



# Sometimes a frog in your throat is just a frog in your throat: Gutturals as (sometimes) laughter-implicative

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## ABSTRACT

Jefferson (1979, 1984, 1985, 2004, Jefferson et al., 1987) has in a series of papers described the 'interactional machinery of laughter', documenting its sequential co-construction. In this paper, data are discussed where guttural sounds produced by one participant are treated as laughter-relevant by a co-participant, who then laughs in response. Sometimes, however, the guttural features can have quite different causes (e.g., the frog in the throat) and treating them as laughter-relevant misconstrues the other's talk. The paper shows the work participants may do in subsequent talk to put things to rights; i.e., on the one participant's part to show that no laughter was intended, and on the co-participant's part to show understanding thereof.

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## 1. Introduction

For my presentation at the IPRA Conference in Göteborg, July 8–13, 2007, I started out to prepare a talk giving an overview of my work on laughter. But, as sometimes happens, as I was pulling materials together things took off in another direction. What remains of the overview is this: My detailed transcription of laughter (which has provided for a range of possible orderliness) is based on Harvey Sacks' transcription of laughter. Specifically, prior to contact with Sacks' work, my transcripts did not show laughter in its particulars, but simply mentioned its occurrence.

## 2. From mentioning the occurrence of laughter to showing what it looks like

As an undergraduate at UCLA I occasionally did a bit of transcribing in my part-time work as a clerk typist at the UCLA Department of Public Health. For example, the following, done in 1963, from a sensitivity-training session for prison guards. Note that where laughter occurred, I'd mention its occurrence (see arrow).

### (1) Jefferson Pre-Sacks transcript, 1963:

This material comes out of Kassebaum and Ward's (1963) project on *Study of Correctional Effectiveness*, part of which involved investigation of a program of group therapy for inmates at a prison facility, where the guards had been enlisted to act as group leaders and were being given training seminars as they went along.

[Ward-Kassebaum: Second Seminar: Feb. 28, 1963:30]

((One of the participants has hesitantly expressed his feelings towards homosexuals.))

Short: Do the rest of you have these feelings, or are you not willing to talk about them, or what?

(Long pause)

<sup>1</sup> Deceased.

Baines: → Well, I know myself I've never given it any thought, so I (laugh) don't know how you can bring any subject into it unless you've given it some thought. . . special thought. Wonder thought. I've never even wondered about it.

On occasion, I'd offer such characterizations as 'giggles', 'chuckles', etc., e.g.:

## (2) Jefferson Pre-Sacks Transcript, 1963

[Ward-Kassebaum: Second Seminar: Feb. 28, 1963:18]

((re attitudes toward inter-racial sex; here a "colored guy" with a "white girl"))

Arlett: What were your feelings toward the white girl?

Baines: I wouldn't go out with her. I mean, after all, she's been out with Negroes, so I wouldn't. . .

→ (somebody giggles, then a few others, becomes general laughter, to guffaws)

Arlett: I'd suffer by comparison -

Baines: I don't think so. . . just the idea.

That was 1963.

In 1965 I happened to take a sociology course taught by Harvey Sacks. At one point he handed out a transcript he'd done; a segment of a group therapy session for teenagers. In that transcript Sacks didn't simply *mention* the occurrence of laughter, he *showed* it: "heh", "ha", et cetera.

## (3) Sacks GTS Transcript Fall, 1965

((The members of the group are talking about each other to a newcomer))

1 Henry He used to walk out on us, he thought he was above us.

2 Mel Yea. But now I'm now I'm below you.

3 Henry Yeah. I corrected I corrected that quality. I gave him

4 → an inferiority complex. ha.

5 Mel And I got him to shave.

6 Joe → hehh.

7 Henry Yeah. I'm not grubby or nothin

8 Bob → No. hehh

9 Joe → hah. Hey this is the academic counselling center. It's

10 called the family, family circle.

11 Henry It's not really an academic counselling center; it's

12 → sort of a drive in nut house. ha ha.

