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Sighing in Interaction: Somatic, Semiotic, and Social

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Participants in interaction routinely orient to gaze, bodily comportment, and nonlexical vocalizations as salient for developing an analysis of the unfolding course of action. In this article, I address the respiratory phenomenon of sighing, the aim being to describe sighing as a situated practice that contributes to the achievement of particular actions in interaction. I report on the various actions sighs implement or construct and how their positioning and delivery informs participants' understandings of their significance for interaction. Data are in American English.

“Sighing” is (a gloss on) a nonlexical vocalization that people use in developing an analysis of the unfolding course of action. To give some background to the research described in this article, I will begin with a short review of the psychophysical and social-interactive work in this area.

PREVIOUS PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Most existing research on sighing comes from physiology and psychology. Researchers in physiology describe sighs as important for maintaining respiratory homeostasis and restoring healthy levels of respiratory variability (Cherniack, Glowowska, & Homma, 1981). The psychological literature links these respiratory effects to both aversive (Wuyts, Vlemincx, Bogaerts, Van Diest, & Van den Bergh, 2011) and positive psychological states (Hirose, 2000). These findings suggest that the physiological and psychological functions of sighing are intertwined, for if sighing acts as a physiological resetter of respiratory states, it is reasonable to assume it also restores psychological comfort.

In regarding sighing as something done in solitude, such studies tend to treat sighing as a reflex of a presumed internal state. cursory reflection would reveal, however, that the production

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of a sigh in conversation may be treated as relevant for the interaction. For example, if a teenager sighs at a teacher after being assigned homework, this sigh is a socially meaningful and accountable action. Furthermore, sighing is eminently manipulable, suggesting that its occurrence in interaction can be conscious, purposeful, and used for social ends. One omission of these prior studies—the one that is the focus of this article—is that in restricting their scope of study to the individual sigher, they cannot account for the orderliness of sighs as they function in connection with social interaction.

An approximation of a social account of sighing in the psychological literature comes from Teigen (2008), who administered two questionnaires and conducted an experiment in which subjects' sighs were recorded. The first questionnaire revealed that most subjects regarded sighing primarily in weakly negative emotional terms, with resignation, boredom, and longing being the most associated with the act. He characterizes the prototypical sigh as carrying two messages: "one of discrepancy (something is wrong) and one of acceptance (there is nothing to be done)" (p. 55). The second questionnaire revealed that participants consistently attributed sadness to others' sighs, but a broader range of emotions to their own (i.e., to "self-sighing"). Finally, in an experiment where subjects attempted to solve difficult puzzles, the occurrence of sighing was documented, and findings indicated that sighing commonly appeared between fruitless attempts at the puzzles.

Teigen's (2008) work provides a helpful starting point for analyzing how participants in interaction understand sighs (both their own and others') and suggests the means by which sighs may come to be occasioned. However, polling participants' opinions on sighing does not translate to an analysis of actual sighing, and even the sighs produced during the puzzle experiment were produced in isolation—not situated interaction. The present analysis builds on this study by examining recordings of face-to-face interaction to describe the precise situations in which sighing occurs and to uncover what sort of public social value sighs have for participants in interaction.

PREVIOUS SOCIOINTERACTIONAL RESEARCH

To date, analyses of sighing in social interaction have appeared only in passing (e.g., Schegloff, 2007, p. 189). There exists, however, an established tradition on nonspeech vocalizations in conversation analysis (CA) (e.g., Sidnell & Stivers, 2013) and discursive psychology (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Work of this type was pioneered in the early 1970s by Gail Jefferson in her development of a transcription system for capturing a wide range of phonetic detail in recorded conversation (Jefferson, 2004), which includes marking inhalations and exhalations. Specifically, in her careful examinations of laughter, another respiratory phenomenon, she demonstrated how participants' laughter is delicately orchestrated, jointly accomplished, and socially consequential in its achievement or absence (1974, 1979, 1984, 1985a, 2004, 2010; Jefferson, Sacks, & Schegloff, 1987). Other analysts have since continued research on laughter (Edwards, 2005; Ford & Fox, 2010; Glenn, 2003; Glenn & Holt, 2013; Wagner & Vöge, 2010), and on other paralinguistic and nonlinguistic phenomena, such as in-breaths and gasps (Lerner & Linton, 2004), coughs (Bailey, 2008), gustatory *mms* (Wiggins, 2002), disgust particle *eugh* (Wiggins, 2012), moaning and whining (Edwards, 2005), crying (Hepburn, 2004; Hepburn & Potter, 2007), clicks (Ogden, 2013; Reber, 2012; Wright, 2007, 2011), and whistles (Reber, 2012). These studies

show how such “sound objects” (Reber & Couper-Kuhlen, 2010), despite lacking concrete lexical content, display regular patterns of usage in situated social action.

Much of this work builds upon Goffman’s (1978) theorization of emotion and interaction, specifically his landmark research on “response cries,” which, he proposes, are produced as spontaneous eruptions understood as “externaliz[ing] a presumed inner state” (p. 794). Wilkinson and Kitzinger (2006), for example, show how demonstrations of surprise, instead of being reflexive responses to an unexpected stimulus, in fact constitute interactional achievements and are used as social action in the course of a sequence of actions. These empirical explorations of emotion/affect present a complementary account for emotion by detailing how demonstrations of affect are organized according to principles often orthogonal to psychophysiological concerns (M. H. Goodwin & Goodwin, 2000; Peräkylä & Sorjonen, 2012). The research presented here is consonant with this line of inquiry on sound objects and affect in interaction. As already noted in relation to the psychological literature, experimental subjects view sighs, at least in questionnaire judgments, as having an emotional dimension, so one goal of the present research is a detailed examination of how interactional participants regularly treat sighs with regard to their indexical association with mostly negative emotion.

In what follows, I describe the data and how sighs were identified and transcribed. Then in the analysis, I examine sighs by reference to their positional relationship to talk and interaction. This is followed by a discussion of the findings. The concrete aim here is to describe sighing in interaction through careful case-specific analysis and to identify the regularities and recurrent uses of sighs across a variety of cases.

DATA AND METHOD

The data come from a collection of 54 sigh tokens identified in audio and video recordings of natural interactions in American English.¹ These are analyzed using conversation analysis (CA), which seeks to understand social interaction by reference to participants’ orientations to the organizational structures that guide and permit such interactions to occur (see Sidnell & Stivers, 2013, for an overview).

I operationally defined *sighing as an audible or visible expiration of relatively great intensity, out of sync with normal breathing*. I will not consider talk paralinguistically produced in a sighing manner as a sigh, though these are certainly related and deserving of attention. Sighing criterially consists of an out-breath, but two preceding phases may occur (shown on the left and in the center in Figure 1).

In Figure 1, a brief in-breath (*h*) and hiatus (.29s) precede a moderate out-breath (*hx*:). The out-breath displays relatively high intensity at the onset, then a decrease in intensity and high-frequency energy over the course of expiration, which is perceptible as a decrease in pitch. Inaudible sighs (i.e., visible-only) were identified by a characteristic heaving motion of the chest and/or shoulders. Though they are referred to as “inaudible,” I cannot claim they were inaudible to copresent participants—only insufficiently audible in the recording.

