

The sequential structure of closings in private German phone calls¹

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Abstract

This conversation analytic study focuses on the sequential structure of telephone closings in a corpus of 28 German phone calls among friends and relatives. It examines the stepwise proceeding within the closing path.

Fundamental prior research on closings (Schegloff/Sacks 1973) implies that, after topic closure, only a *possible pre-closing* and its acceptance and the following terminal exchange are necessary for a minimal closing. Contrary to that, the studied German closings show a more elaborate organization. Our findings suggest that German telephone closings consist of at least two negotiation sequences. In the first sequence, the participants negotiate whether they are ready to end the conversation. We found that besides lexical items such as "gut" ('good'), constructions such as "dann sehen wir uns morgen" ('then we'll see each other tomorrow') can be considered as typical for this first sequence. In the second sequence the participants negotiate when terminal greetings (e.g. "tschüss" 'bye') are produced. This is preferably done by producing a series of utterances, such as "okay – bis dann – tschüss" ('okay – till then – bye'), often to some extent in overlap with the partner.

In the literature on closings, there are attempts to categorize the turns that can occur between the initiation of the closing sequence and the terminal exchange, such as reiteration of appointments. According to Button (1987; 1990a) such turns are *movements out of closing*. Yet, in our German data, we found that turns referring to appointments and future actions (such as the mentioned "dann sehen wir uns morgen") contribute to the joint achievement of the closing.

Keywords: telephone closing, sequential structure, negotiation, Conversation Analysis, *dann*, *pre-closing*.

Deutsches Abstract

Diese konversationsanalytische Studie widmet sich der sequenziellen Struktur von Telefonbeendigungen unter Freunden und Verwandten. Auf der Basis von 28 Telefongesprächen wurde das schrittweise Voranschreiten der Gesprächsteilnehmer in der Telefonbeendigung untersucht.

Grundlegende frühere Arbeiten über Beendigungen (Schegloff/Sacks 1973) weisen darauf hin, dass für eine minimale Beendigung nach einem Themenabschluss lediglich ein *possible pre-closing*, seine Ratifizierung durch den Gesprächspartner und Schlussgrüße notwendig sind. Im Gegensatz dazu weisen alle untersuchten deutschen Gespräche eine komplexere Struktur auf: Unsere Ergebnisse legen nahe, dass die Gesprächsteilnehmer für die Beendigung

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deutscher Privattelefonate mindestens zwei Aushandlungssequenzen durchlaufen. In der ersten Sequenz handeln die Sprecher aus, ob sie sich bereits verabschieden möchten. Festgestellt wurde, dass neben Äußerungen wie "gut" auch Konstruktionen wie "dann sehen wir uns morgen" als typisch für diese Sequenz angesehen werden können. In einer zweiten Aushandlungssequenz legen die Gesprächsteilnehmer wiederum fest, wann die Schlussgrüße geäußert werden. Dieser Schritt wird vorzugsweise durch die Produktion einer ganzen Serie von Äußerungen bestimmt, wie z.B. "okay – bis dann – tschüss", die oft zum Teil überlappend mit dem Partner ausgesprochen werden.

In der Literatur zu Beendigungen gibt es einige Ansätze, Turns zu kategorisieren, die nach einer Initiierung der Beendigung und vor den Schlussgrüßen vorkommen können, z.B. Wiederholungen von Verabredungen. Während Button (1987; 1990a) diese Turns als *movements out of closing* betrachtet, haben wir für die untersuchten deutschen Daten festgestellt, dass Turns mit Bezug auf Verabredungen und zukünftige Handlungen (wie das genannte "dann sehen wir uns morgen") nicht nur Einschübe darstellen oder die Beendigung sogar verlassen, sondern zum gemeinsamen Erreichen des Endes beitragen.

Keywords: Telefonbeendigung, Sequenzielle Struktur, Aushandlung, Konversationsanalyse, *dann*, *pre-closing*.

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1. Introduction

This article deals with the sequential structure of northern German private telephone call closings. Using Conversation Analysis, we examine the steps which participants in telephone conversations pass through from topic closure to the final greetings.

Knowing that there are several publications on German closing sequences, we want to point out that many of them are comparative studies that tend to focus on the lexico-semantic inventory in each language (Marui/Schwitalla 2003; Pavlidou 1997; 1998; Liefländer-Koistinen/Neuendorff 1990; House 1982). Studies which focus exclusively on German telephone data include the early work of Jäger (1976) on the various closing activities combined with their specific constructions, the work of Auer (1990) on rhythm in German phone call closings,² and the work of Selting (2007) on the general question of cooperation as the cen-

² For the discussion of the theoretical background assumptions of Auer's work see also Button (1990b) and Auer (1992).

tral resource of closing activities at various levels of interaction. In contrast, our study focuses on the overall sequential structure of German private telephone closings, which we assume differs from the English data presented in the literature (Button 1987; 1990a, Schegloff/Sacks 1973). Given the wide range of studies on closings internationally, we would like to specify our starting point for this particular study. We started out by making the initial observation of the large amount of turns comprising the word *dann* in the closings of our data. We could immediately see that the turns varied in size: the shortest version was "bis dann/bis denn"³ ('till then'), and the longest ones took sentential forms such as *also* "dann sehen wir uns spätestens montag wieder" ('so then I'll see you again on Monday at the latest', extract C9, lines 26-27). Next we noticed that the sequential distribution of these turn types was clearly different. "Bis dann" was mostly used right before the terminal greetings, whereas the sentential and other longer forms (like "dann bis morgen" 'then till tomorrow', extract 1, line 30) could only be found before this 'late' position. A further analysis of the sequential environment of each turn type led to the observation that one can distinguish two separate sequences in the closing phase of private German telephone calls. The latter finding forms the core of this article.

In the following paragraph, we will briefly describe our data. Then, we will present an exemplary case of a telephone call closing. Based on this example, we illustrate how our results differ from previous research on closings. Next, we will give an overview of our research results on the sequential structure of German telephone closings. In this part of the article, we demonstrate that German telephone closings contain at least two negotiation sequences: in the first sequence, the participants negotiate whether they want to end the conversation; in the second sequence, they negotiate when to say goodbye.

2. Data

The corpus for this study consists of 28 private phone calls with a total number of 32 participants. All subjects are from the northern part of Germany. The calls were recorded in 2000 and 2001. One of the participants attached a recorder to his or her private telephone for one or two weeks. The participant on the other telephone gave his or her consent either well in advance, right after the phone call, or in a few cases, during the phone call. The age of our subjects varies from 20 to 35, two subjects are over 40, and one is over 60. The calls in our corpus all contain some form of inquiry or request that can be viewed as the reason of the call. Most of the participants are good friends or family members. Hence, the calls tend to contain additional topics beyond the identified reason for the call so that the duration of the calls varies from one to seven minutes. The transcription follows the convention of Gail Jefferson, described by Schegloff (2007:265-269).