Now, one of Sacks' themes was a notion of "interactional machinery"; of assembling complex activities out of "standardized parts" (Sacks, 1995, vol. I, lecture 5:159). And he offered an image, that of a "culture as a warehouse" (Sacks, 1995, vol. I, lecture 21:425) where, then, to assemble this or that interactional machine, one would go through the warehouse picking up the various parts one needed.

As it happens, laughter was not something Sacks spoke of as one of those assembled machines. So, e.g., the reference to the 'machinery' occurs in a discussion of such 'tying rules' as 'lister terms' ("first of all", "secondly", etc.). The 'warehouse' reference occurs in a consideration of the systematic ways in which 'discussion' can lead to 'argument'. And he certainly never spoke about how or why he transcribed laughter as he did; it was just something he did. But when I saw his transcripts, there it was: The laughter machine! Especially in that "ha"+ "ha"+ period (line 12 above).<sup>1</sup>

What an image! Moving through the warehouse, picking up a "heh" here, a "ha" there. That transcript did it for me! Thereafter, in my own transcripts, I sought to capture the various 'parts' out of which some actually-occurring spate of laughter had been assembled.

<sup>1</sup> Here is a transcript of that fragment that I did a couple of years later (ca 1967):

Roger: It's not really a-an Academic // Counseling Service. It's  
sort of a drive in nut house.

Al: Then yer father comes in here and we-

Jim: heh heh

Al: → [[hahhah hah!

Ken: [[hehhehh

Al: hh hh hh hh hhhh

Most likely the laughter that Sacks transcribed as "ha ha." is the chunk I've got as "hahhah hah!" (see arrow).

This pursuit sometimes resulted in such reader-unfriendly, downright daunting segments as:

**(4a)** [SBL:2:2:3:45] **ca 1965**

- 1 Claire: Maybe we oughta play across the r(hh)oom fr(hh)om ea(hh)ch  
 2 o(hh)th(hh)er:hh hh hh hh hh hh hh hh hh hhhhhh  
 3 Zoe: Ahh hah hah // heh heh heh  
 4 Claire: Hehh heh hehh heh ·hh hh hh hh // hh  
 5 Zoe: Oh it was fun, wa'n it.  
 6 Claire: Yea:h

That's bad enough, but look what happened in a later version (11 years on)!

**(4b)** [SBL:2:2:3:R:58] **ca 1976**

- ↓ ↓
- 1 Claire: MAY'we oughta play acro:ss the roogh<sup>m</sup> fh<sup>h</sup>h<sup>h</sup>'m [↑eahhch ↑uhh heh hē=  
 2 Zoe: [h h h h h h h h h h h  
 3 Claire: =↑·\*uh↑\*uh↑·#uh↑·\*uh↑\*uh↑·#uh↑·\*uh↑\*uh↑uh-·h<sup>h</sup>h<sup>h</sup>e :·h<sup>h</sup>h<sup>h</sup>h<sup>h</sup>  
 4 Zoe: uhh ↑h<sup>u</sup>h ↑hu[h\*<sup>m</sup>gh↑h<sup>u</sup>h↑h<sup>u</sup>h-]↑uh↑uh [·k·k  
 5 Claire: [ehhh hēh h<sup>u</sup>h hē:h ] eh [↑·\*uh↑·\*uh=  
 6 Claire: =[↑·\*uh↑·\*uh [↑·\*uh]  
 7 Zoe: [·h<sup>h</sup>h<sup>h</sup>h<sup>h</sup>h<sup>h</sup>h [ Ohgh]: it wz fu:n [w<sup>u</sup>n]it.)  
 8 Claire: ↑↑ [-hh]·hh] ih ↓Ye:a:h ((smiling))

The later transcript is horribly detailed. For whatever a reader might make of it, I might as well have simply mentioned that they were laughing together and left it at that. It brings to mind a remark, I think by Frances A. Yates in *The Art of Memory* (1966), that at some point the elaborate and intricate diagrams and devices used for 'memory wheels' degenerate into elaboration and intricateness for its own sake.