¹Audio recordings come from the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English (SBC) (Du Bois et al., 2000–2005; inter alia). Video recordings, except Excerpt (2), come from the Language Use and Social Interaction archive at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I thank Gene Lerner for granting me access to this resource.

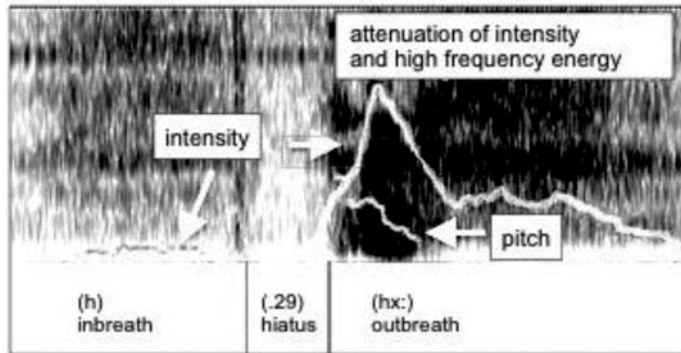


FIGURE 1 Separate phases of a sigh.

In the transcriptions, I largely follow Discourse Transcription conventions (Du Bois, Schutez-Coburn, Paolino, & Cumming, 1993), in which prosodically coherent stretches of talk appear on separate numbered lines. Audible sighs are transcribed as in-breaths (*h*), when such a phase was present, and out-breaths (*hx*), which are criterial. Paralinguistic features are also transcribed: Voicing is represented by underlining (e.g., (*hx*:)) for a voiced expiration of medium length), and intensity is represented by uppercase (e.g., (*HX*:)) for a markedly loud out-breath). Other paralinguistic features are noted in the text when relevant for the analysis. Some modifications are adopted from the CA/Jeffersonian tradition (see the Appendix for transcription conventions).

ANALYSIS

The analysis is organized structurally, the aim being to describe what sighing does by reference to where it is done. I begin by addressing sighs as they appear in turn-constructional terms, specifically sighs that are placed in the prebeginning and postcompletion phases of a turn or turn-construction unit (TCU) (Schegloff, 1996). I then move onto stand-alone sighs in turn-by-turn talk—i.e., those not flanked by same-speaker talk. Finally, I examine sighs that are placed somewhere outside the clear boundaries of sequence. This approach is taken in order to first ground sighing in the concrete particulars of a turn at talk, then progress from there to explore how stand-alone sighs may receive their interpretation from a course of action, and finally to understand what sighing does when not so firmly buttressed by talk.²

Prebeginning Sighs

Schegloff's (1996) turn-constructional terminology is adopted here for an analysis of sighs. In particular, I examine in this section prebeginning sighs (those appearing before a turn's

²Though this organization reflects structured levels of interaction, I do not intend to reinforce a strict division between turn and sequence (e.g., Ford, Fox, & Thompson, 2013). Neither do I wish to suggest any directionality of inheritance in proceeding from smaller instances to larger ones, though the uses, as will be shown, are indeed similar.

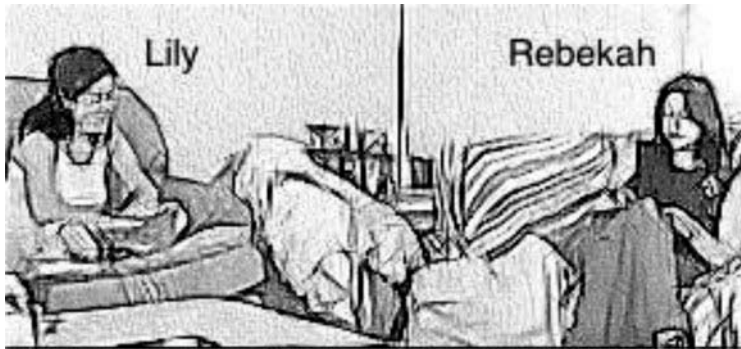


FIGURE 2 Line 1.

recognizable beginning), and in the following section postcompletion sighs (those appearing after a turn's recognizable completion).

Elements occupying the prebeginning phase of a turn or TCU project the onset of talk, though are not yet recognizable *as* the beginning of talk. These include such elements as parted lips, gaze behavior, and in-breaths (Schegloff, 1996, p. 93). These very features appear in the question-answer sequence in Extract (1) (Figures 2–4), in which a sigh is placed before the onset of the answer turn:

(1) IV Roommates 2, 5:16^{3,4}

- 1 LILY; When's your: presentation?
 2 REB; (h::) ((lips parted, gazes down))
 → 3 (hx::)=Wednesday?=
 | ((gazes away))
 | ((returns gaze))
 4 =I like . . . I finished the poster.

In response to Lily's question (line 1), Rebekah draws an in-breath and visibly parts her lips (line 2; Figure 3) broadcasting imminent entry. Rebekah then sighs and gazes away from Lily (line 3; Figure 4), which together accomplish doing "thinking" (cf. C. Goodwin, 1987). Rebekah's in-breath, gaze behavior, and sigh appear recognizably prior to her turn at talk and project the onset of that talk. The sigh, then, as a prebeginning component works to build a display of preparing to answer.

While Rebekah's prebeginning sigh is affectively neutral, participants' interpretations of sighing hinge on an understanding that it can do affective work. By virtue of an indexical association

³Identifying information for all extracts and images has been anonymized. Participants' consent to reprint their likeness was given.

⁴Bodily behavior is described within double parentheses. When this appears on the same line after a stretch of talk or other vocalization (e.g., line 2, Extract 1), then the bodily and verbal behavior are coterminous. When the boundaries of the bodily behavior are relevant, these are presented below a stretch of talk or vocalization and take the same line number designation (e.g., line 3, Extract 1), where the pipe symbols bound the described bodily action relative to the talk above it.



FIGURE 3 Rebekah parts lips (line 2).



FIGURE 4 Exhales, looks away (line 3).

to mostly negative affect, a prebeginning sigh can forecast the valence of the upcoming talk to premonitor a dispreferred response. This is shown in the news interview in Extract (2), in which the interviewer (Gwen Ifill) invites the guest (Micki) to discuss a decision by Yahoo! CEO Marissa Mayer to discontinue employees' option to work from home (Winslow, 2013).

(2) PBS Newshour 02/27/13, 4:47

- 1 GWEN; part of the c- uh concern has been..from women,
 2 who believe that,
 3 (h) the flexibility allows,
 4 especially working mothers,
 5 t'be able to work from home and be part of (h) the work force,
 6 we ha- we had Gloria Steinem uh uh take a shot at that last night on this program.
 7 (h) ..Micki,
 8 is that what this is about as we:ll?
 9 or is- is that completely off- off the point.
 → 10 MICKI; (h:) ..(hx:).