³ *Bis dann* and *bis denn* seem to be semantically identical variants that can be used interchangeably even by one speaker.

3. An exemplary closing

To illustrate the kind of closings we have analyzed and to give some first insights into the sequential structure of German telephone closings, we will look at one typical case. In extract 1, Kathie has called Silas to inform him that she will not be going to university the following day as they had agreed previously. She was to lend him a book, and now they agree that he will come to pick it up at her place on his way to university.

Extract 1 (Silas 16)

- 19 Silas: =>(als)=ich komm dann irgndwann vorbei=wenn=ich=ehm<
=>(so)= I come then sometime around when I uhm<
=>(so)= I come around sometime when I uhm<
- 20 in richtung uni fahre,?
in direction university drive,?
drive to the university,?
- 21 (.)
- 22 Kathie: °okhee.°
°okay.°
- 23 Silas: so gegn halb eins,? eins oder so.
so around half one,? one or so.
so around half past noon,? or one or so.
- 24 (0.2)
- 25 bisch=du=dann=da.
are=you=then=there.
will you be there.
- 26 (0.2)
- 27 Kathie: jo.
yes.
- 28 Silas: .hh ↑GUT.
.hh ↑GOOD.
- 29 (0.8)
- 30 Kathie: gut. h dann bisch mo:rgn.=
good. h then until tomorrow.=
good. h see you tomorrow then.=
- 31 Silas: =dann bis mo:agn.=ein schön abmd noch.=
=then until tomorrow.=a nice evening still.=
=see you tomorrow.=have a nice evening.=
- 32 Kathie: =danke °schön°.°
=thank °beautiful°.°
=thank °you°.°
- 33 (.)

- 34 Silas: ↑bis denn;
 ↑till then;
- 35 Kathie: ↑tschüss,=
 ↑bye,=
- 36 Silas: =↑tschü=üs,
 =↑by=ye,

In line 22, Kathie agrees to Silas' suggestion. He then suggests a time when he will come by, and in line 27, she confirms that she will be home at that time. At this point, they can continue this topic, start a different topic or proceed to end the conversation. This kind of arrangement making is considered a typical last topic in telephone calls (Button 1987:105; Schegloff/Sacks 1973:317), and this holds also for our data. In this example, arranging the next meeting is the first purpose and the only topic of the telephone call. Just like here, in many calls participants arrange next meetings and reintroduce the arrangement towards the end of the call as an integral part of the closing trajectory. In this particular case, the participants signal the start of a new sequence by the mutual marker: "gut" ('fine'). In Silas' turn in line 28, he inhales and says "↑GUT". Prosodically, this turn bears distinctive features: it starts with a recognizable in breath; there is a very high onset after which the intonation contour falls; and the turn is very loud. Obviously, this type of change in the prosody marks a change in the projection, and thus constitutes a pivot position where the participants can move on to a new sequence.

Previous research on prosody and sequence organization (Schegloff 2007:187; Couper-Kuhlen 2004:350; Goldberg 2004:262) points out that a closing sequence, just like any new sequence, is often started with prosodic changes, such as sharply increased volume and a high pitch. Another prosodic feature of the entrance to closing is a modified voice quality. The voices of both speakers can be said to carry an overall intimate and childish quality and it is established gradually, starting already at Silas' turn in line 25 ("bisch=du=dann=da." 'will you be there') and getting more dominant turn by turn so that the closing sequence gradually sounds more and more softened, playful and overtly caring. The changes in the voice quality in closings have been recognized as important aspect, but they still have not been systematically explored. We can only state that the changes in voice quality are linked to face-work in closings, but in this article we will not pursue this topic, since it would require another descriptive apparatus.⁴

After the prosodically marked "gut" by Silas, Kathie repeats the same token in line 30. Exchanges of positive assessment tokens have been described as topic bounding techniques by Schegloff/Sacks (1973:306), Auer/Uhmann (1982:6), Antaki/Houtkoop-Steenstra/Rapley (2000) and Schegloff (2007:123). According to Meier (2002:83f.), the German *gut* like 'okay' or 'so' can be used as a device for closing down a topic or action-sequence and for signalling the willingness to start a new sequence in work meetings. He states that *so* is the predominant form in work meetings while *gut* and *okay* more often are used in German telephone calls

⁴ For the ways to describe face-work and related dimensions of spoken interaction see Holly (2001). For a description of face-work in phone call closings and the role of voice quality in it, see Raitaniemi (in preparation). For a list of criteria for voice quality modifications see Bose (2001).

for topic closure and as *possible pre-closings* of a call (Meier 2002:88). Birkner (2001:92f.), in her work on German job interviews, describes *okay* as a frequently used signal with transitional effect. The frequency of *okay* in her data is due to many explicit topic changes, which is typical of institutional interaction in general. In Meier's data of work meetings the items *so*, *gut* and *okay* are often followed by temporal adverbs like *dann* ('then') and *jetzt* ('now') introducing a new item on the agenda (Meier 2002:118-122). Likewise, in our data of German private telephone calls, the word *gut* seems to work as a marker of transfer to a new sequence with fairly weak semantic value of a positive assessment. This combination of coming to the recognizable end of an arrangement sequence, the mutual production of the token *gut*, the prosody of a sequential new start, and the fact that none of the conversationalists introduces any new topic indicate willingness for closing the conversation by both participants.

In our example, the mutual tokens *gut* are followed by a repeated reference to the arranged next meeting ("h dann bisch mo:rgn." 'see you tomorrow then'),⁵ which refers to earlier talk in lines 19 to 27. However, in this position, this is not part of the initial arrangement making anymore, but rather of a new activity, the arrangement is merely recycled as a known fact. It is important to clarify that the original making of the arrangement and a reinvocation of it on a later position bear completely different statuses. Typically, only the latter is used in closings. Correspondingly, in our extract, the reference to the previously arranged meeting (line 30) is part of the closing activities.

The relevant activity now is the closing, which has been initiated through the *gut* tokens and their prosodic marking. Meier (2002:119) points out that turns with *dann* can be considered a first step into a new topic; here, it is the first step that not only invites but starts to perform the closing. Silas considers the recycled arrangement turn as a leave-taking activity, and he replies with the same expression (line 31). Referring to the actions taking place after the telephone call makes the closing of the call relevant and shows the intention of a speaker to abandon the current communication situation (Button 1991:269-270; Pavlidou 1997:159f.). In this case, Silas repeats the arrangement with the very same words ("=dann bis mo:agn.") which indicates that he is ready to close the call. He also wishes Kathie a good evening ("ein schön abmd noch.") which, in addition to the social function, supports the closing activity. She thanks him in return, and now he says "↑bis denn", 'till then', 'till later', which again has a high onset and a falling pitch curve and which again refers to the arranged next meeting, though in a very short form. It is only now that both participants produce the terminal greeting "↑tschüss". In this last part of the exemplary closing, we are particularly interested in the special interactional effect of "bis dann" (line 34) and in its characteristic sequential environment, which leads to the stopping of the turn taking machinery. In section 5.2 we will argue that the construction *bis dann* can serve as candidate initiation for the terminal greetings.

