like getting out of bed.  
[*continuous small nods*]
- 6 It's just attached right to your headboard.  
[*continuous slight nodding*]
- 7 And I guess I left it on.  
[*stops smiling, raises her eyebrows; looks concerned*]
- 8 And it's got a really, really strong,  
[*bites lip*]
- 9 hot light, like the, the light  
[*smiles, ducking her head puts her fingers on her chin; fades to closed-mouth smile*]
- 10 really heats up. You, you can put your hand really close to it  
[*"m-hm"*]
- 11 and feel heat coming off the light.  
[*"m-hm"*]
- 12 I guess it was on for, I don't know how long it was on for.  
[*raises her eyebrows, widens her eyes*]

- 13 But it was facing down towards my pillow.  
[*maintains previous expression*]
- 14 It started burning a hole in my pillow.  
[*straightens her head;*  
*“Oh my goodness!”*]
- 15 And I--my head is, like, THIS far away from the light, right?  
[*maintains position, fingers still on chin*]
- 16 Burning a hole, burning a h-hole.  
[*eyes are very wide;*  
*ducks her head slightly*]
- 17 Then it starts to catch on fire.  
[*looks more alarmed;*  
*moves hand down to chest*  
*and “freezes” there with open mouth and wide eyes*]
- 18 And I still don’t,  
[*slight smile*]
- 19 I--like I’m still sleeping.  
[*resettles her hand*  
*on her chest; smiling*]
- 20 And it’s like, you know, right like,  
[*starts to twist her collar*]
- 21 you know, my head’s on the pillow like this  
[*hand back up to her*  
*mouth; gasps, which*  
*becomes a laugh*]
- 22 and it’s just right there.  
[*“m-hm”*]
- 23 And my mom smelled the smoke in her room.  
[*tilts her head,*  
*looks puzzled*]
- 24 And she came in and she’s going—”
- 25 A: [*interrupting and spreading her hands out to depict the whole room*] “So it--the room was starting to get full of smoke?”

- 26 S: “Yeah. [laughs]  
*[looks away, then back; rolls  
her eyes; “Oh my goodness”]*
- 27 And I didn’t even wake up. And like it could have gotten on fire, might—”  
*[stares with mouth open, head forward]*
- 28 A: *[interrupting; raises her hand to side of her face; puzzled expression]* “You couldn’t  
feel the heat or anything?”
- 29 S: “No. I just sleep really, soundly—”  
*[shaking with laughter;  
raises her hand to mouth].*