Complaints about Misbehaviour

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Abstract
This paper is concerned with complaints to close friends about the misbehaviour of third non-present parties. In this sequential environment, we seek to identify the basic sequential as well as the distinctive features of complaints in Cypriot Greek ordinary conversations. Thus, this study analyzes the production of complaints as distinct topics with easily identifiable beginnings and endings. As it is shown, a crucial part of complaining is the expression of negative moral stance towards the non-present party’s misbehaviour. This is followed by a description of the non-present party’s misbehaviour which includes overdetailed and exaggerated reporting of the other’s misbehaviour. Added to that, a critical point in the complaints analyzed is the reporting of the oppositional conversation the teller had with her opponent. By quoting this conversation, the teller enables the recipients to see the teller’s innocence and the other’s wrongdoings in their own words. Also considering that complaints are recipient designed, the recipients’ responses are given their own analytical attention since they occur as affiliative interjections within the telling sequence, but also as affiliative evaluations upon complaint completion.

Keywords
negative stance, extreme case formulations, exaggeration, reported speech, opposition-type stories, affiliative evaluations

1 Introduction

Social conduct and social relations are essentially accountable phenomena. They are constituted through our practices of reporting, describing, and reasoning—and therein lies the central role language plays in constructing social reality (Drew, 1998: 295).

In a seminal study on complaints about transgressions and misconduct, Drew (1998) explored the basic features of complaints as they were extracted from his data. As he claims, “complaint sequences are bounded sequences” (Drew, 1998: 304): in each case the complaint is a quite distinct topic, the beginning and the ending of which is relatively easily identifiable. A second feature is the “explicit formulations of transgressions”: the complainant refers quite explicitly
According to Bergmann (1998: 286-290) morality is constructed in and through social interaction and the analysis of morality has to focus accordingly, on the intricacies of everyday discourse. Through a thorough analysis of the descriptive practices and the mechanics of everyday interaction the working of morality can be revealed. In order to construct an utterance in such a way that its moral meaning becomes recognizable, some kinds of elementary descriptive or expressive devices are used. Some primary resources for moralization come from vocabulary, description of local circumstances of action, and displaying attitudes. However, the moral character of an utterance is often not formulated at all but indicated by emblems, prosody, paraverbal means, which convey indignation, irony, or facetiousness.

The present study aims to identify the main features of complaints as they occur in Cypriot-Greek talk-in-interaction. In the extracts analyzed in this paper the teller is narrating a story in order to criticize or complain about the misbehaviour and/or the words of a non-present third party towards her and the recipient(s) respond to that with their own evaluation. The study of complaints investigated in this work is based on recordings of naturally occurring face-to-face conversations conducted in Cypriot Greek. The extracts included in this article comprise transcriptions of approximately 3 hours of tape-recorded naturally produced conversations during a variety of informal gatherings or occasions, e.g. dinner, gathering for coffee etc., between friends, relatives, co-workers. All names of participants are replaced by pseudonyms in order to protect their privacy. The method that is adopted in the analysis of the data is Conversation Analysis (CA), which has its origins in the pioneering work of the sociologist Harvey Sacks (1992a, 1992b). The transcription symbols used in this study —cited in Appendix I— are based on the transcription conventions developed by Jefferson for the analysis of conversational turns in Anglo-American conversation (cf. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974).

As it is shown in the following sections in the complaint extracts presented, one can identify some of the features of complaints already recognised by Drew (1998) such as the expression of moral indignation and the use of reported speech which seem to be universal in complaining, but the study goes beyond this work by identifying some other features of complaints specific to Cypriot Greek. In sum these are:

1 According to Bergmann (1998: 286-290) morality is constructed in and through social interaction and the analysis of morality has to focus accordingly, on the intricacies of everyday discourse. Through a thorough analysis of the descriptive practices and the mechanics of everyday interaction the working of morality can be revealed. In order to construct an utterance in such a way that its moral meaning becomes recognizable, some kinds of elementary descriptive or expressive devices are used. Some primary resources for moralization come from vocabulary, description of local circumstances of action, and displaying attitudes. However, the moral character of an utterance is often not formulated at all but indicated by emblems, prosody, paraverbal means, which convey indignation, irony, or facetiousness.
1) Complaint preface:
   • expression of negative stance
   • pre-announcements, address forms, exclamations
2) Description of the transgression:
   • overdetailed reporting of the other’s misbehaviour
   • extreme descriptions of the other’s misbehaviour
   • reporting an opposition-type story
3) Affiliative evaluations by the recipients

In the following sections, I draw on selected conversational fragments in order to recognize and analyze the aforementioned features through which tellers describe the behaviour or report the words under criticism and how recipients respond to that.

2 Complaint preface

Complaint sequences begin through a specific story introduction or announcement which initiates a new topic (complaint) or another perspective on the conversation (cf. Drew, 1998). As it is shown below, at some point during the telling, the complainant expresses a negative stance about what the other has done. That is, she reports not only the other’s wrongdoing or transgression but also her reaction to it, the way it made her ‘feel’; she expresses, as Drew (1998) calls it, “moral indignation”. In my data, complaints are being prefaced in two ways: through the expression of negative stance usually at the beginning as well as with the placement of address forms, exclamation words and pre-announcements at turn-initial position. Some examples are as follows:

Extract 1

1. A Xristi::na:: mu:: Xristina mu. Xristina en gi’pa su jati-- poso polla enevriasa simera::.
   ChrisTIna:: my:: Christina my. Christina I haven’t told you why-- how much angry I got today::.
   my:: ChrisTIne:: my Christine. Christine I haven’t told you why-- I lost my temper so much today::.