⁵ This turn is strongly colored by the previously introduced childish and playful modification of the voice quality. The non standard pronunciation "bisch" instead of *bis* is another instance of this playful way. A similar softening of the sibilant could be heard also in line 25 in the phonetically close word "bisch", standard *bist*.

4. Problems of applying previous research findings to German data

The most quoted study on closings is Schegloff/Sacks (1973) on Anglo-American phone call closings. They suggest a particular mechanism which participants use to solve the closing problem, that is, how to stop talking without causing any interactive problems. They propose that before producing a terminal greeting such as *bye*, participants need to agree that this is a suitable position for terminal greetings. They argue that this is done by producing and accepting so called *pre-closing* turns, for example *well* or *okay*. For a turn to be interpreted as a *possible pre-closing*, there has to be some technique of topic-closure preceding it.

When we look at our first example, we can find similar features. The topic comes to a possible closing in line 27 when Kathie agrees with Silas' proposed time. The following turn by Silas in line 28 ("↑GUT.") is marked by several prosodic changes and thus introduces something new. In accordance with Schegloff and Sacks (1973), at the position after topic closure, this turn could be seen as a *possible pre-closing* which then only has to be accepted by the co-participant in order to proceed to the terminal exchange (Schegloff/Sacks 1973:317):

Once properly initiated, a closing section may contain nothing but a terminal exchange and accomplish a proper closing thereby. Thus, a proper closing can be accomplished by:

A: O.K.

B: O.K.

A: Bye Bye

B: Bye

Such a smooth and unproblematic closing, consisting of a *possible pre-closing* and its acceptance (*first close components*) as well as of the terminal greetings (*second close components*) is called an *archetype closing* by Button (1987:102).

In our German data, after the acceptance of a *possible pre-closing* (extract 1, line 30: "gut."), the next activity is not a terminal greeting. In fact, we have not found a single example with a direct proceeding to the terminal greeting. We found this remarkable and started to analyze the structures that follow after such a *pre-closing* turn more closely. Schegloff and Sacks (1973:317f.) mention the possibility of extensions of the closing phase, and Button (1987; 1990a) examines different possibilities of extending and leaving it. According to Button's terminology (1987:109), the turns in lines 30 ("gut. h dann bisch mo:rgn" 'good. h see you tomorrow then.') and 31 ("dann bis mo:agn.=ein schön abmd noch." 'see you tomorrow.=have a nice evening.') are cases of *minimal movements out of closing*. He says that such turns are not terminal-elicitive, yet at the same time, they remain closing-implicative. Button claims, if such turns occur after the *pre-closing*, there has to be a re-initiation of the closing, meaning that after such turns, there will be a new *pre-closing* (Button 1987:107ff.). In our example, the turn in line 34 ("↑bis denn;/" 'till then, till later') summons the terminal greeting. In our German closings, such turns as *bis dann* cannot be considered a re-initiation of the closing phase. Moreover, it constitutes a further step towards terminal greetings. We argue that the previous sequences with the reiterated arrangement and the wish are integral parts of the closing activities. Our view is supported by Pavlidou (1998:80), who also observes a "gradual moving towards termination of the call".

She stated that "in the German closings, emphasis is put to the consolidation of the relationship" (Pavlidou 1997:160), which gives an explanation of a more elaborated closing.

An example of extending a call closing for English data can be found in Levinson's "Pragmatics" (1983:317). He proposes a schematic view of the sequential organization of closings:⁶

(a) a closing down of some topic, typically a closing implicative topic; where closing implicative topics include the making of arrangements, the first topic in monotopical calls, the giving of regards to the other's family members, etc.

(b) one or more pairs of passing turns with pre closing items, like *Okay*, *All right*, *So::*, etc.

(c) if appropriate, a typing of the call as e.g. a favour requested and done (hence *Thank you*), or as a checking up on recipient's state of health (*Well I just wanted to know how you were*), etc., followed by a further exchange of pre-closing items

(d) a final exchange of terminal elements: *Bye*, *Righteo*, *Cheers*, etc.

In case of the optional typing of the call (c), he mentions there will be a "further exchange of pre-closings", but in his description this aspect is not further developed. In Levinson's English data excerpt (1983:316f.), there are two exchanges of *okays*, both of which are understood to be *pre-closing* exchanges.⁷

C: Okay so::
 R: One o'clock in the bar
 → C: Okay
 → R: Okay?
 C: Okay then thanks very much indeed George=
 R: =All right
 C: // See you there
 R: See you there
 → C: Okay
 → R: Okay // bye
 R: Bye

The second pair of *okays* is interpreted as *re-initiation* of the closing by Levinson. It is remarkable that in this English closing, the participants use the same lexical item *okay* at two occasions. This supports the interpretation that the second exchange of *okays* is a repetition of the first pre-closing exchange. In contrast, in our German data, we find different utterances at these different positions. In our opinion, for the German data the single term *pre-closing* cannot be used for both instances. It would be misleading, as for the German data, it would melt together the initiations of two different sequences into one functional category.

Our findings support the view that turns with reiterated arrangements or wishes are not pursuing a movement out of closing, but, for the German closings, constitute integral and essential parts of the closing path. Therefore, they are not followed by another instance of *pre-closings* of the same quality, but rather by a negotiation of when the next step – the terminal greetings – can be taken. Our analy-

⁶ Levinson's schematic view is his reception and reformulation of the work of Schegloff and Sacks (1973).

⁷ The arrows in the excerpt were set by the authors of this article.

sis suggests that previous findings based on English data, and hence a single term *pre-closing* cannot be directly applied to comparable turns in German; the sequential structure of German closings seems to differ from the English closings. This is why we refer to the different forms as candidate initiation of the first closing sequence and candidate initiation of the second closing sequence.

