

WITHHOLDING EXPLICIT ASSESSMENTS IN TOURIST OFFICE TALK

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Plan

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- Recap: conditional relevance
- Absences
- Withholding assessments

Adjacency pair (AP)

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

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

Minimal APs

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A What time is it? FPP: Question

B It's noon. SPP: Answer

FPP: Invitation

A Why don't you come and see me sometime.

B I would like to. SPP: Acceptance

A Would you like some tea. FPP: Offer

B Yes please. SPP: Acceptance

Addresses format
of turn

Addresses action
of turn

- Response (turn B- SPP) fitted to the type of initiating action (FPP)
- Same form (interrogative) but different functions (actions)

Conditional relevance & sequential implicativeness

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- “Given the recognizable production of a first pair part, on its first possible completion its speaker should stop, a next speaker should start (often someone selected as next speaker by the FPP), and produce a second pair part of the same pair type.” (Schegloff, 2007)
- Upon recognizable production of a FPP, a/the relevant second part is immediately expectable and is made relevant by the FPP (sequential implicativeness, Schegloff & Sacks, 1973) (e.g. I love you)

Two parts: two types of relationship

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□ AP relationship: prospective relationship

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

Next turns and displayed understandings

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

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

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

- APs: fundamental significance for how mutual understanding (intersubjectivity) is accomplished and displayed in talk

AP: accountable framework

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- *Normative* character to relationship between turns at talk
- Adjacency pairs: framework that is *accountably* implemented
 - ▣ Production of a FPP proposes that a particular type of response should *relevantly* and *accountably* be produced next
 - FPP speakers hold recipients accountable for not producing the response that was 'due' (e.g. pursuit) or...
 - recipients of a FPP may account for not providing the response made relevant

Relevant absences

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‘Upon recognisable production of a FPP, a/the relevant second part is immediately expectable’

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

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

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

Relevant absences

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(8)

1A: **Is there something
bothering you or not?**

Est-ce qu'il y a quelque
chose qui t'embête ou pas?

2 (1.0)

3A: **Yes or no**

Oui ou non

4 (1.5)

5A: **Eh?**

6B: **No**

Non

(9)

1 Ch: **Have to cut the:se Mummy.**

Faut les couper Maman.

2 (1.3)

3 Ch: **Won't we Mummy**

Faut couper Maman

4 (1.5)

5 Ch: **Won't we**

I faut

6 M: **Yes**

Oui

Assessments as a restricted activity

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- Explore the notion of interactional restriction through two sequential environments making assessments relevant and their subsequent *withholding* in tourist office (TO) talk
- 800+ telephone calls between clients and French TOs

Institutional background

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

- TOs' primary role: information providers
 - Fostering and promoting tourism within own geographical area
 - *intermediary* between tourism providers and public
 - Key principle: impartiality, but no formal interactional guidance

Assessments

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- Previous work: pervasiveness of assessments in social interaction
- Assessments display participant's stance towards assessable + access to it (epistemics)

(Pomerantz, 1984; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987, 1992)

- **First assessments set up the normative expectation of second assessments** (Pomerantz, 1984)

Preferred responses: assessments (Pomerantz, 1984)

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1A **T's- tsuh beautiful day out isn't it?**
C'- C'est une belle journée, non?

2B **Yeh it's just gorgeous...**
Oui c'est magnifique...

First assessments:
normative
expectation of
second
assessments

1A **Isn't he cute**
Il est pas mignon

2B **O::h he::s a::DORable**
O::h il est a::DORable

Preferred
response to
assessment=
agreement

Upgrade=
strong
agreement

1A **She seems like a nice little [lady**
Elle a l'air d'être une charmante petite dame

2B **[Aw::fully nice little person.**
Absolument charmante petite personne.

Assessments

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- ❑ Support, affiliation, epistemics (priority & independence of knowledge) (Heritage, 2002; Heritage & Raymond, 2005; Raymond & Heritage, 2006)
- ❑ Range of actions accomplished by assessments (e.g., Lindström & Mondada's (2009) special issue of ROLSI)
- ❑ Assessments contribute to shape of overall activity and to *institutionality* of the context
(Clayman, 1998; Clark et al., 2003; Pillet-Shore, 2003; Lindström & Mondada, 2009)

Two ways in which assessments are made relevant in TOs

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- Previous studies: assessments in assertions
- In TOs, assessments made relevant by enquiries (sequential environment of Q&A)
 1. 'C'est bien' type enquiries: 'C'est bien' (it's good/nice), 'c'est correct'(it's decent)
 2. 'C'est comment comme X' enquiries (how is it this X/what is it like this X)

'C'est bien' type enquiries in TOs

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- In TOs, 'c'est bien' type enquiries with partially-rising intonation: routine way of enquiring about quality of a service
 - *Closed Qs in declarative format involving embedded assessments*
 - *'claims greater epistemic access than interrogatives... whilst still assigning authority for confirming to recipient' (Heritage & Raymond, frth)*
 - *Not first position item (deictic 'c' (it))/often 'et' prefaced*
 - *Invite confirmation and subsequent assessments*

- Formulation 'c'est bien/correct...' embodies presupposition to be confirmed and makes relevant further assessment → minimal confirmation insufficient

- In TOs, *absence and avoidance of explicit assessments* in next turn after enquiries making them relevant, despite TOs' epistemic priority → so what response?