2. Lipon irten enas pela::tis (.) tʃe::iʃe::n…
   Well a client came (.) a::nd he ha::d…

Extract 2

1. C [na su po kati?
   [to you tell something ?
   [shall I tell you something?
2. P [(------)
3. C emenan di me eknevrisi parapano::?
me what me annoyed mo::st?
what annoyed me mo::st?

Extract 3
1. C panajia mu, simera, irtε mητα pelatissa pu μu fakka:::. Koutouri Pelajia, e mηta kaθijitria,
virgin mary my, today, came one client that me infuriate::s. Koutouri Pelajia, is one teacher,
lord, today, a client came in, that really gets on my ne::rves, Koutouri Pelagia, she is a teacher.
2. C perki na tin kseris.
possible to her know
maybe you know her.
Pelajia? the name ((of)) her is totally treacher-like
Pelagia? her name sounds very teacher-like.
4. C ja na δεε poso mu fakka::: beni::, Xristi::na:: μu::, Xristi::na:: μu:::
to see how much me infuriate::s. She gets i::n, Christi::na my, Christi::na:: my::
to see how much she gets on my ne::rves. She comes in, Christi::na:: de::ar,
Christi::na:: de::ar

The prefaces of the extracts above show that the complainant makes a strong introduction to the complaint by overly expressing negative stance as in 1: I haven’t told you why— I lost my temper so much today::: 2: shall I tell you.. what annoyed me mo::st? 3: a woman client came in that really gets on my ne::rves/to see how much she gets on my ne::rves. These expressions of indignation serve as overt manifestations of the complainant’s condemnation of the third party’s conduct. Reporting her emotional reaction to the other’s transgression in first person rather than making a general statement e.g. it’s annoying, is a way of showing how far the other’s behaviour has caused offence (cf. Drew, 1998: 311) and thus invite the affiliation and agreement of the recipients.

Another aspect which shows that the complaint is being prefaced is the placement of address forms, exclamation words and pre-announcements at turn-initial position. Thus, in (1) the repeated use of the address form my:: ChristiIne:: my Christine. Christine prosodically emphasized with stretched intonation, invites the recipient not only to hear the complaint which is pre-announced with an expression of indignation —1: I haven’t told you why— I lost my temper so much today:::— but also invites her affiliation. The complaint sequence of fragment (2) begins with a preface in the form of an “interest arouser” (cf. Sacks, 1992a: 10, 18; 1992b: 226), which announces the initiation of a complaint/criticism, performed with a request to proceed to the telling (shall I tell you…what annoyed me mo::st?). Thus, in 2: 1, 3 Christiana
establishes her stance by inviting recipients to listen to *what annoyed her most* (2: 3). In (3:1) the exclamation word *Lord* in turn-initial position serves to introduce the complaint as a new topic treated as serious and expresses an emotional stance towards what she is reporting. Through these expressions of indignation, complainants overtly express condemnation of the other’s behaviour (cf. Drew, 1998: 312).

The prefaces of the extracts presented above show the tellers’ attention in displaying their negative stance towards what they are reporting. This is in accordance with Drew’s observation that at some point in the narrative the complainant expresses indignation about what the other has done by reporting her emotions (1998: 309). This way the tellers elicit recipients’ affiliation from the very beginning.

### 3 Description of the misbehaviour

When a storytelling has been properly prefaced, its teller should proceed to tell it to its completion (Sacks, 1974). A very important part of complaint narratives is the description of the other’s behaviour as having constituted a transgression. Thus, the other’s behaviour is described by the complainant in such a way that the fault is not to be regarded as accidental, inadvertent, or otherwise innocent (cf. Drew, 1998). As it is shown in the following sections, in the extracts presented, the description is achieved through an overdetailed direct reporting of the other’s transgression, extreme descriptions and reporting of oppositional conversations; these are what we turn to now.

#### 3.1 Overdetailed reporting of the other’s misbehaviour

In Drew (1998), after the preface which shows that what follows is a complaint, the teller warrants the complaint through reasoning about events and behaviour. As he claims, a report of the other’s transgression is accompanied with an account of the circumstances of that conduct: “it is through that circumstantial account that the egregious character of the other’s behaviour is portrayed” (*ibid*: 314).

Complaining in my data develops quite differently; a crucial part in complaining about a third party in Cypriot Greek is the overdetailed direct reporting of the other’s misbehaviour with which the teller provides the recipients. This is essential in eliciting the recipients’ affiliation because it informs them about the teller’s stance and how they should react to the reporting of the exchange. After all, the complaining is recipiently designed. That is, the tellers
have ways of showing that the telling of the story is being done with an orientation to the specific recipients (cf. Sacks, 1992b: 231). The following extracts of the fragments under study serve to illustrate this point:

Extract 4

(C = Christiana; M = Maria; A = Angelina; E = Eleana. Before the following conversation Christiana was narrating that the previous night in the club a young guy was flirting with her, but she was ignoring him. The conversation is about that guy and Andy, a non-present party)