- 11 Y'know,
 12 I- I was reading a lot of comments about this,
 13 and I- yknow I'm trying to sta:y ..>kinda in< the middle about it,
 14 for what.. miss Mayer's ..uh motivations are but,
 15 (h) people are saying=
 16 =this is a way to get us to quit.
 17 this is a way to cut jobs.
 18 this is a l:ayoff by telling us..to come into the office=
 19 =I mean ^first of all,
 20 I ^thought that this..this working from home battle was do:ne=
 21 =I thought this was something that,
 22 (h) ten or twelve ^years ago everybody got kinda..comfortable with,

The interviewer's question (lines 1–9) frames Micki's upcoming response as an alternative view to the one expressed by another guest prior to this extract. The question's format invites a polar response from the Micki, but her response is not type conforming (Raymond, 2003), premonitoring possible disagreement. Resistance is first adumbrated by a brief voiceless sigh (line 10). This prefaces a change in footing, positioning her as a neutral party reporting what "the people" are saying (lines 11–14) (Clayman & Heritage, 2002). The affect forecast by the sigh is revealed over the course of Micki's response as one of exasperation. Her response implements a complaint (lines 15–18) targeting what she views as a long-resolved issue (lines 19–22). Micki's prebeginning sigh thus prefaces her response and prefigures its dispreferred turn shape.

Extracts (1)–(2) let us probe the relationship between sighing and negative affect. They are structurally analogous: Both are question-answer sequences with a sigh preceding the answer, and the sighs themselves are not differentiated by any perceptible acoustic features.⁵ Yet, in Extract (2) the turn carries an exasperated tone, while there is no detectable affect in Extract (1). One key difference is the activity, the recognizable structure of which readily provides for certain interpretations over others (Levinson, 1992). Participants in Extract (1) are engaged in ordinary conversation, while in Extract (2), the occasion for talk is moderated debate, an activity with built-in antagonism. The activity thus provides a place for the type of sigh Micki produces, while in ordinary conversation, the relevance and interpretability of such a sigh would have to emerge through the course of talk, as shown in the next example.

The association between prebeginning sighs and dispreferred sighs may be used as a resource for building another action. In the following task-related talk, three engineers discuss a mechanical problem. One of the engineers (Mark) jokingly proposes they use a chain to solve the issue (line 5). Instead of laughing at this joke, though, another engineer (Les), advocates for serious consideration of the chain idea (line 7), thus establishing a misalignment between them regarding the best solution. Below, we can observe how Mark uses a prebeginning sigh in formulating disagreement with Les in a nonthreatening way.

⁵The general finding in this regard is that the overall course of action, as modulated by the recognizable organization of an activity, contributes to the affectivity of a given sigh token. That is, it would appear from my data that the acoustic particulars of sighing do less "work" than does its positioning in the flow of situated action. This may in part stem from the restricted set of paralinguistic inflections a sigh can take and still be recognizable as a sigh.

of Les's idea), the juxtaposition of which is treated as humorous (line 21). Thus, a sigh's form and routine association with negativity can be used to guide (or subvert, as the case may be) the interpretation of ensuing talk.

Extracts (1)–(3) show how prebeginning sighs can both project and preview upcoming talk. Positioned in the prebeginning phase of a turn or TCU, these tokens may forecast the likelihood of talk, as in Extract (1) where Rebekah sighs to do “preparing a response.” Prebeginning sighs may also forecast the valence of upcoming talk by exploiting the negative affective association of sighs: In Extract (2) a sigh was positioned before the launch of a dispreferred, and in Extract (3) the speaker manipulated this regularity to disaffiliate in a nonthreatening way. Placing a sigh before the recognizable beginning of a turn, then, has specifiable effects that in part derive from this positioning. These effects may be contrasted with the choice to place a sigh after the recognizable completion of a turn; I turn to that choice next.

Postcompletion Sighs

Speakers may add to a turn or TCU upon arriving at its possible completion, and this may take the form of a postcompletion stance marker (Schegloff, 1996). These elements are placed after the recognizable completion of a turn or TCU, and, rather than constituting extensions of the prior talk, bring that talk to closure and provide a space for the speaker to display “retroactive alignments *toward* it, or consequences *of* it” (p. 90). Occupants of this space include laughter, smiles, facial expressions, and *I dunno* (e.g., Kaukomaa, Peräkylä, & Ruusuvuori, 2013; Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2012; Ruusuvuori & Peräkylä, 2009). An example of a postcompletion sigh appears in Extract (4). Here, a couple (Jamie and Harold) and two of their friends complain about a neighbor of the couple and that neighbor's children. The extract begins right after Jamie announces that this neighbor is pregnant again.

(4) SBC002, 6:50

- | | | |
|------|---------|---|
| 1 | JAMIE; | Werna have babies cry:ing. |
| 2 | | . . . [>in th'middla night]. |
| 3 | HAROLD; | [°%e::ugh] |
| 4 | | ..Well it's no worse than her scre:aming at em ..is it? |
| 5 | PETE; | . . . Yeah b'now you'll have <u>both</u> . |
| 6 | JAMIE; | . . . Yeah right. |
| 7 | | . . . Proibly be=like, |
| 8 | | <ANGRY>°Shuddup you ki-° |
| 9 | | y'kno:w:. |
| 10 | | ##? |
| 11 | | Oh: %go:d. |
| 12 | | (2.8) I feel:- I (j)s feel like such an old la:dy, |
| 13 | | bt=I- |
| 14 | | they % just re:ally annoy me. |
| → 15 | | (1.8) (h)=(hx::) ..[kay, |
| 16 | MILES; | [Hunh. |
| 17 | JAMIE; | new subject . . . @@ |

- 18 PETE; °Hm.
 19 JAMIE; °@@ (h::)
 20 HAROLD; Well it's cause they have ↓no resp↑e:ct.
 21 JAMIE; °Yeah . . . I guess so. °
 22 MILES; (3.8) ↑Those two top ma:sks ..there.

Harold promptly affiliates with Jamie's announcement/complaint with a disgust token that prefaces a complementary negative assessment (lines 3–4). Pete likewise affiliates with and builds on their complaints by indicating a consequence of the situation Jamie and Harold describe (line 5). In third position, Jamie ratifies Harold's and Pete's contributions by enacting what she would *probably be like* in that imagined situation (lines 6–10). Her turn at talk is brought to possible completion with *oh god* (line 11), itself a postcompletion stance marker. However, none of Jamie's coparticipants enters the turn space for 2.8s. Jamie reacts to this silence by moving toward closure with a summary assessment (lines 12–14). Notably, this assessment is composed of recycled talk about feeling old, which appeared in the opening of the topic (not shown) (Schegloff, 2011), further indicating her transition to closure. Again, though, there is no uptake (line 15). So in response to the possibility that her coparticipants tire of the subject, Jamie sighs and makes a marked transition to a *new subject* (lines 15–17). Miles and Pete align to the relevance of transition with minimal acknowledgment tokens that accede to sequence closure (lines 16, 18), as does Harold, who initiates a sequence-closing sequence (lines 20–21) (Schegloff, 2007).