1. [Chevalier- PTO.31.07.DW_A0144PR Delicacy food]


1 Clt ET:: >c'est bien comme hôte((h))!& Enquiry
AN::D > it's good this hote((h))!&

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

3 Gour↓man:de il es:t propre eu :::h <i::ls sont en train
it is: clean u:::h <they:: are in the process of

4 de voir pour être labéllisés au niveau des étoiles.>
considering being ranked in terms of stars.>

5 (.) No uptake

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

7 (0.2) L6-18: orientation
8 Clt .hh eu::h ou:i((hh)). by Agt to answer
.hh u::h ye((h))s. being insufficient

9 (0.2)
10 Agt .hh alors en allant sur leur site,
.hh so by going on their site,
(6 lines omitted about the web address))

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

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

18 19 Clt Ptk d'acco((h))rd.
Ptk riah((h))t.

Expectation of assessment in response:
-Emphasis on 'bien'
-Declarative format
-Epistemic imbalance
Et' prefaced
Deictic 'c'
(List of hotels)

-No confirmation
No explicit assessment
-Factual description (scheme membership/
cleanliness/star ranking)
-Surface features:
external/objective info →
Neutral?
Doing impersonal response

So far:
Enquiry with embedded assessment inviting assessment in return
No assessment in return

2. [Chevalier- PTO.31.07.DW_A0144PR The Rocard]

20 Clt Ptk d'acco((h))rd. (.) **et le le: Rocar:d c'est:: i c>'est vienç<**
Ptk righ((h))t. (.) and thee: the Rocar:d i::t's it it'>s goodç<

21 (0.2)

22 Agt Le ROCA:RD mes tarifs vont de soixantë-ui' euros à quatre-vingt-
The ROCA:RD my prices go from sixty eight euros to ninety

23 dix-sept euros = e[t (c'est un-)
seven euros= and (it's a-)

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

25 (0.1)

26 Agt C'est un °deux étoi((h))les°. **It's a °two sta((h))r°.**

Factual
 description/report
 Recycles L23

-No explicit assessment
 -Factual description (price)
 -Surface features:
 external/objective info
 Doing impersonal response

L24: relevance of response
 → rejection

27 (0.2)

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

29 beaucou((hh))p.
very mu((h))ch.





3. [Chevalier HTO5.08.DW_A0076FC Medium category]

- 1 Clt .hhh et- et- et- et >sinon c'est bien le le: le:
.hhh and- and- and- and > otherwise that it's good the thee: thee:
 la- la- (- - [- -)
the- the (- - [- -)
- 2 Agt [>Je n' connais pas person-nell'ment.< =
 [> I don't know (it) person-ally.< =
- 3 Clt = Ah bon d'a[ccord.
 = **Oh really o[kay.**
- 4 Agt [(on est) sur une catégorie médium hein.
 [(we are) in a medium category uh.
- 5 (0.2)
- 6 Clt N: d'accor:d,
N : ri:ght,
- 7 (0.1)
- 8 Agt O:Voilà.
O: there you are.
- 9 Clt D'accord.
 Okay.

Enquiry

L2: Claiming lack of knowledge
 L3: Treated as newsworthy
 Clt's orientation to agt's greater knowledge
 L4: minimal factual description

4. [Chevalier - HTO-09.08.WS320338BR Decent hotel]



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

2 LE: L'HOTEL LA REVE/RE:NCE;
THEE: HOTEL LA REVE/RE:NCE;

3 (0.2)

4 Agt ou:i, **Prefaced enquiry as
 reason for call (L1-6)**
Ye:s,

5 (0.1)

6 Clt **c'est: CORREC comme hôtel ou::**
It's DECEN- this hotel o::r

7 (0.1)

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

9 Clt [>c'est un trois é-]
 [>**it's a three s-**]

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

11 (0.1)

12 Clt n'>d'accord.<
n' > right.<

13 (0.1)

14 Agt hm. ([non mais) = y a pas] d'problème °Monsi[eur.°=
Hm. ([no but) = there's no] problem °Si[r. °=]

-L8-10: No explicit assessment in response, but
L8: non-straightforward confirmation+ account
 -enquiry treated as inapposite
 -factual description : ranking given as evidence (clt should know this)
 -Agt orients to 'decent'= basic standard that clt should expect