But at least in this case the intricacy of this particular fragment – after 30 years' hibernation – paid off! As I was preparing the handout for my originally planned talk, retyping this fragment from an old manual-typewriter version onto the computer, I noticed one nice detail, a *laugh-premonitory guttural* (see the arrows above line 1):

**(4b)** [SBL:2:2:3:R:58] **ca 1976**

- ↓ ↓
- 1 Claire: MAY'we oughta play acro:ss the roogh<sup>m</sup> fh<sup>h</sup>h<sup>h</sup>'m [↑eahhch ↑uhh heh hē

As it happened, this was very useful because several weeks earlier something had come up in one of the Watergate tapes I was transcribing. Most roughly, it seemed to me that speaker A produced talk with some gutturals included, and speaker B, hearing the possibility of laughter in those gutturals, laughed in response. But the crucial difference was that in the Watergate instance, speaker A produced no actual laughter. It was unsupported speculation that Speaker B was responding to a possible laughter-relevance to be found in speaker A's gutturals. Now, with Fragment (4b), I had a bit of empirical evidence of a relationship between gutturals and laughter. It wasn't until some subsequent going-through of this fragment that I noticed what happens at the end of the laughing-together (see the arrows beneath line 7):

- 6 Claire: =[↑·\*uh ↑·\*uh [↑·\*uh]  
 7 Zoe: [·h<sup>h</sup>h<sup>h</sup>h<sup>h</sup>h<sup>h</sup>h [ Ohgh]: it wz fu:n [w<sup>u</sup>n]it.)  
 8 Claire: ↑↑ [-hh]·hh] ih ↓Ye:a:h ((smiling))

I wrote a note to myself: "Oh look!: Parenthesizing! Mirroring Claire's laughter-premonitory guttural, Zoe does a laughter-exiting guttural!" And it was at this point that I decided to abandon the overview of my work on laughter, and instead to talk about what had just emerged.

### 3. Sometimes a frog in your throat is just a frog in your throat

Actually, sounds which are not themselves laughter but are possibly laughter-relevant is something I've long been interested in. So, for example, in ca 1972, in an endnote to a consideration of 'laugh tokens', I suggested that someone might

hear ‘laughter’ when what has been done is ‘coughing’, and might then ‘join in’ that laughter by himself laughing (Jefferson, 1972: 448–449)

At that time I had no recorded material to back up this suggestion. And it wasn’t until some 20 years later, in 1993, that at least a bit of empirical evidence showed up as I was transcribing some material for Anita Pomerantz, who was working with medical data.

**(5) [HospSite: 5-14-93 (1:32) [1993]**

((Tom, the intern, is describing to Jill, the senior physician, a problem the patient he’s just interviewed had reported; roughly, a kind of energy slump))

- 1 Tom: It’s not summing that happened ·hh during or immediately following  
 2 training but like two or three hours afterwards. when he’d kind of be ·hh (·)  
 3 Tom: back at (·)whatever he was doing baseline ·hhh[h Uh-  
 4 Jill: \_\_\_\_\_ [Is there a relationship to mea;ls?  
 5 Tom: | ·tch·hh He sa:ys th<sub>ghb</sub> at u<sub>gh</sub>h:m ·t ·huhhhh hē-ukhh hu:m. ·pth·t·k He always  
 6 Tom: | eats:: bef<sub>o</sub>:h<sub>h</sub>re. tra<sub>i</sub>ning. ·hhhhhh[h<sub>h</sub>h  
 7 Jill: | → [°h<sub>h</sub>eeh[Yh<sub>h</sub>eh.°  
 8 Tom: | [uk·ekh<sub>h</sub>e<sub>gh</sub>h HUH::=  
 9 Jill: | → =[°uh!°  
 10 Tom: | [There’s a frog in my throat? ·hhhhh  
 11 Jill: | \_\_\_\_\_ °Oh(h)[::°  
 12 Tom: [Healways eats before tra<sub>i</sub>n ↓ing.  
 13 (·)  
 14 Tom: So that- (·) it didn’t happen then.  
 15 (0.6)  
 16 Tom: → ·hhh Bu<sub>u</sub>(gh)t-mghh::m.  
 17 → (0.4)  
 18 Tom: ·pl<sub>t</sub>ch if he hasn’t eaten-  
 19 (0.2)  
 20: Jill: Mm[hm  
 21 Tom: [in a little while.  
 22 (·)  
 23 Jill: Mm[hm  
 24 Tom: [Then this can happen.[So:  
 25 Jill: [Unh hunh,