Jamie's postcompletion sigh successfully works to bring about sequence completion, but we should note the manner in which closure becomes relevant. There is no audible orientation to the relevance of turn transition during the gap in line 12, neither is there an orientation to the relevance of sequence closure in line 15. Her sigh, then, both indicates movement to closure and embodies a realignment to her talk: She treats her talk not just as finished, but finished after her coparticipants did not align to the contingencies of that talk.

Regarding affect, there is evidence that Jamie's stance includes a component of resignation (see Barth-Weingarten, 2011; Couper-Kuhlen, 2004, 2012; Ogden, Hakulinen, & Tainio, 2004; Stevanovic, 2012). Her postcompletion stance marker is actually a complex of elements: SIGH+kay+LAUGHTER. Her sigh, as already indicated, brings her talk to completion after its having not been taken up. *Okay* does similar work: It is regularly used to accept some prior action and display preparedness for what that acceptance implicates (see examples in the next section) (Beach, 1993). Finally, the postcompletion laughter resembles "troubles-resistant" laughter (Jefferson, 1984, p. 346), which exhibits her ability to take the troubles lightly. Jamie's compound postcompletion stance marker, in addition to doing the interactional work of turn/sequence termination, indexes her understanding and acceptance of the relative immutability of some state of affairs. That these elements are bundled together for turn/sequence completion is not surprising, since regarding something as unalterable is readily interpretable as "there is no more to say/do, therefore I will say/do no more." It also appears that Harold understands her stance as one of resignation. He delivers his assessment (line 20) with a sing-song prosody that would also be used for an assessment like "well that's ↓how it ↑i:s," which justifies Jamie's stated annoyance (line 14) by framing the situation as an intractable one.

Through postcompletion sighs, then, participants may bring a turn/sequence to an end, and display their understanding of its relevance for subsequent talk. These uses complement those of prebeginning sighs, which were shown to project imminent talk, and preview its possible

valence. Sighing is thus a resource for the organization of both TCU beginnings and endings, and instantiates one way in which turn and action boundaries are malleable through nonlinguistic means (Sorjonen & Peräkylä, 2012b). I close this section with a special case that exhibits how participants can take advantage of the fact that sighs are used in both beginnings and endings. We saw previously how Jamie used SIGH+*kay*+LAUGHTER as a device for transitioning out of a sequence. In this final example, the speaker uses a sigh as a device for invoking transition between topics/sequences. This exchange involves two friends, Patrick and Corinna. It begins with Patrick explaining a pun that, just prior to this, had received neither recognition nor appreciation from Corinna:

(5) SBC045, 18:00

- 3 PATRICK; ..Didja catch the little reference to w:hite wall?
 4 . . . Y'know whitewalls,
 5 see,
 6 CORINNA; @:[@@@@@@]
 7 PATRICK; [get it,
 8 ..no I'm jus] joking.
 → 9 (h:)=(HX::)=
 10 =I wish I was at Metropolis yesterday.
 11 I think it would've been cool.

The success of Patrick's joke rests upon Corinna's connecting *white wall/whitewall*, but Corinna demonstrates no appreciation of it, prompting Patrick to explicate the pun and seek her recognition (lines 3–5, 7). Corinna's subsequent laughter adequately appreciates the pun (line 6), so Patrick moves toward topic-closure by means of two devices: *no*-prefacing, which is characteristic of nonserious to serious transitions (Schegloff, 2001), and verbalization of his joking stance (line 8). Patrick then produces a relatively long and intense voiced sigh (line 9) and, without pausing, launches into a new topic (lines 10–11).

While other topic-transitioning devices are available (e.g., Drew & Holt, 1998), Patrick's sigh accomplishes a type of "marked transition" (Sacks, 1992, p. 352). Transition is not so much proposed, in other words, as it is forced. To accomplish this, Patrick moves directly from sighing into a new sequence without pausing, leaving Corinna little entry space. Moreover, the sigh is produced with relatively great intensity, which could inhibit possible entry. The physical form of a sigh is also germane here: Sighs being sound objects roughly 1–2s in length, they necessarily occupy a given temporal space. As such, they weaken the adjacency relationship between otherwise connected units in interaction, decoupling them and inhibiting the interpretation that whatever comes next succeeds its prior *as* its relevant next. In Extract (5), we observe this decoupling, as a sigh is placed conspicuously in the transition between unrelated topics.⁷ Thus, Patrick sighs as a way to transition away from the ineffective pun, out of that sequence, and toward something else.

Depending on the perspective regarding the borders of turn and sequence, this sigh could be prebeginning or postcompletion. It is prebeginning in the sense that, prosodically, it is latched

⁷An alternative to this transition would be simply moving onto another topic without notification that such transition is being enacted. This could invite the interpretation that, e.g., Patrick is trying to evade a certain topic or preference structure.

onto the initiation of a new sequence (lines 9–11). And it is postcompletion in that it works to bring the unsuccessful punning sequence to closure, the abruptness of which reveals Patrick's alignment to that talk. Arguably, these are not entirely mutually exclusive options, given that sighs occupy both regions of the transition space and one token could reasonably do double duty. Moreover, as will be shown in the following sections, sighs tend to be attracted to different types of interactional junctures (turns, sequences, topics, etc.), suggesting that transitional periods in interaction are the relevant place for sighs. Having dealt with sighs that are understood by reference to their within-turn placement, I address in the next section tokens of sighs that do not flank a turn at talk, but rather appear to stand on their own in turn-by-turn talk.

Stand-Alone Sighs

Sighs may appear by themselves in situated talk-in-interaction, and so how these sighs come to be interpreted is by reference to the course of action underway. Such “stand-alone” sighs recurrently function to receipt information or acknowledge some (recently changed) state. In this respect, they resemble receipts like *okay*, *oh*, *yeah*, and *mm hm* (Beach, 1993; Heritage, 1984; Jefferson, 1985b). One critical difference with sighing, however, is its indexical relationship with emotion—specifically, negative emotion of weak intensity. By way of contrast, speakers can use stand-alone *okay* in a value-neutral way to acknowledge and agree with/to the prior action and what it may project (Beach, 1993). Sighs can do much the same work, but with the added component of affectively evaluating the prior action and its implications.⁸ This is exemplified in Extract (6), in which two teenage students are working together on algebra homework. Kathy dictates the problems from a workbook to Nathan, who copies them down to work on. The extract begins with a side-sequence (Jefferson, 1972) (lines 1–4), after which they resume the homework activity.

(6) SBC009, 24:10

- 1 KATHY; . . . You gonna study s'more tomorrow then,
 2 right?
 3 NATHAN; . . . Oh definitely.
 4 KATHY; . . . Okay.
 5 X plus four,
 6 . . . over,
 7 . . . three X minus two,
 8 . . . is less than zero.
 9 NATHAN; ((*pencil writing sounds*))
 . . . °Is° less t]han zero.
 10 KATHY; . . . Right.
 → 11 NATHAN; (h:)=(hx:::).
 12 (4.8) °Go::sh°.
 13 . . . ((*papers rustling*)) Is this the c–
 14 Is this the same class I'm taking Kathy.