5. Two negotiation sequences

We argue that in the studied German data the reinitiated arrangements are not *movements out of closing* but rather constitute integral parts of the closing. In addition, opposed to the view of a single *pre-closing* pair and a terminal greeting pair as the essence of the closing,⁸ we recognized two more elaborate sequences in which the proceeding of the closing track is negotiated. First, participants negotiate whether they are ready to end the conversation, and then, they negotiate when to produce the terminal greetings. As mentioned above, for us, the starting point for the analysis of the sequential structure of the closings is the finding that there are recurrent constructions that appear to have their proper place at different steps within the closing track. All of these constructions in focus contain the lexical item *dann* ('then'), such as *dann sehn wir uns morgen* ('see you tomorrow then'). As for the syntactic composition of these constructions, we have encountered 17 cases with *dann* in the *front-field* position, that is, before the conjugated verb. In our data, there are also 6 cases of turns where *dann* follows after the conjugated verb (*middle-field* position). We will refer to both groups as clausal *dann*-constructions.⁹ The second construction type consists of shorter expressions, with no verb and with *dann* in initial position, such as *dann bis morgen* ('then till tomorrow'). We encountered 8 of these.¹⁰ The third construction type is the even shorter construction *bis dann* ('till then'). The latter was found on 17 occasions. We will show that its sequential position is later than that of all other *dann*-constructions. It seems that speakers make use of these constructions in a systematic way. The construction types occupy different predominant positions within the proceeding of the closing track, becoming gradually shorter and more formulaic. In this study, we will analyze the stages the speakers go through within the closing track and describe the use of the mentioned constructions as part of their closing activities.

5.1. The first closing sequence

We will now focus on the first closing sequence and on the sequential positioning of constructions with the word *dann* ('then') at the beginning of a turn-constructional unit, which turned out to be predominant for this sequence. We found that

⁸ See Schegloff and Sacks (1973:303f., 317) and its reception in Button as *archetype closing* (1987:102; 1990:94).

⁹ We assume some slight differences in the uses of the two syntactic variants (*dann* before or after the finite verb), but this aspect is not discussed in this paper (see Harren/Raitaniemi in preparation).

¹⁰ These variants (the clausal type and the construction with *dann* plus adverbials) vary slightly in their sequential positioning; the latter is positioned later in the first closing phase. This will be described in a forthcoming article.

such turns with *dann* are used frequently at the beginning of the closing phase; examples can be seen in extracts 2 to 3:

Extract 2 (Silas 19)

- 19 Silas: .h[h weil=n] paar von den sachn könn wir dafür
.h[h because] some of the things can we that-for
.h[h because] some of those things we can
 []
- 20 Kathie: [(-)]
- 20 Silas: wahrscheinlich gebrauchn fürs theaterstück.
probably use for-the theatre play.
probably use for the theatre play
- 21 (0,5)
- 22 Kathie: >jo.<
 >yes.<
 >sure.<
- =>23 Silas: .h >↑ja=super.=dann komm=ich gleich ma ehm so<
.h >↑yeah=perfect.=then come=i soon PRT PRT so<
.h >↑yeah=perfect.=then i'll be quite soon<
- =>24 in: etwa ner halbm stunde oder so bei dir rum.
in: about a half hour or so at you around.
in: about half an hour or so at your place.
- (.)
- 25 Kathie: >↑okee.<
 >↑okay.<
- 26 Silas: ↑okee.=bis dann, ts[chü=üß.
 >↑okay.=until then,b[y=ye.<
 []
- 27 Kathie: [>tschüß, ?<
 [>bye, ?<

Extract 3 (C2)

- 045 Jutta: gut. machen wir das. (u) na?
good. do we that. right?
fine. let's do that (r)ight?
- 046 Katha: ja=a.
 ye=ah.
- 047 (.)
- 048 Jutta: schreibe ich mir das (nämlich) gleich ein?
write i me that (namely) right away VERBPREF?
i'm writing it down right away?
- 049 (1.5)

- 050 Katha: hm=hm?
hm=hm?
- 051 (2.5)
- 052 Jutta: gu:t;
goo:d;
- 053 (.)
- 054 Katha: ja:, ha[haha
yeah:, ha[haha
[
- 055 Jutta: [pri:ma:
[gre:at:
- 056 Katha: .hhh o:k[ei;
.hhh o:k[ay;
[
- 057 Jutta: [o:kei;
[okay;
- =>058 Katha: <dann um:-
<then at:-
- 059 (0.7)
- =>060 .hhh drei> an der deu[tschen bank übermorgen. ne?
.hhh three>by the NAME[OF A BANK the day after
tomorrow. right?
[
- 061 Jutta: [>deutschen bank.< hh
[>NAME OF A BANK.< hh
[>deutsche bank.< hh
- 062 genau;;
exactly;;
- 063 Katha: †bis da[nn;;
†till t[hen;;
[
- 064 Jutta: [bis dann..
[till then:.
- 065 Katha: machs gut [(du); ne?
make it well [(you); okay?
all the best [(to you); okay?
[
- 066 Jutta: [machs auch gut;
[make it also good;
[to you too;
- 067 Katha: tsch[ao::-
by[e::-
[
- 068 Jutta: [^tschü;;
[^bye;;

In extract 2, Silas has asked to borrow some videos from Kathie on his way to a meeting, and in line 22, Kathie agrees. In the following lines (23-24), Silas comes in with a *dann*-construction that summarizes his plan to come over, and this leads to the rapid closing of the call. Schegloff and Sacks (1973:303) point out that one-word utterances like *okay* or *well* are just one type of *pre-closings*, which specifically invite *unmentioned mentionables*. They call this specific form of a *possible pre-closing* a *floor-offering-exchange device* (1973:309). They further say that different forms of *possible pre-closings* may vary in their strength to invite the entrance to the closing (Schegloff/Sacks 1973:312):

While "I gotta go" cannot prohibit further talk, while others may insert unmentioned mentionables after it, it does not specifically invite such a sequel, as "O.K." does. For the initiation of a closing section in a way that discourages the specific alternative of reopening topic talk, this pre-closing may be more effective.

In line 23 and 24 of extract 2, it is clear that Silas proposed to enter the closing section. This form rather discourages the reopening of topic talk. In contrast, in extract 3, the "gu:t;" (line 52), which is positioned at the end of an arrangement making, can be viewed as a *possible pre-closing* of the kind of a *floor-offering-exchange device*. This form can also be taken as a possibility to provide further *unmentioned mentionables*, and thus it constitutes a form of *possible pre-closing* with more vagueness and openness.

The *dann*-construction in lines 23 and 24 of extract 2 is of the syntactic type with *dann* before the finite verb (*dann* in the so called *front-field* position of a clause). The *dann*-construction in extract 3 differs slightly from the one above: there is no verb and the *dann* is directly followed by a series of temporal and locative adverbials and a tag particle. At a first view, *dann* itself could be used as a temporal adverb. However, in extracts 1 to 3, *dann* is not used temporally. Instead, it is used to show that the following turn is a conclusion or a next step within a schema (see also Meier 2007:119f.).