'Correct': downgraded relative to 'bien'
 Clt orients to scale of opposites
 'c'est bien' type enquiry because orientation to positive side of scale

SPP to enquiries with embedded assessments

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

(1) 1 Clt ET:: >c'est bien comme hôte((h))!ç
 AN::D > it's good this hote((h))!ç
 2 Agt .hh c'est un hôtel >qui fait partie< d' la Cuisinerie Gour↓man:de
 .hh it is a hotel >that is part< of De↓licacy Food it is:
 3 il es:t propre eu :::h <i::ls sont en train de voir pour être
clean u::::h <they:: are in the process of
labéllisés au niveau des étoiles.>
considering being ranked in terms of stars.>

(2)

20 Clt Ptk d'acco((h))rd. (.) et le le: Rocar:d c'est:: i c>'est vienç<
 Ptk right((h))t. (.) and thee: the Rocar:d i::t's it it'>s goodç<
 21 (0.2)
 22 Agt Le ROCA:RD mes tarifs vont de soixantë-uj' euros
The ROCA:RD my prices go from sixty eight euros to ninety
 23 à quatre-vingt- dix-sept euros = e[t (c'est un-)
seven euros= and (it's a-

(3)

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

7 (0.1)

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

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

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

11 (0.1)

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

-Not treated as positive evaluations because of disconnect between initial enquiries and formulations in agents' responses

'C'est comment comme X' enquiries

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- No embedded assessment, but assessments invited in return
- Make relevant two types of responses:
 - a) evaluation (e.g. 'c'est très bien')
 - b) description (e.g. 'c'est un hôtel normand')
- In TOs, no evaluations in next turns
- Agents produce 'factual' descriptions

5. [Chevalier -HTO 1.11.WS320490FC The Reverence]

- 1 Agt Office de tourisme Hou↑gères Cassandra bonjourè
Hou↑gères tourist office Cassandra good morning uhç
- 2 Clt ptk oui bonjour ma/dame un p'tit renseignement s'il vous plaît, = j'aurais
Ptk yes good morning ma/dam a small piece of information please, = I am
- 3 voulu savoir le::: ptk l'hôtel la Révér↓ence c'est comment comme hôte:l,
wanting to know thee::: ptk the hotel la Rever↓ence how is it this hote:l,
- 4 (1.2)
- 5 Agt .hh c'est un /hôtel qu'est classé trois étoiles,
.hh it's a /hotel that is ranked three stars,
- 6 (0.3)
- 7 Clt D'acco:rd,
Okay:,
- 8 (0.2)
- 9 Agt °° (*Donc je croi:s*)°° de mém/oi:re °ch' vais vous l'° (°°con- firmer:°°)
°° (*So I thin:k*)°° from me/mo:ry °I am going to° (°°con- firm it for you:°°)
((ruffling papers))
- 10 (0.2)
- 11 Agt .hhh (0.2) >↑oui tout à fait<< c'est un hôtel qui (- -)< trois ét/oi:les euh::
.hhh (0.2) >↑yes absolutely<< it's a hotel that (- -) < three /stars u:h
- 12 Rue d' la [Name.] .h
(on) [Name] Street. .h
- 13 (0.1)
- 14 Clt Hm mh,=
Hm mh,=

Prefaced enquiry as reason for call
inviting assessment (L2-4)

No explicit assessment
Factual description (star ranking) following long pause (L4-5),
(L11-12: star ranking/address (i.e. location))
L7-14: continuers

5. [Chevalier -HTO 1.11.WS320490FC The Reverence] (continued)

15 Agt = Donc à deux minutes du:: bass- du Vieux Bassin::
=So two minutes from the:: har- from the Old Harbou::

16 et euh:: (0.3) voilà.
and u::h (0.3) there you are.

17 Clt .hh et c'est bien comm[e hôtel]ç
.hh and it's good th[is hotel]ç

18 Agt [(- -)

19 (0.8)

20 Agt Ou:i(h).
Ye:(h)s.

21 (1.6)

22 Clt D:'accord.
O:kay.

Following continuers , still no explicit
assessment

Factual description (L15-16: location)
L16: 'Voilà' (end of contribution)

-L17: 'C'est bien' enquiry as pursuit
L20: Delayed, very minimal
confirmation

-L21: clt orients to more to be said

-Ex 1, 2,3 & 5: 'C'est bien type
enquiries' often 'and' prefaced as
part of ongoing activity
orient to prior information/listing
as orienting insufficiently to quality

6. [Chevalier- HTO 1.11.WS320490FC Both nice] (pursuit)

57Clf *Mai:s tous les deux c'est des hôtels bien?*

Bu:t both of them they're good hotels?

58 (1.1)

59Agt /ou:i.

/ye:s.