⁸This, of course, is also possible with tokens like (*oh*) *okay* delivered with particular affect-laden prosody. The difference here is that sighs do so nonlexically in a way that bears resemblance to response cries.

Kathy dictates to Nathan the final problem of their algebra homework (lines 4–8), pausing at intervals to give him time to copy it down (Goldberg, 1975). Nathan echoes what he heard as the final component of the problem to confirm its completion (line 9), and Kathy in turn provides confirmation in a sequence-closing third (line 10) (Schegloff, 2007, p. 118). That is, Kathy treats Nathan’s turn as adequate and proposes sequence termination, which Nathan accepts with a long voiceless sigh (line 11). His sigh acknowledges the implications of a prior turn—that he must now confront the newly dictated problem—and demonstrates some anxiety toward those implications. This token could be described vernacularly as Nathan “steeling himself” before taking on the problem. After a 4.8s pause, Nathan emits a response cry *gosh* (line 12). This cry betokens how Nathan is struggling with the homework, which is confirmed by the complaint initiation that follows (lines 13–14) and also by the difficulty he had with the problems preceding this extract (not shown).

Placed after sequence termination and before the onset of the next-positioned activity, Nathan’s sigh does retrospective and prospective work (or postcompletion and prebeginning work). It looks back in receipting Kathy’s confirmation and looks forward in negatively evaluating what her confirmation implicates (i.e., starting the math problem). After Kathy’s confirmation, that is, what is relevant from Nathan is some public orientation to the task at hand—that he will now start it, that he wants to take a break, etc.—but by sighing in this space, he takes a resigned or defeated posture toward the task. He acknowledges/accepts his responsibility to confront the problem, but at the same time treats it as burdensome.

This same function of accepting some task while still regarding it as onerous can be seen in the next example. In this case, however, a stand-alone sigh is used in service of building some other action. This extract involves two friends, Patrick and Corinna, and begins with Patrick proposing an activity for the evening (lines 1–3):

(7) SBC045, 8:35

- 1 PATRICK; So. . .u:m,
 2 ..like what’re we doing,=
 3 =we:’re gonna grab some movies a:nd,
 4 CORINNA; ..Yeah.
 5 ..[#looks #like],
 6 PATRICK; [drink],
 7 ..cause it’s still early.
 8 >cause you<’re too sober for me.
 9 [@@].
 10 CORINNA; [Well do] you wanna grab me a beer?
 11 PATRICK; tsk (h:.) ..Guess.
 12 CORINNA; Please?
 → 13 PATRICK; (hx:).
 14 CORINNA; . . .Watch out for the lasagna.

Patrick provides a space at the end of his turn for conditional entry (Lerner, 1996); the coordinate clause, in other words, is left designedly unfinished. Corinna, however, declines to complete his turn and instead confirms Patrick’s proposal in general (line 4). Following a beat of silence, they both add to their turns in overlap (lines 5, 6): Corinna’s contribution is not completely audible, but Patrick clearly enters with *drink* (line 6). We can speculate that *drink* is what he would

have preferred Corinna supply, given that absent her immediate uptake of this addition, Patrick increments his turn to justify his proposal to drink. He first provides a “time of day” reason (line 7), then rejustifies it as being motivated by Corinna’s being sober (line 8). This second reason is hearable as replacing the first: It recycles *cause* from the previous TCU and is delivered with greater intensity and slight anacrusis at the beginning of the TCU.

By using this increment to frame her current sobriety as problematic, Patrick’s transforms his proposal into a complaint. Specifically, it is a teasing or playful complaint, as evidenced by postcompletion laughter that betrays a nonserious stance (line 9). In response to the “problem” of her being sober, Corinna counters with the suggestion that he grab her a beer (line 10).⁹ Patrick continues in doing “teasing” with a flatly intoned imperative *Guess* (line 11), which responds to the interrogative *format* of her turn, but not to the request it implements. Corinna responds to this taunt by upgrading her request with *Please* (line 12), thereby making a second request that orients to his reluctance to comply. As a *second* second pair-part to her request, Patrick produces a voiced sigh (line 13), through which he demonstrates compliance to her request while maintaining an unenthusiastic stance toward it. Corinna acknowledges Patrick’s compliance in her warning to *Watch out for the lasagna* when he goes to fetch the beer (line 14).

The occurrence of a stand-alone sigh in Extract (7) is understandable by reference to the project underway (Levinson, 2013). With a sigh, Patrick acquiesces to fulfilling an onerous task—i.e., he both accepts it and negatively evaluates it—and this allows him to continue doing “teasing.” As for why Patrick may want to tease, note that this interaction occurs in Corinna’s apartment, which grants her certain rights. The beer in question is likely hers, meaning she decides who may drink it and when. By suggesting they drink, Patrick possibly threatens her negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987) since his suggestions could be understood as drinking *her* alcohol. In eliciting a *Please*, then, Patrick is on safer grounds in his proposal, since her twice requesting a beer means she ratifies the suggested activity and does not register any face-threat. Furthermore, by securing from Corinna a second request for a beer, Patrick can implicate her as an agentive member of the activity, not someone who was compelled or merely invited to participate. The stand-alone sigh in this example thus trades on an understanding of sighs as doing this affective work, and it does so in service of a foot-dragging performance. Through his sigh, that is, Patrick is not doing “being uncooperative” but rather is doing “doing being uncooperative.”

In the previous examples of stand-alone sighs, a task gets established (an algebra problem, fetching a beer), which makes relevant some orientation to its fulfillment (or postponement, etc.). In each case, a sigh is used to both register and negatively evaluate that task. That this gets done in the production of a stand-alone sigh (i.e., one not adjacent to same-speaker talk) suggests that sighs can be coherent actions in themselves. Without the benefit (or restriction) of adjacent same-speaker talk elaborating the sigh’s import, that is, a stand-alone sigh must derive its interpretability from the ongoing course of action. It is notable in this regard, then, that stand-alone sighs appear to be used much in the same way as both prebeginning and postcompletion sighs. That is to say, sighing is an auspicious resource for the management of contingencies related to transitional spaces. In the following section, I explore more thoroughly how sighs work in organizing such nodes in interaction.

⁹The general principle here being that complaints are justifiable insofar as the complainer has limited options for remedying the complainable matter (e.g., Drew & Curl, 2009; Schegloff, 2005).