Let us have a closer look at extract 3. The arrangement making can be considered as a typical last topic (Button 1987:105; Schegloff/Sacks 1973:317), and the reference to the success of the arranged meeting (line 45) can be understood as a first step or as gliding over into the closing of the phone call, which is accepted in line 46. Jutta announces that she will write it down, and she takes a moment to do so (lines 48 to 51). In line 52, Jutta says "gut", which indicates the end of writing it down as well as her return to the phone-talk activity. In the following lines (54-57), neither of the partners comes in with new topical material, and the exchange of the short tokens shows the exhaustion of any further *mentionables* (Schegloff/Sacks 1973:300-304). Thus, the possibility for closing is again mutually recognized but not developed further. In lines 58 to 60, Katha produces a *dann*-construction that refers to the arranged next meeting and summarizes the core information of it. On the one hand, this turn repeats topical material; on the other hand, it does this in the conventionalized form of a *dann*-turn with *dann* in the front-field position. This syntactic form contextualizes the utterance as a step into a new action sequence (see Meier 2002:119f.), establishing the closing activity more explicitly than the preceding forms (lines 52-57). Comparing this to the *dann*-turn in extract 2 (line 23), this one in extract 3 (line 58-60) is not a candidate initiation of the first closing sequence. This time, the entrance into the first closing section has already been initiated and accepted, and the *dann*-turn extends the first closing se-

quence, leaving it to the partner to provide a next step towards a second and terminal closing sequence. Although it does not push the closing forward, and although it can be considered as hesitation of quick proceeding to the terminal greetings, we do not consider this turn as a movement out of closing. In this sequential position, it is moreover a device used to negotiate the pace of proceeding towards the terminal greetings, which in this case is slower than in the previous examples of closings.

Let us consider the following extract for a comparison, to see a slightly different sequential follow-up after another *dann*-turn. In this case, there is no closing following immediately, but there still are some hints of a closing-implicative interpretation of the turn (line 109). We recognize this turn as possibly closing-implicative, since the following turn by Silas (line 110) seems to be hesitating and, in a way, counter-effective of the intended closing implicativeness.

Extract 4 (Silas11)

- 104 Silas: zwei siebm acht.
 two seven eight.
- 105 Nina: °zwei siebm acht.°
 °*two seven eight.*°
- 106 Silas: .h s[upa.
 .h g[reat.
 [
- 107 Nina: [(gut.)
 [(good.)
- 108 (0.4)
- =>109 Nina: dann ruf ich einfach an,?
 so call i just up?
 so I'll just call you,?
- 110 Silas: .hJA[und sonst könn wa] uns ja irgndwo
 .hye[and otherwise can we] *us PRT somewhere*
 .hye[and otherwise we can meet] *somewhere*
 []
- 111 Nina: [(mo:gen)]
 [(tomorrow)]
- 112 Silas: aufm stadtfest treffm.
 at the street festival meet.
 at the street festival.
- 113 Nina: wunderbar.
 wonderful.
- 114 Silas: coo[l].
 coo[l].
 [
- 115 Nina: [wunderbar.
 wonderful.
- 116 (0,2)

117 Nina: geil. ja [()]
 nice. yes [()]
 []
 118 Silas: [n=ja find ich] auch.
 [and= yeah I] think so too.

In this call, the participants have already agreed to meet the next evening, but Silas first has to give Nina his mobile number (lines 99-105) to make sure they can meet at a street festival. After this sequence, the participants mutually express their satisfaction with the result of the phone-call (106-107), which is analyzable as the end of this sequence and thereby summons the possibility of call-closing. Nina's turn "dann ruf ich einfach an,?" ('so I'll just call you,?') is closing-implicative by referring to what she plans to do in the evening as a conclusion of the receipt of the telephone number. The *dann*-turns in actual call closings share this characteristic: they indicate that the proposition of the ongoing turn refers to something that has been said before, and speakers make references to future actions or to their next contact. These constructions can thus be used as closing implicative devices.¹¹ Silas' turn in lines 110-112 does not provide a reciprocal form of a closing turn; contrary to that, it contains a slight modification of the arrangement, which now reopens the topic for further negotiation. His unwillingness to collaborate in closing activities, proposed by the *dann*-turn in line 109, is also reflected in his slight hesitation at turn-beginning (".hJA"). After this, both participants show happiness with the result of the arrangement sequence by producing positive assessing adjectives (lines 113-117). With the positive assessment tokens, they signal that, again, the topic is coming to an end, and with the fact that none of the conversationalists introduces a new topic, they signal that the closing of the call would be the next relevant activity. However, they now continue by elaborating the assessment sequence (lines 113-118). This can be interpreted as their way of expressing willingness to keep on talking.¹² We consider this occasion a case of a mutually recognized possible position for the closing which is interactionally refused and redirected into more topical talk. This illustrates how flexible the proceeding to the closing can be negotiated between the co-participants.

Basing on these observations, we assume that the constructions with an initial *dann*, which refer to the success of the call or to an arranged next meeting, express increasing relevance of the call closing. The description of the *dann*-turns has shown that the closing has an initial phase, where the participants first open up the possibility of closing the call and then interactively proceed by supporting the closing or redirecting their path back to topical talk. This sequential phase can take many turns of talk, and the forms we have encountered contain different single word tokens such as *gut*, *ja*, *prima* and *okay* as well as *dann*-constructions. In our data, these *dann*-turns mainly re-invoke material talked about earlier and other material like thanking (see also Schegloff/Sacks 1973:318) and solitudes (see also Button 1987:118ff.). We must further say that not all closing-implicative

¹¹ Schegloff and Sacks do not mention English *pre-closings* of exactly this kind, but they mention that in Anglo-American call closings, "There are, in addition, devices which DO make use of conversationally developed materials" (1973:310).

¹² Selting (2007:320ff.) also describes a phone-call closing in which participants re-enter topical talk on many occasions after *possible pre-closings* and even after mutual establishment of *pre-closings*.

turns referring to the future are realized as *dann*-turns. Yet, in our data, they are common for this position of the first closing sequence, and for sequential positions at the beginning of and within the second closing sequence. We have shown that participants recognize them as signals of the willingness to proceed to the next step within a call-closing. Let us now turn to the specifics of the second and last closing sequence.

5.2. The second closing sequence

In the second closing sequence, participants negotiate when to produce terminal greetings. In this sequence, we have also found constructions with the word *dann*. In these cases, the construction is much shorter: *bis dann* ('till then'). We will show how the *bis dann*-construction is placed within its sequential environment. In our first example, we found the *bis dann*-turn (extract 1, line 34) right before the terminal greetings. To explain its interactional task, we will examine the particular positioning of these turns and see that they have a tendency of projecting immediate terminal greetings.