60 (0.4)

61Clf D'accord, (.) est-ce que:: ↑ya un restau:ran:t dan::s l'un

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

6 2 des deux.

of them.

- 'C'est bien' enquiry as pursuit

- 'but' prefaced as contrastive with prior
Evidence of non-satisfaction in prior
enquiry

L59: minimal confirmation after long
pause

L60-61: Orients to more to be said

→ different trajectory

7. [Chevalier- RTO 1.11. WS320491FC- market]

Enquiry

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

2 (2.4)

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

Factual description (L3 & 5) following long pauses
L4 & 6: Clt orients to more to be said

4 (0.8)

5 Agt Des p'tits châlets.
Little huts.

L7-9: 3rd position repair treating response as inadequate

6 (1.7)

7 Clt >Oui=mais ch' veux dire< au s:- en terme de c'qui es::t n:: euh:::m:::
>Yes= *but I mean*< in the s:- in terms of what i::s n:: u:h:::m:::

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

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

10 Agt [Des produits régionaux.
[*Regional products.*

11 Clt N'accord,
Okay,

8. [Chevalier- RTO 1.11. WS320491FC-market] (continued)

12 (2.0)

13Agt Eu::h tout c'qui va êt produits eu:::h (0.5) *bah* produits de- Noël,

*U::h all that is products u:::h (0.5) *well* Christmas- products,*

14 produi::ts (0.4) .hhh des vêt- ments fin des écharpes eu:::h (1.0) des polaires,

pro::ducts (0.4) .hhh some clo- thes well scarves u:::h (1.0) fleeces,

15ClT Hm mh,

Hm mh,

16 (2.0)

17Agt Et eu::h tou- voilà. Tout c'qui:: *tient bien

£chaud hah*

*And u::h every- there you are. Everything tha::t *keeps (you)*

*£warm hah**

18ClT .hh e:t c'est bien comme marché. Ça vaut le: coup d'venir,

.hh an:d it 's good this market. It is wo:rth coming,

19 (1.0)

20Agt Bah- oui. ouioui. C:'est un beau marché d'Noël.

Well- yes. Yesyes. It's a beautiful Christmas market.

21 (0.3)

22ClT ((sniffs)) d'a:ccord.

((sniffs)) O:kay.

L13-14: Factual description following long pauses

- 'C'est bien' enquiry as pursuit (L18)

- 'and' prefaced as part of ongoing activity

L20: Confirmation + assessment, but ambiguous re quality or architecture

One assessment: how come?

30

9. [HTO – 31.07WS320262BR- very good hotels]

1 Clt >/Bon:: bah c'est déjà pas < MAL << I SONT ↑BIEN D'FAÇON¿ = C'EST
>/Goo::d well it's already not< BAD << THEY'RE ↑GOOD ANYWAY¿=IT'S

2 CORREC[T?
DECEN[T?

Non-discriminatory
enquiry

3 Agt [oui:, ah bah ouioui là °c'est du trois étoiles°

[ye:s, oh well yesyes there/in that case °it's a three star°

4 donc c'est quand même une euh::

so it's at least a u:h.

Confirmation + account
as evidence of hotel's
decency

5 (0.2)

6 Clt B:on. .h[h ↑BAN]

Goo:d. .hh ↑OKAY]

Sequence-
closing third

Non-
discriminatory
assessment

7 Agt [(De très bons)] hôtels. Heh.

[(very good) hotels. Heh.

8 Clt Eh ben j'vais leur téléphoner [j' vo]us r'mercie d' vot gentillesse.]

Well I am going to phone them [Thank you] for your kindness.]

Conclusions: power of sequences

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

Concluding remarks: Absence

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- Participants may *withhold* an official action (on the record), but find a different sequential way of achieving its import off the record through turn design
- Absence: not just the lack of something, but related to the capacity for an utterance to make relevant but not deliver a particular action (evaluation)
- Absence: sequentially and interactionally meaningful
- Agents' responses treated as negative evaluations, as fall short of terms of initial enquiries

Concluding remarks: Institutional import

- 33 Alternative formulations to explicit assessments= 'professional' answer
- ▣ **Skillful implicit evaluative work**, but not produced as overt recommendations (off the record)
 - ▣ **Withholding, distance and accountability**: selection of *external, third-party* factors (ranking, prices etc) to *avoid* being heard as doing evaluation/personal opinion and *avoid* being held *accountable* for response provided and be challenged about it
 - ▣ **Epistemics**: agts work to avoid showing what they know to accomplish the work of information provider vs doctors' 'zones of expertise' (Sarangi & Clarke)- doing impersonal response
 - ▣ **Restriction**: selection of a practice (avoidance of a practice: assessments) to accomplish both a principle of the organisation (impartiality) and its role as information provider and intermediary (selection of turn design)
 - Theme vs phenomenon