Transitional Sighs

Sighing can be done in sustained talk, as shown in the previous extracts, and it can be done somewhere on the boundaries of sustained talk. In this section, I examine sighs that do not appear to be organized so much by reference to turn or sequence organization, but in the somewhat more nebulous spaces before, after, or between sequences. This is not to imply that these instances are noninteractional—on the contrary, what will be shown is that speakers deploy these sighs precisely *for* managing interactional contingencies. In the first of these transitional sighs, a participant uses sighing as an “outloud” during an ongoing state of incipient talk (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; cf. Berger, 2012). In Extract (8), a mother, her son, and her son’s friend Hat are sitting at the table having just finished a meal. It begins with Hat summoning the family’s dog (lines 2–3), which approaches Hat and proceeds to whine and beg (line 4):

- (8) GB07-9, 12:43
- 2 HAT; tsktsktsktsktsk
 3 tsktsktsktsktsk?
 4 DOG; ((*approaches Hat, starts to whine*))
 5 MOM; ((*turns head toward Son, then returns to home position*))
 → 6 (h:)=(HX:::)
 [] ((*settles back into chair*))
 7 (2.5)
 8 DOG; ((*begins licking Hat’s face*))
 9 MOM; O:h that is even worse.
 [] ((*turns head away and back*))
 10 Do you know that- what that dog was eating right before this?
 11 HAT; Pa:sta=MY pa:sta. @@@@ @@@

Once the dog begins to whine,¹⁰ Mom turns her head toward her son in an act of checking for his availability (line 5), a prerequisite for interaction. His gaze, however, is on the dog, and so whatever course of action she may have planned must be abandoned or modified to account for her son’s apparent unavailability. In light of his diminished participation status, Mom’s alternative action is the production of a voiced sigh of significant intensity (line 6). By contrast, most other sighs in my collection are voiceless, meaning Mom’s voiced sigh would be marked. Such a vocalization would be audible to her coparticipants regardless of the direction of their gaze and could achieve the complaint she had ostensibly planned to implement. Her sigh was designedly voiced to be heard by a present but not currently available participant. Thus, Mom’s sigh works to both solicit coparticipants’ attention as recipients for the sigh and express displeasure at the dog’s behavior.

Confirmatory evidence for the analysis comes from the composition of Mom’s negative assessment (lines 9–10), which could be said to retrospectively elaborate her sigh. In response to the dog licking Hat’s face, Mom articulates the negative valence of her affect with *even worse*. By formulating it in this way, she references back to her prior action and assigns it a negative valence

¹⁰That Hat attends to the dog during a state of nontalk is a regular phenomenon I have found in a preliminary exploration of lapses in interaction. His unproblematic attendance to “something else” in his surroundings, while still in the silence of copresent others (Goffman, 1963), is one piece of evidence for their being in a state of incipient talk.

by comparing the magnitude of the whining to the licking. That is, the licking is *even worse* than the whining and beginning. Her affect is specifiable as disgust, as she first registers the source of disgust through a noticing (Wiggins, 2012) and then simultaneously voices her evaluation while turning her head away and back in a canonical expression of disgust (lines 9–10) (M. H. Goodwin, Cekaite, & Goodwin, 2012).

The sigh in this case thus resembles what Szymanski (1999, p. 19) has found for “outlouds” as devices for reengaging talk in a state of incipient talk. Outlouds are utterances that do not reengage talk in the same way as a question or announcement but can still provide for the possibility of interaction in furnishing a resource for further talk. We observe this precise thing in Extract (8): Mom’s sigh is indeed produced in reaction to the dog’s behavior, but her coparticipants do not orient to it as a first pair-part (i.e., it is not treated as making anything conditionally relevant). We may characterize this interaction as gradually emerging from incipience. While Mom’s sigh is not designed to reengage talk, it nonetheless is retroactively used in a later turn as a resource for getting back into talk and restarting the turn-taking machinery (lines 9–11). The sigh here is thus situated between turn-taking governed sequences and ongoing states of incipient talk (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973) and in this regard challenges a clear-cut distinction between the organizational systems that structure different states of talk (Stivers & Rossano, 2010a, 2010b).

While the previous example showed a sigh placed prior to the initiation of a sequence,¹¹ the sigh in the following exchange (Extract [9], Figures 5–8) is placed specifically by reference to sequence closure. In particular, a sigh appears at the conclusion of a storytelling. This involves the same two friends from Extract (8), Son and Hat, who are chatting in a bedroom. It begins as Son nears the end of his story about how he came to own a dog (the *her* in line 1).

(9) GB07-10

- 1 SON; I threw her in the ..La:ndrov↑er=and . . .we:nt back to Selma.
_____ ((*Hat changes body comporment, figures 6–7*))
- 2 HAT; N’just like that.
_____ ((*begins propping himself up on his elbow, figure 7*))
- 3 SON; Just like that.
- 4 HAT; (hx) ((*pushes self up into a reclining position, figure 7-8*))
- 5 (1.5) ((*settles into new position, figure 8*))
- 6 (h:)=(hx:).
 7 (0.7) >Howmanytimes< you wash your sheets.
- 8 SON; My feet?
- 9 HAT; Your sheets.

During this exchange, we should note Hat’s bodily behavior: He alters his posture from lying on his back with his feet suspended above, to reclining on the bed propped up on his elbow (Figures 5–8).

¹¹While I characterize Mom’s sigh as appearing outside of a sequence, I acknowledge that it could be described in sequence organizational terms. That is, it could constitute something like a retro-second (cf. “retro-sequences,” Schegloff, 2007, p. 217), which targets some prior stimulus from second position, thereby rendering that source a virtual chronological first. This token constitutes a retro-second in that the sequence “works backward” by getting launched from second position. Though the dog’s whining in its occurrence was not produced as a first, Mom’s sigh targets it as if from second position.



FIGURE 5 Hat lying with feet suspended above.



FIGURE 6 Hat transitioning to new position.



FIGURE 7 Hat beginning to prop himself up.



FIGURE 8 Hat settling into reclining position.

Researchers have long noted how shifts in posture often accompany shifts in talk, thereby embodying topical junctures or modifications to participation frameworks (Erickson & Shultz, 1977). It does not seem coincidental, then, that Hat's sigh fits into both the sequence of actions and his embodied behavior.

Son's story comes to possible completion as he provides a "return home" delivered with final intonation (line 1) (Jefferson, 1978, p. 231). Hat's reception of this story is somewhat muted:

He formulates the story's upshot with figurative language (line 2), which indicates movement to closure (Drew & Holt, 1998). Son completes sequence termination by echoing Hat's turn with matching prosody (line 3) (Szczepek Reed, 2007). Story completion makes relevant things like second stories and topic talk about the story (Mandelbaum, 2013)—i.e., things that are comprehended by reference to the story's completion. By sighing in this environment (line 6), Hat forgoes the opportunity to maintain the story as an anchor for subsequent talk. His sigh shows that he has chosen *not* to, e.g., start a second story or expand his story reception. This reveals an orientation to the fact that the story is possibly finished and also reflexively brings the story activity to definitive completion. Because of this choice to not continue with story talk, nonstory talk may resume, which is what occurs in lines 7–9.

In sequence organizational terms, the sigh is placed post sequence completion and pre possible sequence initiation. Raymond (2004, p. 7) describes these places in talk as “interactional seams”—places where a sequence has been brought to possible closure, but no new sequence has been launched. I would add to this formulation that such interactional seams are also recurrently the site where no “next thing” is self-evident. In the course of bringing a sequence to closure, it is a structurally provided possibility that nothing is set up to be done next, thus presenting a problem of progressivity (Schegloff, 2007, p. 15). This is the situation we observe in Extract (9): Upon definitive termination of the story sequence, nothing apparently is positioned as a next matter. This is evidenced by Hat's question in line 7. Because he has forgone the opportunity to expand on Son's story, he must then draw from some other semantic domain to establish the grounds for further talk—in particular, he asks a mundane question about something in the immediate environment, the bedclothes.