1. C  ((to E)) θιμα:: SE::! to σινδρόμο τις Andy::! 
   ((to E)) you reme::MBE::R! the syndrome of Andy::!
   ((to E)) Do you reme::MBE::R! Andy’s syndrome::!
2. M  huh ti σινδρόμον είτι?
   huh what syndrome has ((she))?
   huh what’s her syndrome?
3. C  opcos mas mila, pai τίς pcanni ton τίς mila ↑tu::!
   anybody ((to)) us talks, she goes and gets him and talks ((to)) ↑hi::m!
   every time someone is talking to us she starts talking to ↑hi::m?
4. E  o::;
5. C  pu τίς din-- en di θίμασε τίς din imera pu rt- τίς da peTCHA ta::
6. [i fili tis i Lemeʃani:: tis LIZA::S??
   since tha—don’t ((you)) remember that day ((that)) cam- those guys who::
   [the friends ((of)) her the Lemesia::ns ((of)) LIZA::S?
   since th-- don’t you remember that day that those guys
   [Liza’s friends came from Limassol?
7. A  [mem mu to ksanapi::s reXristiana::
   [don’t ((to)) me that say again re Christiana.
   [don’t say that again re’ Christiana::.
8. E  pu tan na mas proksenepsi:: telospanton.
   that ((she)) was to us introdu::ce actually
   that she was going to introdu::ce us actually.
9. C  ne
10. E  τίςνυς
   those
11. C  τίς opcos ercetun τίς milam mas ercetun τίς epcanen ton etsi i Andy:: τίς
12. epienne τίς emilan ↑tu::!

R is an untranslatable Greek discourse marker that signals intimacy. Mackridge (1985: 56) refers to re as an unceremonious term of exclamation or address, used on its own or in front of a noun, adjective, or pronoun. Holton et al. (1997: 275) refer to re as exclamatory words which can be used on their own or precede a noun indicating person, thing etc. in the vocative. They are uninfl ected for case, number and gender. These address forms show affection when used among intimates, but impoliteness when used to a stranger (ibid).
and whoever came and talked to us was coming and grabbing him like that
Andi and was going and was talking (to) him
And every time someone was talking to us, Andy was coming and grabbing
him like this and was talking to him!

13. E e? (.) ekamen do tē pse::s?
so? (.) did it also last night?
so? (.) did she do it last night too?

14. C epie ṯ epcan ton ṯ is dom mitsi peθe:::
 she went and took him that boy guy::s
she went and grabbed that young guy, guy::s.

15. M e oí re, "ton aynostou::?"
oh no re, "the stranger::?"

16. C mne::
yes::.

17. M enna firto::
I’ll faint.

18. C erravisen don =
she pulled him towards her=

19. E =ma tora sovara::?==
 = but now seriously::?==
 =seriously::?==

20. C =ṯ isos itan etsi::: to xore- o xoros tu etsi polla to polla proklitiko:::s, susto::s
[ksero 'yo::,=
 = him was kind of the dance his dance his kind of very provocative::, shaky::
[I don’t know
=he was sort of the dance his dancing was sort of very provocative::, shaky::
[for example::,=

[hm, hm, hm

22. C ṯ is xorefe [ṯ isos
and dancing [he
and he was [dancing

23. E [inda, pco barros!
[what, which nerve!
[what a nerve!,

24. C ṯ i Andi δame mes ta poθca tu ṯ is xorefkán kolliti etsi::,
and Andy here between the legs his and dancing glued like this::s.
and Andy here between his legs and they were dancing stuck to each like
this::s.

In the extract above, the preface (4: 1-12) is hearable as background information to the upcoming telling. The addressed recipient with a “candidate understanding” (cf. Wilkinson and Kitzinger 2006) in the form of a question (4: 13) reveals recognition of the connection between the information given in the preface and the topic of the upcoming telling, that is, what the story is about and asks about it directly, so? (.) did she do it last night too?: The telling
(4: 14) is designed as a surprise source as shown by the fact that it responds to a yes/no question (4: 13) with a direct reporting of the third person’s misconduct and the placement of the address form guy::s in turn final position. In each of her turns, the teller adds another increment which forms part of the overdetailed description of the principal character’s transgression (18: She pulled him towards her, 20: he was so::rt the d- his dancing was sort of very provocative::, shaky::, 22: and he was dancing and Andy here between his legs 24: and they were dancing stuck to each like thi::s.) The description of the other’s misbehaviour is designed to elicit the recipients’ affiliation. The recipients talk within the telling sequence interchangeably (4: 15, 17, 19, 23) with the teller, expressing a negative stance through expressions of “ritualized disbelief” (cf. Heritage, 1984: 339) which treat the prior utterance as news (cf. Wilkinson and Kitzinger, 2006): 15: oh no re, “the strange::er”? 17: I’ll faint 19: seriously::? 23: what a nerve! This is a way to show agreement and affiliation with the teller. The description of the other’s transgression has its climax in 4: 22, 24.

A similar example of reporting the other’s misbehaviour as evidence of the other’s conduct being reprehensible occurs when D, a psychologist certified by the Ministry of Education to visit some specific primary schools and check on the welfare of children, presents to some teachers, friends of her, the story of a mother that was hitting her child:

Extract 5
1. D emenan ipem mu enam moron, ioøetas me? pu kseri to moro ti leksi tuti::?
   me told me one child, adopt me? how know the child the word thi::s?
a child told me, would you adopt me? how does a child know this wo::rd?
2. T indam ↑ bu jine?
   wh'at happened?
3. D ioøetas me? lei mu, iøe stom Mama ((talk-show host)) kati ioøesies ce lipa::;
   adopt me ? says me, saw at Mama some adoptions and othe::r.
   would you adopt me? he told me, he saw something of Mama’s show about
   adoptions and stu::ff,
4. T ioøetas me? ipe su?
   adopt me? told you ?
   he told you, would you adopt me?
5. D ioøetas me? lali mu.
   adopt me ? tells me.
   would you adopt me? he says to me.
6. M ma pco moro?
   but which child ?
   which child ?
9. D ena:: pu to eøernen i mamma tu δame::;
   one:: that hit the mother his here::, till cracked the:: ski::n.
one:: that was being beaten by his mother, here::, till the:: skin cracked.