As I was transcribing it back in 1993, it seemed to me possible that Jill was hearing Ted’s breathy gutturalness as some sort of laughter/invitation to laugh, and responding, twice, with a slight laugh (lines 7 and 9). More recently I noticed that subsequent to Tom’s announcement, ‘not laughing, frog in throat’ (line 10), when he next produces a guttural (line 16), Jill does not follow it with a laugh-particle. And having noticed that, I went on to wonder if (at line 16), Tom might be working to keep this guttural from being heard as possibly-now-laughing by immediately clearing his throat rather than, as he did before, trying to talk through the obstruction.

At the very least—20 years after that endnote remark about laughing in response to a cough, I now had an actual recorded case of someone laughing to another’s possibly laughter-relevant but non-laughter noises.

Then, a couple of months ago, along came that business I mentioned earlier in the Watergate materials I’ve been transcribing, where it had seemed to me that speaker A produced talk with some gutturals included, and speaker B, hearing the possibility of laughter in those gutturals, laughed in response, where, for that material the problem was that, unlike Fragment (4b), speaker A did *not* follow his gutturals with laughter. But now, with Fragment (4b), we’ve got the connection between gutturals and laughter, and thus at least a bit of support for the speculations I’ll now offer



Here are some very rough notes on two ‘rounds’ of interaction, with the gutturals appearing in round two:

Round One (lines 1–14): Nixon’s laughter (line 8), can be responding to and showing appreciation of Petersen’s assessment of Ron Ostrow as “a rep<sup>h</sup>orter<sup>v</sup> character if there are any, .hh”, (line 7), as a wry invocation of a between-us skepticism about the good character of reporters.<sup>3,4</sup> Most roughly, then, a wry joke is followed by laughter.

Petersen’s subsequent, laughter-free “U<sup>h</sup>:m” (line 9) may be proposing to leave it at that – to close off something that might potentially develop into, e.g., further denigration of reporters – by a return to the business at hand.

Incipient sounds can also be heard in cases where a speaker, having produced just that much of a word, aborts and revises the utterance in progress, e.g., in the following fragment, Shelly, starting to say “. . . that’s not the point”, aborts and revises just after having produced an incipient ‘p’ for the word ‘point’:

[MeijiGakuin:DebShel:8:32–48]

Debby: .hh But don’t alienate me just because I’m friends with ↓Jā:y.  
I [mean it]JUST really] s e e : m s like it.]  
Shelly: [ I’m not trying to I ] mean or:iginally] I know it ↑seemed like  
→ that but that’s not th(p)- that’s no:t it. I meā:n, ihyou know I ed-  
u<sup>h</sup>h! aa-  
(0.5)

Shelly: [( )  
Debby: [I (OH NO) you↑DON’T HAVE TO explain (yih) Shelly

And, e.g., in what may be a much more subtle instance, it’s possible that Ehrlichman, having started to say someone’s name, aborts and revises just after having produced an incipient ‘m’ for that name, and inserts a title, ‘Mister’. See below, “. . . we can’t call it off no:w(m) Mister Mitchell hez: . . .”

[Nixon-Ehrlichman:Tel:4-13-73:6pm:7:13-19]

((Ehrlichman is relaying to President Nixon a report of a conversation between Watergate burglar Howard Hunt and fellow burglar, Gordon Liddy.))

Ehrl: =hHunt says ↑this is a screwball: opera|tion this Watergate thing.=I doh-  
I don’t think I woh-wanna go }forward ↓with it.↓=Liddy .hh says well  
→ How’rd we haf to we can’t call it off no:w(m) Mister Mitchell hez: u-hass  
hass specifically instructid that we do en we must go ahead.