Sighing may thus be placed interstitially between sequences as a way to bring the prior sequence to closure and orient to the possibility of interactionally moving on to a next matter. Notably, Hat did not have to self-select after his sigh; Son would have been within his rights to self-select as well. In this regard, we may speculate that sighs can also function as a way to buy time in spaces where speakership is unclear. A sigh, in other words, may be an ambiguous token in this environment. Because they operate both to forecast talk and to bring talk to a close, sighs placed intersequentially can be read as either gearing up to talk or securing its closure. Given that both interpretations are available,¹² sighing can be a resource for managing speakership. In the moment of its very production, that is, sighing briefly absolves a potential next speaker from assuming the role of current speaker, thereby delaying a decision about turn allocation. Evidence for this comes from the slight pause after Hat's sigh (lines 6–7). Arguably, this would have been enough time for Hat to recognize that Son had passed on an opportunity to enter the turn space.

The converse of the preceding discussion is that sequence closure also structurally provides for the possibility of a lapse. In the final example of the analysis, a lapse emerges after sequence completion, and a sigh is used as a way to nonverbally manage the contingencies of that lapse. In Extract (10), three young women (Lex, Marie, and Rachel) are discussing Lex's job.

¹²We have already seen in Extract (5) how this sort of Janus-faced ambiguity may be used as a resource to force transition out of one sequence and into another, all within the bounds of a single turn at talk.

(10) GB07-7, 28:49

- 2 LEX; right now I'm getting five fifty,
 3 and then,
 4 ..>when she comes back,
 5 I hope t'get six fifty.
 6 RACH; Wo:w,
 7 that's like twenny per↑ce:nt.
 8 @[@ [@
 9 MARIE; [Ye::ah.
 10 LEX; [@:
 11 MARIE; Movin u[p the ladder.
 12 LEX; [fyou look at it that way.
 13 RACH; @ @ @ [@ @ @
 14 MARIE; [@ @ @
 15 LEX; (3.0) ((gazing down, scraping dish with chopstick))
 16 %Y:ea::[h. ((gaze still down))
 17 MARIE; [Hm. ((gazing toward Lex))
 18 [] ((turns to face forward))
 19 RACH; [] ((lifts head up from resting on elbow))
 20 MARIE; [] ((turns toward Rachel, checking for gaze))
 → 21 RACH; (hx::[:]) ((hummed sigh produced with closed-lips))
 22 LEX; [I think I'll get Nicki something,
 23 she's stuck with me what my whole shift last time ..yesterday.

The topic of Lex's workplace approaches possible completion via appreciative laughter (lines 8, 10, 13, 14), which is followed by 3 seconds of silence (line 15). This constitutes recognizable closure of the sequence and also sets up a problem for the participants. In such lapses, that is, no one has been selected as the next speaker, and as the silence grows, it becomes evident that no one has elected to self-select. Each participant in Extract (10) deals with the lapse in a different way. First, Lex reappreciates the just-closed sequence with an elongated *Y:ea::h* (line 16), which furnishes another TRP and thus allows her to pass on entering the turn space. The second participant to pass on the opportunity to self-select (i.e., to *self-deselect*) is Marie. She issues a soft *Hm* in overlap with the end of Lex's *Y:ea::h* (line 17), then demonstrably seeks next speaker in turning her gaze from Lex to the space in front of her (line 18; [Figures 9–10](#)), and then to Rachel (line 20; [Figures 10–11](#)).

In this way, we see Marie forming an analysis of next speaker and embodying that it will not be her. She first acknowledges Lex's passing on the turn with a recompleter *Hm* (line 17), a token that is produced in a closed-lips manner and thus projects no imminent talk. She then turns toward Rachel, which may be interpreted as possibly selecting her (Lerner, 2003; Rossano, 2013). So both Lex and Marie at this point have removed themselves from the set of potential next speakers, leaving Rachel as the remaining member of that set. In Marie's incipient turn toward Rachel, Rachel responds right away in her bodily behavior. Even before Marie has fully completed turning to face forward (line 18; [Figure 10](#)), Rachel lifts her head up from resting on her elbow (line 19). Then, as Marie's gaze comes to settle on Rachel ([Figure 11](#)), Rachel distinctly avoids Marie's gaze and produces a hummed sigh (line 21) (cf. humming in Stevanovic, 2013). These public behaviors allow Rachel to nonverbally communicate self-deselection to both Marie,

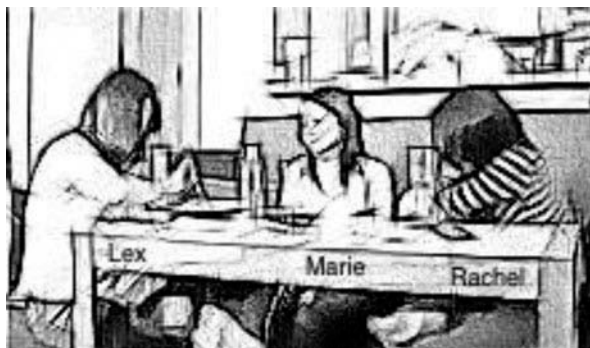


FIGURE 9 Marie facing Lex (lines 15–17).

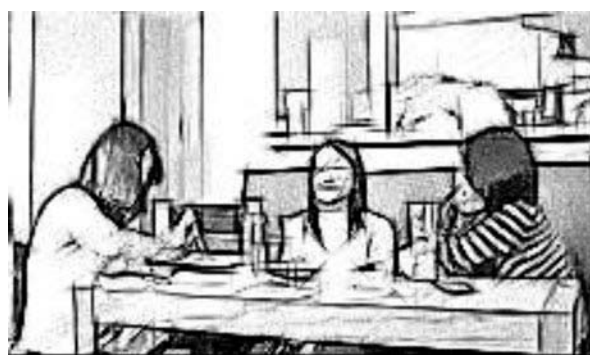


FIGURE 10 Marie faces forward, Rachel lifts head (lines 18–19).

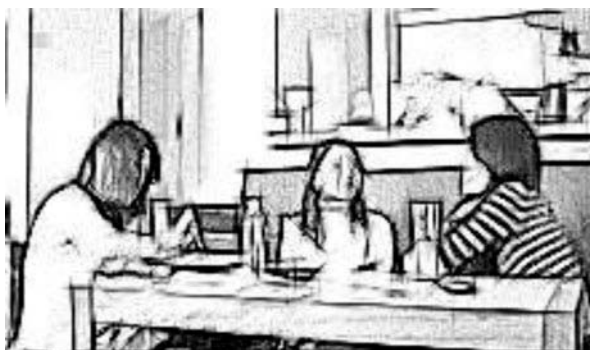


FIGURE 11 Marie turns to Rachel, who sighs (line 20).

who would observe Rachel's gaze avoidance and closed lips, and to Lex, whose gaze is down but would nevertheless hear the sigh. In overlap with Rachel's sigh, Lex self-selects and continues to treat her workplace as the topical anchor for talk (Figure 12).