10. C  ciri' eleison.  
  Jesus Christ.

11. D  ἐδέρνην δο με τί γυναίκα τὸ ἵδιο σίμιον,
  she spanked him with a spoon on the same spot,

12. C  τά::!
  ↑o::!

  with the spoon the wooden on same place till wounded the skin.
  with a wooden spoon on the same spot till the skin cracked

  Jesus Christ

15. L  ja onoma to θεο δίλαδι (.) ἐνικά etsi aspu=  
  for name of god for example (.) in general like this for examp=  
  for God's sake, really (.) just like th=  

16. D  τιλέφων τις τέλειο τίς, κιτά:: [etsi,  
  =call he::r and tell her, loo::k [like that,  
  =I called he::r up and said to her, loo::k, [just like that,  

17. C  [na su po kati? εγ' δέν ἀντεξα etsi me etsi aθροπος τέ τορα
  [to you say something? I couldn't stand this kind with this
  kind people and now lost the temper my I think  
  [let me tell you something, I couldn't stand  
  this sort of people, and I feel I've lost my temper now.

In (5) the teller describes the transgression of the mother through an overde-
tailed description of her actions in 5: 9, 11, 13. In each of these turns the teller
emphatically adds new information to her reporting. Thus in 5: 9 she informs
the recipients that the child was being beaten by his mother, here::, till the:: skin
cracked, in 5: 11 she adds that she spanked him with a spoon on the same spot
and in 5: 13 she adds with a wooden spoon on the same spot till the skin cracked.
With the reporting of these activities the teller presents the mother’s wrongdo-
ings and allows the recipients to witness them for themselves, eliciting their
criticism towards the mother and thus affiliation with herself, who blames the
mother. The recipients show affiliation through the expressions of negative
surprise in 5: 10, 12, 14, 15 (Jesus Christ, ↑o::!, for God's sake, really).

3.2 Exaggerated and extreme descriptions

A second distinctive feature of complaints is that the description of the
other’s transgression is accompanied with extreme case formulations (ECFs)
and exaggeration (also called overstatement/hyperbole). An exaggeration/
overstatement “includes any extravagant statement of amplification or atten-
uation used to express emotion and not to be taken literally” (Norrick, 2004:
On the other hand, ECFs are “descriptions or assessments that deploy extreme expressions such as every, all, none, best, least, as good as it gets, always, perfectly, brand new, and absolutely” (Edwards, 2000: 347-8). Describing with “extreme case formulations” (ECFs) is a way of legitimizing claims and thus is used in complaining, defending, and justifying (Pomerantz, 1986: 219).

In extracts (4) and (5) presented above, the complainant employs extreme descriptions for the other’s misbehaviour. Thus, in 4: 3 the other’s transgression is proffered explicitly through extreme and exaggerated descriptions such as every time someone is talking to us she starts talking to hi::m. Also, the psychological term syndrome::!(4: 1) that the teller uses to refer to that behaviour can be heard as an exaggeration that conveys the complainant’s emotions rather than as a possible description of the actual behaviour and so must be treated rhetorically or figuratively. This is in accordance with what Torode calls “impossible description”, where an extraordinary reality is momentarily acknowledged and shared (1996: 33). Hence, both the ECF every time and the exaggerated description syndrome are provided as evidence that Andy’s behaviour is not incidental, since a syndrome is used to describe a recurring behaviour. That way, Andy’s behaviour is presented as constant, repetitive, and thus deliberate.

Similarly, in 5: 9, 11 the description of the mother’s misbehaviour that she hit her child is accompanied with exaggerations: till the:: ski::n cracked…on the same spot. The mother’s impropriety is characterised as having been deliberate through the use of repetitions and excessively detailed descriptions of action. Very briefly, these are descriptions where instead of saying the mother hit the child, the speaker reports in full detail (5: 9, 11, 13) that the child was being beaten by his mother, here::, till the:: ski::n cracked…she hit him with a spoo::n on the same spot…with a wooden spoon on the same spot till the skin cracked. This shows that there is an attempt by the complainant to give a description as vivid as possible and this is achieved with the use of exaggeration, repetition, and extremely detailed narration.

### 3.3 Reporting an opposition-type story

In the previous sections we have been concerned generally with the way in which reported conduct is characterised as morally reprehensible, as an offence, through detailed and exaggerated descriptions. One aspect which appears fairly systematically to be located at a particularly crucial point in the narrative is the report of what the other said, in the form of direct reported speech (cf. Drew, 1998; Christodoulidou, 2006). By “reproducing the “original” utterance...
or utterances, speakers can provide access to the interaction being discussed, enabling the recipient to assess it for herself. Supplying this kind of evidence is important when "...a complaint is made about someone based on what they said" (Holt, 1996: 229), as in the following example where the complaint culminates in a specific directly reported utterance, attributed to a non-present person:

Extract 6 [from extract 3]
(C works in a bank.)