One predominant feature of this very last sequence of the call is overlap. We have found numerous examples of overlapping turn-constructive units in our data. In 14 cases in our corpus, participants produce one or more expressions in overlap. There are 8 closings in which partial overlap of single words occurs. Only 6 closings contain regular turn-taking without overlap. Auer (1990:387) also confirms a tendency to overlap in German call closings. He states: "simultaneous talk in closing sequences is the rule, not the exception". Generally, overlap is very often produced at the end of turn-constructive units, if the syntax and the prosody project a certain trajectory (Lerner 1991). However, in closings, we can find overlap production of complete TCUs and even complete multi-unit turns. Let us look at the overlap in the lines 29 to 33 in the following extract:

Extract 5 (C9)

			<i>*with rounded lips</i>
26	Fanny:	.hh also=dann sehn wir *uns .hh so=then see we us .hh so I'll see you	
27		[<spätestens °montag> wie[der;° [<latest °monday> aga[in;° [at the latest on monday aga[in	
28	Anja:	[°m:ontag° [genau.= [°monday° [exactly.=	
29	Fanny:	<i>*with rounded lips</i> =*↑o[khei;] []	
30	Anja:	[↑ o k]hei; [↑bis dann; [↑ o k]hay; [↑till then; [
31	Fanny:	[↑bis dann;=ne?= [↑till then;=huh?= [

- 32 Anja: =t[sch(üss,?)
 =b[(ye,?)
 [
 33 Fanny: [↑tschü=üs;
 [↑by=ye;

Our observation concerning this second closing sequence is that it consists of many simultaneous passages where no systematic turn-taking occurs (lines 29 to 33). Here we find a structure of three turn-constructional units in a choral production ("okay – bis dann – tschüss"): The overlap starts in line 27 and 28 as a regular terminal overlap. The women refer to their meeting in a class every Monday. The interesting thing is that, in the following lines, three units are produced almost simultaneously. After an overlapping mutual "okhei" ('okay') in lines 29 and 30, Anja says "bis dann" ('till then'). At the same time, Fanny joins in with the same lexical expression followed by a tag particle.¹³ At this point, Fanny does not wait for a reaction, but directly continues with the terminal greeting "tschüss", which once again is produced in overlap. Looking at the transcript of this segment, the reader gets the impression that although there is much overlap, turn-taking still takes place. Listening to the audio file gives another impression: the units seem to be produced as one continuous string, thus forming a choral production. This is a case of high anticipation of the partner's activity and an example of the extremely well coordinated closing activities. How do Anja and Fanny succeed in anticipating exactly what the other is about to say? In order to find an answer, we will look at more data, which will show examples with rather turn-by-turn fashion closings, nevertheless also comprising simultaneous passages of various length.

In the following extracts, only the last part of the closing is shown, where the participants move from a turn-by-turn fashion to a less orderly and overlapping mechanism. In the terminology proposed in this article, the speakers move from the first to the second closing sequence.

Extract 6 (C1)

- 053 Hanna: und dir wünsche ich ne schöne woche.
and you-DAT wish i a nice week.
and i'm wishing you a nice week.
- 054 Katha: [danke;;
 [thanks;;
 [
 055 Hanna: [und wir sehen uns dann nächste woche ne?
 [and we see us-REFL then next week PRT
 [and w'll see again next week right?¹⁴
- 056 Katha: gena:u;
 ri:ght;

¹³ Pavlidou (1998:88-91) has observed a similar use of *ne* in German closing sequences. For an analysis of its function in this position see Harren (2001:123-126).

¹⁴ The reader should notice that the translations of the particles (extract 6, lines 55 and 58 and extract 7, line 237) are just suggestions, and in some cases a translation must be left out (extract 7, line 239) for reasons of multifaceted or too obscure functional implications of the original.

- 057 Hanna: ↑o:k(h)ei:,,?
 ↑o:k(h)ay:,,?
- 058 Katha: machs gut; [nh?]
 make-it well; [PRT]
 all the best [alright?]
 []
- 059 Hanna: [(bis) da]nn? [°tschau°;]
 [(till)th]en? [°bye°;]
 []
- 060 Katha: [tschü=üs;]
 [by=ye;]

Extract 7 (C12)

- 236 Robert: ja =o[kei.]
 yes=o[kay.]
 []
- 237 Fabian: [.h] ja?
 [.h] right?
- 238 (0.4)
- 239 Robert: ↑bis denn; [wa,?
 till then; [PRT,?
 []
- 240 Fabian: [bis denn. tschü=üs;
 [till then. by=ye;

Extract 8 (GNS11)

- 51 Gitte: o↑key.
 o↑kay.
 (.)
- 52 Uwe: o↑ke:y.=
 o↑ka:y.=
- 53 Gitte: =↑bisch denn,
 =↑till then,
- 54 Uwe: >bis dann du.< =[tschü:üss
 >til then you.<=[by=ye
 []
- 55 Gitte: [tschau.
 [bye

Extract 9 (Silas7)

- 01 Kathie: h °↑okee°
 h °↑okay°
- 02 Silas: ↑okee:.=↑dann grüß schön.
 ↑okay:.=then greet nicely.
 ↑okay:.=then send my love to them.

- 03 Kathie: ↑mach=ich.
 ↑make=i.
 ↑i will.
- 04 Silas: >↑bis da=ann. ↑tsch[aau.<
 >↑till the=en. ↑by[ye.<
 ↓
 [° (tschüss) °
 ↓° (bye) °
- 05 Kathie:

The expressions used in the very last part before the terminal greetings are to some extent limited. Interestingly, we have observed the series of the very tokens *okee*, *bis dann* and *tschüss* to be widespread. This series is produced in extract 5 and 8 by both speakers, in extract 6 and 9 only by one speaker, and in extract 7 by Robert and Fabian in co-production. Of course, variation occurs, so that for instance in extracts 6 (line 58) and 3 (lines 65-66) the speakers use "machs gut" ('all the best to you'), and in extract 7 (line 239) they use a not so common tag particle: "wa".¹⁵ In extract 8 (line 54), a *tag-positioned address term*¹⁶ is used, and in extract 9 Silas sends greetings to a third person,¹⁷ which is responded to, before he continues with "bis dann" and the terminal greeting. We cannot cover all further variants; the corpus is too limited for an overview. Prosodic features of some of the turns that precede the terminal greetings (extract 5 to 9) are a high onset and a falling pitch curve. These features can be accompanied by other prosodic changes: a modification of the voice quality (extract 5, line 29) or stretching of syllables (extract 6, line 57 and extract 9, line 4). We assume that these prosodic features propose the entrance to a possible last sequence of the closing, that is, the section where the terminal greetings are expected to follow.

It is of specific interest that after the prosodically marked first item, such as "↑okhei" (extract 5, line 29), the following step is not the terminal greeting, but something else. It is the participant, who comes in with his or her next turn, which can be comprised of one or some more closing targeting expressions. The alternatives we recognized are that the next speaker either comes in with

- two or more expressions in a series – such as "okay bis dann tschüss" – (extract 2, line 26, extract 5, lines 30 and 32, extract 7, line 239 and extract 9, line 2) or
- a single token (extract 3, line 64 and extract 6, line 58 and extract 8, line 52).