FIGURE 12 Lex self-selects, Marie turns to her (lines 21–23).

Thus, a sigh can effect self-deselection after a participant has been possibly selected during a lapse. Rachel sighs in this extract as a way to do “being present,” an act that would be relevant where questions of participation are at issue. That is, in a lapse, the question of “who speaks next” is unresolved. Through her sigh, she shows herself to be still engaged in the interaction, however minimally, and responsive to the relevance of turn-transition. Her sigh is a display of disengagement (C. Goodwin, 1981) that works to sustain the participation framework in that it permits her to be a receptive but momentarily unavailable participant. Sighing in this case thus presents an alternative to speaking while still maintaining an orientation to the progressivity of talk and thereby to the interaction itself.

By way of comparison, sighing in Extract (10) occurred in much the same environment as in Extract (9)—i.e., post sequence completion. However, the relevant contingencies in each case differ slightly. We may say that while both are post sequence completion, the sigh in Extract (10) is pre sequence initiation, while the sigh in (9) is pre *possible* sequence initiation. This distinction is explicable by reference to activity (Levinson, 1992). In Extract (9), Hat and Son had been watching television, and so at sequence completion the option to return to that activity is always available. In Extract (10), by contrast, the three young women have no obvious other activity to turn to. A lapse in talk would implicate cessation of their only activity, whereas in Extract (9), a lapse would implicate an adjournment of talk and resumption of watching television. In this respect, the sigh in Extract (10) functions as a way to transition *between* sequences, while in Extract (9), the sigh functions to transition out of a sequence and only potentially into another.

Participants in this section were shown to use sighing as a way to negotiate matters of participation at transitional periods in interaction. During states of incipient talk, as in Extract (8), sighs may be used as “outlouds,” which may serve as the grounds for getting back into turn-by-turn talk. In the context of sustained turn-by-turn talk, sighs can be placed at emerging and emergent lapses to manage issues of speakership and activity, as in Extract (9) and Extract (10). It appears that sighs may be used in this way given their status as sound objects, i.e., distinct nonlexical phonetic forms (Reber, 2012, p. 3). Speakers may rely on sighing for doing transitional work because sighing is meaningful insofar as it is heard as possibly concluding, commencing, or displacing a given action. Though sighs may not always be treated as turns at talk nor unambiguously organized by reference to turn or sequence organization, the transitional sighs analyzed in this section exhibit public social value precisely because of their relationship to situated talk-in-interaction.

CONCLUSIONS

To summarize, I explored the ways in which the variable positioning and delivery of sighs were responsive to and relevant for ongoing, incipient, and concluding units of action. I detailed how sighing performs specifiable work as a part of situated everyday interaction and that the type of work accomplished emerges in part from its position and composition. Evidence was presented across several cases of sighs. First examined were sighs placed within the prebeginning and postcompletion phases of a turn or TCU. Speakers were found to use prebeginning sighs for presaging the onset of talk and indicating its possible valence. Speakers used postcompletion sighs for marking turns as being complete and displaying a (typically resigned) stance toward the talk. I then turned to address stand-alone sighs placed in the course of turn-by-turn talk. These were shown to resemble receipts like *okay* in their acknowledgment/acceptance of some state of affairs, while concurrently taking a distinctly negative posture toward the implications of that acceptance. In the final section, I inspected the work sighing does in the penumbra of talk-in-interaction. Findings indicated that participants may rely on sighing to transition into, out of, and between sequences in service of managing speakership and participation.

These findings contribute to the research on sound objects in talk in interaction (Reber & Couper-Kuhlen, 2010), specifically by elaborating Schegloff's (1996) observation that "breathings" may be produced in various modalities and placed variably in a TCU (p. 106). Expanding on this general statement, the present research also localizes sighs at organizational levels beyond the TCU. The general picture that emerges from the analysis situates sighing in the interstitial spaces in interaction as a sound object that can manage the transitions between turns at talk, sequences of action, and talk as an activity itself. It is in this respect that participants render a semiotic object into a social device for interaction.

This research also contributes to the growing scholarship on emotion in interaction (Ruusuvuori, 2013; Sorjonen & Peräkylä, 2012a) by describing the relationship between affect-laden sighing and multiple orders of interactional organization. The operation of affect-laden sighs at the periphery of turns and sequences can work to shift the boundaries of recognizable action such that the sigh becomes a critical component in the assembly of that action (Kaukomaa et al., 2013; Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2012; Sorjonen & Peräkylä, 2012b; Ruusuvuori & Peräkylä, 2009). This report has shown how sighing in a display of affect can figure centrally in complaints and acknowledgments and has focused on how participants may do "resignation" through verbal, vocal, and embodied practices. Furthermore, it was suggested that sighing was readily taken as communicating something like "resignation" insofar as many of the interactional functions of sighing traded on or grew out of the understanding that sighs index a resigned affect.

It was additionally shown where and under what circumstances a sigh is treated as displaying affect and where it is not. This distinction provides some insight into the difference between a conception of emotion as laminated onto an action and one in which emotion is the central element of an action itself (Sorjonen & Peräkylä, 2012b, p. 9). It was suggested that an affective reading is in a sense inherited or provided by the course of action underway and modulated by the recognizable structure of the activity being enacted (e.g., the question-answer sequences in Extracts 1–3). One layer of analysis that awaits in this respect is a finer phonetic inspection of sigh tokens as it relates to their function in talk and especially as it relates to the expression of affect (e.g., Reber, 2012). I noted how the composition of sighs in particular cases contributed to their usage in a given course of action (e.g., Extracts 5, 8, and 10), but a systematic account could certainly strengthen these findings.

In pinning down something as ephemeral as sighing and detailing its systematic usage across a variety of positions, this interactional account offers a complementary perspective to the existing psychophysiological research. Instead of relying on subjects' judgments/interpretations of sighing, or on experimentally induced sighing, this account used the natural laboratory of conversation to present the phenomenon as it actually appears. The key finding in this respect is an affirmative answer to the question of whether sighs may constitute or construct meaningful social action. Sighing, then, is not merely a physiological act with psychological correlates, but is also a legitimate resource in, and a delicate component of, human social activity. This account provides empirical evidence for an interactional approach to sighing and instantiates it as an orderly phenomenon.

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APPENDIX

Transcription Symbols, as They Depart From Jeffersonian Conventions

(h)	inbreath
(hx)	outbreath
,	continuing intonation
.	final intonation
?	rising intonation
-	word cutoff
–	intonation unit cutoff
..	micropause
...	pause
(1.0)	timed pause
((text))	transcriber’s description
<TEXT>	manner of speech
#text	indecipherable word
#	indecipherable syllable
%text	creaky through word
%	glottal pulse
:	lengthening
=	latching
@	laughter pulse
↑	marked pitch rise