4. C ja na δίσ poso mu fakka::. beni::, Xristi::na:: mu::, Xristi::na:: mu::: 
   to see how much me infuriate::s. gets i::n, Christi::na my, Christi::na:: my::: 
   to see how much she gets on my ne::rves. she comes in Christi::na:: de::ar, 
   Christi::na:: de::ar

5. M = >etsi kamnun i kaθijitries. en dژe filoloyos? etsi-< = 
   = >like that do the teachers. Is also philologist? like that-< = 
   = >this is how teachers are. does she teach literature by any chance? this is 
   how- < =

6. C =o::i kkompcuters. δılaδı= 
   =no::computers. that is= 
   =no:: computers. really= 

7. M =a e aθiceolOjiti, an itan filoloyo::s, ha. 
   =oh, is inexcusable, if was philologist, ha 
   =oh, then she is inexCUable, if she were a literature teacher, ha.

8. C lali mu, Xristi::na:: mu, Panajia mu ime pt- lalo tis ti kamnete ciria Pelajia? 
   tells me, Christi::na:: my, virgin Mary my am dea- tell her how are you mrs 
   Pelagia? 
   she says to me, Christi::na:: de::ar, my goodness I’m so ti- I said to her, how 
   are you mrs Pelagia? 

9. E PaΓO::na mi∫ımu. 
   Pelagia, ridiculous!

10. C lali mu, xa::ξa, Xristina mu, xa::ξa, ime ce liyon arosti, 
    she tells me, awful Christina my, awful, I’m also bit sick, 
    she says to me, aw::ful, Christina dear, I feel aw::ful, I’m also feeling rather 
    unwell, 

11. ime siŋθos pu ime arji, simera fa se kaθisteriso poli:::. 
    I’m usually that I’m slow, today I will you delay lo :: t. 
    as I’m usually slow, today I will take e::ven longer of your time

In 6: 4 the complainant is seeking to involve the recipients in the storytelling by inviting her recipients to see how much she gets on her nerves. She then constructs the other’s transgression through the reporting of the complained-about reported speech of the non-present party. By quoting her words the teller gives access to the recipients to see the wrongdoings in her words. Thus in 6: 8 the teller starts reporting the other’s words: she says to me, Christi::na::.
... but she repairs it by reporting C's greeting to Mrs Pelagia. By inserting the mention of C's greeting to her, C shows Mrs Pelagia to be exploiting the good will of C to enquire after her well-being as an opportunity to announce that she intends to impose on C's time.

The above example illustrates the point made by Drew (1998) about the significance of the reporting of what the other said. This study takes this observation a step forward by showing that in some cases the narrative account which is employed to warrant the complaint consists of the direct reporting of the oppositional conversation the teller had with the third person. The positions that are in opposition are mapped into an ABAB format, A being the teller and B his/her opponent. Thus, the ABAB format tracks not only the alternation of the turns but also the alternation of positions. This formula turns out to have B's position be the one occupying the last turn (Schegloff , 1984). Consider this fragment from example (5):

Extract 7 [from extract 5]

15. L  ja onoma tu ðeu ðilaði (.) jenika etsi aspu-=
    for name of god for example (.) in general like that for example=
    for God's sake, really (.) just like that=

16. D  =tilefono tिस tʃe leo tis, cita:: [etsi,
    =call he::r and tell her, loo::k [like that,
    =I called he::r up and said to her, loo::k, [just like this,

17. C  [na su po kati? eγo ðen antexa etsi me etsi aðropus tʃe tora

18. exasa tin psixremiam mu nomizo.
    [to you say something? I couldn't stand this kind with this kind
    people and now lost the temper my I think
    [let me tell you something, I couldn't
    stand

    this sort of people, and I feel I've lost my temper now.

20. D  [to moron e ffuskomeno ðame, leo tis, ða se kataŋjilo
    [the child is swollen here, I tell her, I am going to report
    you

21. stin astinomia::, frontise mesa se mŋan evδomaða na jinis mana::;
    to police::, take care within one week to become mo::m,
    to the poli::ce, I give you one week and you make sure you be a mothe::r
    to him,

22. aŋos ða se kataŋjilo stin astinomia::, poso xrono ise si? lei mu.
    otherwise I'll report you report to police:: how old, are you? she says
    to me

23. erotise me tʃe poson xronon im' eγ(h)o, ise mana? lei mu.
    she asked me how old I(h) was, are you a mother.

24. monon otan ða jinis mana ða katalavis lei mu.
    only when you become a mother will you understand she says to me.
In 7 after having reported the wrongdoings of the mother, the teller reports herself as calling the mother and speaking angrily to her as shown by the fact that the first thing she reports as said to her is “loo::k” (8: 16). Through the reporting of her own words (7: 16, 20-22), D shows that she acted professionally by calling the mother to warn her. The mother is reported as challenging D’s right to judge her through the question how old are you? (7: 22). The parenthetical evaluation (7: 23) of the mother’s words (she asked me how old I(h) was) is a glossing that reiterates how ludicrous the other’s behaviour is. Thus it can be heard as an elicitor of affiliation. The story culminates in the reporting of the mother’s words. The reporting is composed of an ECF only and an idiomatic expression when you become a mother will you understand (7: 24).

Similarly, in the following example the teller reports the oppositional conversation she had with Lina, her opponent.

Extract 8
(C = Christiana; M = Maria; P = Petra. Lina is a person whom the participants usually criticize. She has just finished her master’s degree and she is very proud of it. Now she is looking for a job. Panos is one of Christiana’s best friends who did similar studies with Lina.)