The alternatives have a crucial difference concerning the sequential organization of the last part of the closing and concerning the pace to proceed towards termination of the call. In the first alternative, the next speaker accelerates the proceeding to the terminal greeting by providing two or more further steps towards closing. This limits the possible alternatives for the reaction to follow. In the sec-

¹⁵ The particle *wa* is a shortened version of the interrogative *was* 'what'. This short form has been observed to function as a tag particle (Harren 2001:104f.).

¹⁶ See also Jefferson (1973).

¹⁷ The syntagma "↑dann grüß schön." resembles the clausal *dann*-constructions which occur predominantly in the first closing sequence. Here the construction is used in the second closing sequence. However, this construction is much shorter, it contains an imperative form and it is a request to send greetings. We have encountered only this occasion of this type.

ond alternative, the next speaker leaves the option for further turns by the partner. The latter can be considered a way of not demanding a fast closing. We interpret this as one way of accomplishing a friendly tone of closing and a way of securing the social relationship.

A closer look at the cases with two or more expressions in a series evokes the question of why these turns tend to contain more than just an *okay* or more than just a terminal greeting. Even more relevant is the frequent use of the tokens in exactly this order: the token *bis dann* is followed directly by the terminal greeting *tschüss*. We assume that co-participants orient to a previously known order of these tokens. We have encountered *bis dann* in this position on 11 out of 17 occasions. Our impression is that *bis dann* can be used in order to evoke and/or project the terminal greetings. There is a study on answering machine communication by Lange (1999). The analysis of her data supports our results of the order of these tokens. Her data shows that the messages left by callers on answering machines, that is, messages of a single speaker, tend to be brought to an end by a combination of at least two expressions. We counted this to be the case in 75 of 120 callers' messages in her data. 36 of these contain the very combination *bis dann tschüss* at their end. For us, it is remarkable that callers frequently use more than one closing expression at the end of their answering machine message, since there is no obligation to end the talk in a cooperative fashion. Even if there is no real time interaction going on, the termination still contains the same expressions in the same order.

Consequently, the next aspect to specify is the positional variation. In extract 7, Robert's last turn of talk (line 239) consists of "bis denn; wa," ('till then; PRT,' line 239). Fabian comes in after Robert's "bis denn" saying "bis denn. tschü=üs;" ('till then. by=ye;' line 240). There is no further *tschüss* by Fabian. This suggests the interpretation that the transitional relevance can be lifted after his "bis denn" and the tag particle, and a further terminal greeting is not necessary. Thus, terminal greetings or routine formulae generally identified as 'proper' terminal greetings (e.g. in dictionary entries) like the German *tschüss* need not always be produced by both participants.

To examine a more elaborated second closing sequence, let us look at extract 3 again.

Extract 10, reproduced from extract 3 (C2)

```

058   Katha:   <dann um:-
           <then at:-

059                               (0.7)

060                               .hhh drei> an der deu[tschen bank übermorgen. ne?
                               .hhh three>by the NAME[OF A BANK the day after
                                       tomorrow. right?

061   Jutta:   [
           [>deutschen bank.< hh
           [NAME OF A BANK
           [>deutsche bank.< hh

062                               genau;;
                               exactly;;

```

- =>063 Katha: †bis da[nn:;
†till t[hen:;
[
- =>064 Jutta: [bis dann:..
[till then:..
- 065 Katha: machs gut [(du); ne?
make it well [(you); okay?
all the best [(to you); okay?
[
- 066 Jutta: [machs auch gut;
[make it also good;
[to you too;
- 067 Katha: tsch[ao::-
by[e::-
[
- 068 Jutta: [ˆtschü:;
[ˆbye:;

The *bis dann*-exchange (lines 63-64) is followed by the exchange of the items "machs gut" 'all the best' (lines 65-66), which are followed by the terminal greetings. We consider this to be a case with subtle differences in the strategies to close the call by the participants. Already before this shortened excerpt, Jutta has finished writing down the time of their arrangement, and she has signalled this by saying "gu:t;" ('good', line 52) and "pri:ma:" ('great', line 55). These positive assessments are proposals to close the sequence and open up the possibility of moving into the call closing, and Katha takes the closing up by formulating a rather precise reformulation of the arrangement (lines 58-60). She does this at a slow pace, which Jutta views as displaying some formulation problem, because she comes in filling the syntactic slot of the locative adverbial. In the following, Jutta affirms the reformulated arrangement (line 62), and Katha comes in with "bis dann" (line 63). Being prosodically marked (high onset, stretching of the last consonant), this turn suggests a new sequence, which we interpret as the offer to enter the second closing sequence. Jutta immediately takes this up, and responds with the same item in terminal overlap (line 64). So far, there have been two instances of Jutta coming in in overlap in order to support Katha's activity and to show alignment. Katha, on the other hand, seems to need a bit more time for each transition to a new activity, and her hesitation with the reformulation of the arrangement (line 59) also signals her preference for a careful formulation of each step. This care can be considered to be reflected in her next turn as well. She now says "machs gut" ('all the best'), which supports the social relationship and gives the closing phase a note of highlighted concern for the well being of the partner. Jutta comes in with "machs auch gut" ('all the best to you too') after the first possible completion point of Katha's turn. Then they produce the terminal greetings, Jutta in terminal overlap, again reacting sooner than Katha. We believe that the rather elaborate series of closing-targeting expressions in this closing is caused by Katha carefully choosing her words. This can be identified as such, because her co-participant shows a different pace: she is constantly overlapping Katha's turns in a supporting fashion. Katha orients to a fairly slow tempo, and Jutta proposes a faster pace. This may be the reason why the lifting of the conditional relevance of following utterances is not accomplished by the production of the conventional

series of expressions by both speakers in co-production, but by going through a number of regular adjacency pairs, each contributing to the social relationship of the co-participants. So, even if there is a tendency for *bis dann* to immediately summon the terminal greetings, and even if it is possible to use it as a terminal greeting, we can also observe it in not such a restricted position, but rather as a more generally applicable closing expression as well.

In extract 10 (reproduced from extract 3), the first "bis dann" in line 63 is followed by comparably many turns before the termination of the call. This is a fairly slowly produced second closing sequence. It is fruitful to compare it with a fast alternative, since this will lead to considerations about the role of the tempo in the second closing sequence in general. In extract 11, we observe a fairly minimal second closing sequence.

Extract 11 (Silas19)

- 25 Kathie: >↑okee.<
>↑okay.<
- 26 Silas: >↑okee.=bis dann, ts[chü=üs.<
>↑okay.=until then, b[y=ye.<
[
- 27 Kathie: [>tschüss, ?<
[>bye, ?<

In Line 25, we have an *okee*-turn by Kathie, followed by a three-unit-turn by Silas: "okee – bis dann – tschüss" which, in line 27, is partially overlapped by Kathie's terminal greeting. What is different here concerns the sequential organization and the tempo. A central observation concerning this example is that Silas' turn in line 26, like Kathie's "okee", is produced with a fast tempo. But whereas Kathie only produces "okee" and then waits for a response by Silas, he produces the conventionalized series of expressions. Auer (1990) has stated that in German telephone closings, it is important to fit one's tempo to that of the co-participant, and that in closings, the tempo tends to fasten. Here we have a case in concordance to this line of thought. Kathie obviously reacts to the tempo taken up by Silas' three-unit turn, so that she anticipates both that Silas is about to say "tschüs", and when he is going to do so. This is why she is able to fit her terminal greeting so closely in overlap with his that it can be considered as almost simultaneous. So, we assume that Silas' multi-unit-turn in line 26 sets a frame for the timing of Kathie's possible next turns. In order to fit in, she needs to produce her next turn rather quickly as well. The ability to anticipate the next component of Silas' turn enables a choral production of the terminal greetings and a smooth transition out of the space of transition-relevance.

We have observed the closing sequence to be comprised of two sequences, the latter of which is described above. This second sequence seems to be initiated by an offer in the form of a prosodically marked turn (for example *okee* or *ja?*). This prosodically marked turn projects a sequence which is conventionalized and thus bears an expectable form to some extent (for example *okee – bis dann – tschüss*). Because of the strong projection of the nearing terminal greetings, the machinery of turn-taking can start to fade and the participants might collaboratively, even in a perfect choral production (see extract 5), produce the sequence to an end. As-

sumably, even if there is simultaneity, the participants are still able to monitor that their partner is on the same track. Here it is necessary to stress that the ability of the speakers to anticipate what the other is about to say might also depend on their social proximity and possibly also a high frequency of contacts. Resuming, we can state that it is the conventionalized order which allows the speakers to anticipate what the other person is about to say, over a number of turn-constructural units.

We can infer that it is not necessarily the use of single expressions as regular adjacency pairs that enables the stopping of the turn-taking machinery (as in Schegloff/Sacks 1973:295): Here, it seems to be the conventionalized sequence structure that is exploited to coordinate the joint achievement of the termination of the phone-call. Auer (1990:388) comes to similar conclusions basing his results on the rhythmic integration of the speakers in the phone call closing. What we can say about the devices that allow the stopping of the turn-taking machinery in the examined German telephone closings is that, on the one hand, the constructions chosen by the participants set a sequential projection of what is to come next, and, on the other hand, the tempo projects the timing of each next expression. In what way a conventionalized sequential order of the described small tokens and the rhythmic integration studied by Auer (1990) interdepend is a promising question, which has to be investigated in further studies with more data.

6. Summary

Adding to the findings of previous research, we have discovered – for our German private telephone calls – the existence of a second closing sequence. In this article, we have described the two sequences within the closing and shown that they are functionally different. In the first sequence, participants negotiate when they are ready to end the conversation. In the second sequence, they negotiate when to produce terminal greetings.

Our central findings regarding the first closing sequence are:

- Constructions with *dann* in initial position ("dann sehn wir uns morgen" 'See you tomorrow then') are highly characteristic of the sequential environment of the first closing sequence.
- These *dann*-constructions can be used as a candidate initiation of the first closing sequence or at various positions following this sequential slot. They are used as devices for the stepwise negotiation on the proceeding within the first part of the closing path.

Concerning the second closing sequence, we state:

- One of the participants offers the entrance into this sequence by a prosodically marked turn, such as *okee*. The observed prosodic features include high onset, various modifications of the pitch, and possibly some other modification, like stretching out a syllable or a change in the voice quality.
- The design of the second closing sequence often entails a multi-unit structure, consisting of some typical tokens, for example *okee – bis dann – tschüss*. The structure can be produced in different ways, the extremes being a bilateral

turn-by-turn production and a choral production of all tokens. The production can also be a combination of these ways, resulting in partial simultaneity and in the participants delivering an unequal amount of tokens.

- This sequential structure, along with the temporal orientation, is used to project the proceeding towards the terminal greetings and to jointly reach the point to hang up.

Considering that many researchers have based their analysis on previous research on (American-) English closings, our results show how promising it is to look at the sequential structure of an activity in different languages. Sequential structures in one language should not be imposed upon the analysis of data from other languages.

Having discovered the existence of two sequences in the closing of German private telephone calls, we are still far from understanding them in detail. It remains to be examined how constructions are used in different sequential environments for various purposes. For verb-constructions with the word *dann*, we have examined this in more detail (Harren/Raitaniemi in preparation). Obviously, our data only consists of a small number of northern German telephone-calls of a specific type. Therefore, it still remains to be seen if our results can be applied to a larger corpus also with data from other German regions and how, for example, institutional call closings systematically differ from private calls. This is only the beginning of understanding the interactional work in closings and of realizing how complex and interactionally delicate the interaction in closings is.

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8. Appendix: Conversation-analytic transcript symbols

In this article we mainly use the conversation-analytic transcript symbols developed by Gail Jefferson and reproduced in Schegloff (2007:256-269). The descriptions are reformulated to suit the purpose of the current article.

wo[rds [words word=word	The onset of overlap is indicated by square brackets. Equal signs are used if words or utterances follow each other without perceptible silence or overlap. They are used both with single words and utterances of the same speaker that prosodically appear to "melt" into one and at the position of turn transition, when one speaker continues with another TCU.
(candidate words)	Parentheses indicate uncertainty on the transcriber's part, but the words are a likely possibility.
()	Empty brackets indicate that something is being said, which could not be heard or understood.
(.)	A period in parentheses indicates a "micropause", a silence which is less than 0.2 second
(0.6)	Numbers in parentheses indicate silence, represented in tenths of a second.
↑oh	Up and down arrows mark sharper intonation rises or falls at the onset of a word or within a single word.
.	A period denotes a falling intonation.
;	The semi colon marks a weak pitch fall.
?	A question mark indicates rising intonation.

, ?	A combined comma and question mark indicate milder rising intonation.
,	A comma indicates continuing intonation.
ah::	Colons are used to indicate a prolonged sound.
<u>word</u>	Underlining is used to indicate some form of stress or emphasis either by increased loudness or higher pitch.
WORD	Loudness is noted by capital letters.
°word°	The talk between degree signs is markedly quiet.
>words<	These symbols indicate that the talk between them is markedly rushed compared to the surrounding talk.
<words>	Here the words are markedly slowed.
.h or .hh	The length of a hearable inbreath is symbolized by one or more "h"es after a period.
h or hh	One or more "h"es symbolize hearable outbreath.
<i>*with rounded lips</i>	
*several words	An asterisk marks the starting point of a relevant change in the prosody with the description in the high indent.
wo(h)rd	A word internal (h) stands for laughter during speech.

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