1. C Aku:: tʃ' i LIna-- tʃe proxtes pu milusame [ja ta epanelmata: ti mu lali emena::?
   Listen and Lina-- and other day when talking [about profession::ns wht me says me::?
   Loo::k, Lina-- the other day too that we’re talking [about jo::bs, you know what she said to me::?

2. P [ma ti allo (   )?
   [but what else (   )?

3. M bravo.
   well done.
   exactly

4. C e eyo, lei mu, an epcanna kamtna eftakosan pu p- mallon enna pcanni o Panos, lei mu::,
   well I, tells me, if I got some seven hundred if that g- probably is getting Panos, tells me::,
   well I, she tells me, if they paid me about seven hundred pounds as--which is probably what Panos is paid she says to me::,

5. mpts lei mu:: enna mini tʃame pu ine? leo tis, re a ðœen ton efxaristi:: tʃe vri kati allon
   mpts says me:: will stay there where is ? say her re, if not he happy and finds something else
   mpts ((dental noise)) she says will he stay put? I say if it doesn’t pleas::se him and finds something else

6. enna fi::, leo ti:;s. lei mu:: ma sovaromilas? pcanni toso misðo tʃ' enna fi?
   he will lea::ve, say her. tells me:: but talk seriously ? he gest such salary and he will leave?

he'll quit I said. she tells me,, are you serious? he gets such a salary and 
he'll quit?
7. [leo tis jati na mini, 
say her why to stay, 
[I say, why should he stay on,
8. P [e ma'n dʒ̥ en da lefta to .pan. 
[well but is not the money everything 
[money isn't everything.
9. C a δδεν ton efxaristi i δουά pu kamni? = 
if not him please the jop that does ?= 
if he doesn't like his job?
10. P =ma oi mono ja τφινον, ja ulla toŋ gosmon. 
=but not only for him, for all the people 
=and this does not apply just for him, but for everybody.
11. C nne, a δδεν ton efxaristi, enna fɔːi , tʃe laL:i: mu:::, e lei mu, emenam ammu 
ediussasin 
yes, if not him makes happy, will leavːe, and tE::LLS me:::, well tells me, me if 
gave me 
yes, if he doesn't like it, he'll quit and she sAY::s to me:::, well she says, if they 
paid me 
12. eftakoʃes lires tʃe na mu lalus安心 kļaŋgy ulli mera, θα ta kļaŋgy:: seven hundred pounds and me told, make copies all day, wouːld those make. 
seven hundred pounds and told me to make photocopies all day, I wouːld make 
do it.

In 8: 4, the teller starts reporting Lina’s assessment about which she is complaining: well I, she tells me, if they paid me about seven hundred pounds as-- which is probably what Panos is paid but cuts off and restarts the reporting of the “opposition-type” conversation she had with her opponent from an earlier point (she says to me:::, mpts she says, will he stay put? I say if it doesn’t please him and he fi nds something else, he will quit. I said. she says to me are you serious? he gets such a salary and he'll quit? I say, why should he stay on). This inserted oppositional story can be heard as background information essential for the recipients’ appreciation of the climax. The climax, that is, the opponent’s words that she started reporting in 8: 4-5, but were left unreported, are repeated and completed in 8: 11-12. In this story, the teller presents the oppositional conversation in an ABAB format where A is the teller and B the opponent. The opponent is reported as making the questions and the teller as responding to them. The reported questions are presented as challenging of the responses given by the teller (are you serious? he gets such a salary and he'll quit?). With the reported assessment of 8: 11-12, Lina is presented as expressing her overt disapproval of Panos’s claims which are also adapted by Christiana. This is achieved with her reported exaggerated claim that even if she was asked to do the worst thing she would do it for money. This is a strong criticism of
the teller and her friend’s beliefs. Christiana is complaining about her making such a strong criticism of their beliefs. This becomes even more extreme because it is accompanied with an extreme case formulation *all day* which is part of an impossible description.

4 Evaluations upon complaint completion

A telling sequence’s completion, by design accomplished by its climax, prompts its response sequence (Sacks, 1974: 347). A sequential problem for storytellers, so far as stories take more than a sentence to produce, is how to hold off prospective speakers, who may start talking at the first possible completion point, from talking (Schegloff, 1984: 44). Given that, so long as the story is continuing, other speakers properly refrain, story completion is fundamental to the sequential structure of the conversation and the story recipient’s slot after story completion is an especially marked place because in it recipients must show appreciation or understanding of story completion. Displaying appreciation of completion and displaying understanding of the story are related activities; one way of showing that one sees the completion is the display of one’s understanding (*ibid*).

In the conversations examined in the previous sections the complaining often has its climax in the reporting of an overstatement, an ECF, or an idiomatic expression proffered by the opponent. Briefly some of these are:

Extract 6: *she says to me, awful, Christina dear, I feel awful.*

Extract 7: *are you a mother? she says. only when you become a mother will you understand she says.*

Extract 8: *well she says if they paid me seven hundred pounds and told me to make photocopies all day, I would do it.*

As shown in Schegloff (1984) and Christodoulidou (2009), the reporting of oppositional stories which culminates with the opponent’s position is done with consideration to the specific recipients. In the cases examined here, the placement of an extreme claim at the climax is vulnerable to attempts at refutation (Torode, 1996: 10). Thus the placement of an extraordinary claim at the climax of the story should be seen in relation to motivations of eliciting affiliation (cf. Christodoulidou 2009). Let us now turn to the recipients’ responses upon story completion as indicated in the examples below with arrows:

Extract 9 [from extract 4]

20.  C = ʧinos itan etsi:: to xore- o xoros tu etsi polla pros to polla proklitiiko::s, susto::s  
[ksero ’yo::,]
In (9) there is more than one recipient to the story and most of them, that is, M (9: 25), A (9: 26) and P (9: 27) make an evaluation upon the story-completion one after the other. Thus, M (9: 25) and A (9: 26) both display “assertions of ritualized disbelief” (Heritage, 1984: 339). According to Wilkinson and Kitzinger these items “convey the speaker’s amazed incredulity and may also thus constitute a kind of surprise response in their own right” (2006: 34). One of the recipients, P (9: 27), produces a rhetorical question, identified as such because it does not expect a response since it brings into question a piece of common knowledge. As such it can be heard as an ironic evaluation of the third person. This question is framed as an ironic evaluation, based on the fact that is not sequentially linked to the previous talk. The ironic evaluation conveyed is also recognized based on the shared knowledge that Andy often consults a priest. Hence, with this assertion P (9: 27) offers another argument for Andy’s behaviour being reprehensible by evaluating her actions as incompatible. The extreme description all her time adds to the ironic overtone.
In extract (10) the climax is followed by an ironic evaluative assessment. The ironic evaluative summary consists again of an impossible description.

Extract 10 [from extract 6]

10. C lai mu, xa::ʎa, Xristina mu, xa::ʎa, ime ce liyɔn arosti,  
tells me, awful Christina my, awful, am also bit sick,  
she says to me, aw::ful, Christina dear, I feel aw::ful, I'm also feeling rather  
unwell,
11. ime siniθos pu ime arji, simera θa se kaθisteriso poli:::  
am usually that am slow, today will you delay lo :: t.  
as I'm usually slow, today I'll take e::ven mo::re of your time.  
12. A →=mono pu ksekina me tun din isayɔjii::, katuro pano mu pu ti xara mu.  
=only that starts with this introductio::n, wet myself from the pleasure my.  
=this introduction alo::ne and I wet myself from sheer pleasure.
13. C Panaji::a mu, Panaji::a mu.  
de::ar lord, de::ar lord.

Thus, in extract 10 the story culminates in an extreme claim from the opponent (10: 11: aw::ful, Christina dear, I feel aw::ful…). A (10: 12) makes a negative ironic evaluation of the words of the third person which supports the stance of the teller. The ironic evaluation consists of an ECF this introduction alo::ne and a figurative expression and I wet myself from sheer pleasure. The impossibility of what is asserted acknowledges an extraordinary reality (cf. T orode, 1996) and makes the assessment sound ironic. The monotonous intonation in proffering these words of enthusiasm I wet myself from sheer pleasure in contrast to the extremity of what is asserted make discernible the speaker’s insincerity and thus the claim of detachment from it (cf. Haiman, 1990), framing what is said in the turn as an ironic evaluation. With this expression (10: 12) the recipient offers an evaluative summary of the story which ironically criticizes the stance of the third person. Similarly in (11) the recipient makes an ironic evaluation upon story completion:

Extract 11

(I. (Lina) is reporting to her friends the words of a fortune-teller as something stressful)

1. L peθca epi- lepiamen ja xazin se mṯan emis mṯa fora pote epiamen ε en  
iθimume,  
guys we- we went for fun to one we one time when went£ don't remember,  
guys we- £we went once to one ((fortune-teller)) for fun £I don't remember when,
2. prin xroṯa poll- tʃ' ime mmu tuti emenan-- eγo epienna:: epienna::: polla, milo  
su oti  
xaxaxa  
before years man- and said me her me—I goi::ng, going lot, say you that ha  
ha ha
long time ago- and she said to me-- I used to go::, I used to go:: often, I was like hahaha (description of laughter)

3. mës sto xațxano, nne pou na pistepso tora::, tje jirizen mu xarca::
in the laughter, yes that will believe now::, and turning me card::
I was laughing, yes sure I'll believe now::, and she was reading (fortune) card::

4. tje jirizen mu p’ aťa:: en thîumume kan, ute thîumume
and turning me thos:se, don't remember even, not remember
and she was reading things. I don't even remember, I don't remember

5. indam bu mu ipe. ena prama mu eminen monon, tje kseris to otî anxoțîka?
what me said. one thing me kept only, and know that stressed?
what she told me. one thing has got to me and can you believe I was stressed?

6. ipen mu mîjîmî otî sta kosiefta:: mu, γîtro sta kosiefta:: mu::,
told me supposedly that around twenty seven, around twenty seven my,
she told me that, supposedly, when I will be twenty seven, around the age of twenty seven,

7. enna perasis mîta sovarin arsoncan ipem mu, alla enna tin perasis. pîste-? anxoțîka::
you will go through one serious illness told me, but will pass. belie-? stressed:
you'll go through a serious illness she said to me but you'll get over it. can you believe? I was stressed:

8. C → efxaristo para poli.
thank you very much.

9. L
inda arsencan enna peraso? ksero γo::, lalo tje γo::, e ja tin ijia tu papa:: mu
what illness will go through? I don't know::, say me, is for the health of father:: me
what kind of illness will I go through? I'm wondering, I'm thinking, is it about my dad's health

10. tje ja opcađîpote tu arsencan?
and for any of his illnesses?
and any illness?

As can be shown, after the narration by L of her experience, C (11: 8), the recipient, takes the side of the teller by ironically expressing “thank you very much” to the fortune-teller. Here the recipient constructs her utterance not only based on the position of her turn after story completion, but she also triggers another positioning of that slot that the formula ABAB assigns to teller’s side. That way it can be heard as a contribution to and thus an agreement with the teller’s side.

Hence, in the extracts here the rhetorical questions and the figurative assessments employed are so effective in challenging the opponent’s claim in that they make a stronger claim than the opponent’s claim. Moreover, the teller is presented as the one who has the last word because rhetorical questions and figurative expressions seem to be designed so as not to expect responses.
This is crucial in oppositional conversation where opponents strive to win the battle since the best way to do this is by having the last word.

5 Conclusion

This paper has been concerned with the production of complaints about transgressions of non-present parties. First and foremost, complaint sequences are bounded sequences with distinct beginnings and endings. The complaints examined here follow a pertinent sequence with storytelling sequences which include preface, telling, and response sequences. Here we investigated the distinctive features of the aforementioned sequences in complaining.

To begin with, tellers make a strong introduction to the complaint usually through a pre-announcement but most significantly through the expression of a negative stance towards the misbehaviour that is going to be reported. As was shown throughout the paper this is a practice by which tellers seek to involve recipients to the telling and, since complaining is being done with orientation to the specific recipients, to secure their affiliation or support from the very beginning.

When the telling has been properly prefaced, the teller can proceed to tell it to its completion. As was shown in the extracts under study, the teller provides the recipients with the relevant information required to condemn the non-present party’s behaviour. This involves an overdetailed description of events and behaviour that proves that the other’s transgression is not to be regarded as accidental. On the contrary, through these descriptions which take the form of narratives, the other’s behaviour is portrayed as reprehensible, repeated, and deliberate. This is reinforced by the exaggerated descriptions of the other’s transgression which usually involve excessively detailed descriptions, extreme case formulations, overstatements and impossible descriptions.

A very important part in describing the other’s behaviour as reprehensible is the reporting of the oppositional conversation the teller had with her opponent and/or the reporting of the opponent’s own words which are placed at the climax of the telling. These usually involve idiomatic and extreme expressions by which the non-present party offended the teller. The placement of these words upon the climax of the telling seems to be associated with issues of affiliation and stance because the story recipient’s slot upon story completion is a marked place for the occurrence of evaluation. At that place recipients need to take the side of the teller or her opponent. Usually recipients side with tellers because this is how tellers choose their story recipients. As was shown in the extracts here, recipients take the side of the teller with strong evaluation of the reported words. Interestingly the recipients’ evaluations include ECFs,
impossible descriptions, rhetorical questions, irony, and idioms. These proved to be very effective in challenging the reported words and siding with the teller.

To sum up, this paper attempted to approach the hallmarks of complaint sequences and concluded that these are first and foremost the condemnatory moral work achieved through expressions of indignation, reasoning about events and behaviour, and reported speech. At the same time, one could not overlook the crucial role of the occurrence of extreme case formulations and exaggerations throughout the complaining, that is, in the description of the other’s transgression, in the other’s words reported by the teller, and in the recipient’s evaluation upon story completion.

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References

Torode, Brian. 1996. Humour as impossible description: humour and horror in calls to a consumer helpline. *Paper delivered at 5th International Pragmatics Conference Mexico City*, 4-9 July.

Appendix I
Transcription conventions

[ ] Separate left square brackets, one above the other on two successive lines with utterances by different speakers,
[ ] indicates a point of overlap onset, whether at the start of an utterance or later.
[ ] Double separate left square brackets, distinguish pairs of overlapped utterances.
= Equal signs ordinarily come in pairs – one at the end of a line and another at the start of a next line. If the two lines connected by the equal signs are by the same speaker, then there was a single, continuous utterance with no break or pause, which was broken up in order to accommodate the placement of overlapping talk. If the lines connected by two equal signs are by different speakers, then the second followed the first with no discernible silence between them.
(2) Numbers in parenthesis indicate silence.
(.) A dot in parentheses indicates a micropause.
. The period indicates a falling or final, intonation contour, not necessarily the end of a sentence.
? A question mark indicates rising intonation, not necessarily a question.
, A comma indicates continuing intonation, not necessarily a clause boundary.
:: Colons are used to indicate the prolongation or stretching of the sound just preceding them. The more colons the longer the stretching.
- A hyphen after a word or part of a word indicates a cut-off or self-interruption, often done with a glottal or dental stop.
word Underlining is used to indicate stress or emphasis.
Capital letters indicate louder than the rest talk.

Two degree signs indicate that the talk between them is markedly softer than the talk around it.

† The up arrow indicate a segment starting on sharper rise.

> < The combination of “more than” and “less than” symbols indicates that the talk between them is compressed or rushed.

.hh The dot followed by “hs” indicates inbreath

(h) The letter “h” in parentheses inside the boundaries of a word indicates laughter.

(()) Double parentheses are used to mark transcriber’s descriptions of events, e.g. ((telephone rings)), ((sniff)) etc.

(word) When all or a part of an utterance is in parentheses, this indicates uncertainty on the transcriber’s part, but represents a likely possibility.

£word£ Word or Words enclosed by pound sterling signs indicate the word is articulated through a hearably smiling voice.

() Empty parentheses indicate that something is being said, but no hearing can be achieved.

→ An arrow marks significant turns.