In all the Watergate materials I’ve so far transcribed, Ehrlichman usually refers to John Mitchell by his last name; sometimes by his first name or full name, but not as ‘Mister Mitchell’. I have transcribed no talk by Liddy but in his autobiography, *Will* (Sphere Books Ltd., London, 1981), he refers to John Mitchell by both his full and his last name, and as far as I can see, not as ‘Mister Mitchell’.

What may be happening in the above fragment is that Ehrlichman almost uses a last-name-only reference, ‘Mitchell’, then aborts and revises to ‘Mister Mitchell’. In the particular context – someone speaking of a third party’s position on a matter – use of last-name-only reference might be associated with a certain lack of respect for the position-holder and thereby of the position itself. Ehrlichman’s report clearly has Liddy pressing for acceptance of the third party’s position, with “Howard, we have to, we can’t call it off now. . .” and “. . . we must go ahead.”. The use of a title (well-fitted to the formulation “specifically instructed”) rather than last-name-only, would be an additional resource in Liddy’s reported pursuit. What I’m posing as a possible abort and revision, in “. . . we can’t call it off no:w(m) Mister Mitchell. . .” would then be a matter of Ehrlichman’s – almost – seamlessly inserting that term of respect into an utterance in which it was not initially to be used.

Returning to Petersen’s utterance, “en a(r) (0.7) reasonably good acquaint’nce.”: As I was proof-reading my way through the fragment, it occurred to me that the incipient ‘r’ in “a(r)” might be an aborted start on what he *subsequently* says, “a rep<sup>h</sup>orter<sup>v</sup> character”. That is, “en a(r)”, might have been a start on the assessment ‘and a reporter of character’ as part two of a two-part list (‘A decent man and a reporter of character’). Which is then aborted, and an r-begun clause providing grounds for both the prior assessment (‘a decent man’) and the, now, *forthcoming* assessment (‘a reporter of character’), is sought and found in ‘reasonably good acquaintance’. So: what may have started out as ‘A decent man and a reporter of character’ would then have been restructured to ‘A decent man and a reasonably good acquaintance; I think a reporter of character.’

<sup>3</sup> Note that Nixon’s appreciation of the remark, his laughter (line 8), is slightly delayed—the delay parsable via Petersen’s inbreath (“. . . if there are any,”+ “hh”). Conceivably, although Petersen has produced a possibly complete sentence, and the bit of breathiness in “rep<sup>h</sup>orter” could constitute a bit of within-speech laughter and thus be inviting a bit of laughter in response, Petersen has yet to deliver the information he’s announced as forthcoming, and the bit of breathiness could simply be an incidental speech-production occurrence, a slightly over-plosive ‘p’ See, e.g., the immediately subsequent line 9: “. . . they hed rep<sup>h</sup>orts outta the White Haou:se. . .”. But also note at line 32, there is no over-plosiveness in “percolate”. (My guess is that there are different mechanisms involved in producing the ‘p’ in ‘reporter’ and the ‘p’ in ‘percolate’.)

In any event, there may be some ambiguity about what’s to come next: further information by Petersen, or an appreciative laugh by Nixon. Where, then, the absence of continuing speech by Petersen may specifically constitute a ‘response-opportunity place’; a place for Nixon to respond to Petersen’s skepticism. Nixon’s laughter might then best be characterized as occurring, not directly in response to the remark, but after possibly being ‘cued’ by the occurrence of a ‘response-opportunity place’.

<sup>4</sup> The phrase “. . . if there are any” significantly modifies the utterance Petersen had, up to that point, produced. Upon its occurrence, the utterance is now on track with President Nixon’s well-known loathing of reporters. I’m wondering if Petersen might not have specifically *appended* it, ‘just in time’. I’ve been collecting instances of ‘appended modifications’. Some are easy to spot, in that an utterance comes to full-stop intonation and then the modification occurs, e.g., in the following fragment there is a possible touchiness in Emma’s telling her sister Lottie, to whom she’s talking on the telephone, about having invited someone else for a visit:

[NB:IV:13:R:14]

Emma: Ah wanna see the ga:me Gladys’s ast iss over et one thirty tih see  
→ the game I had her over la:st night.=for a minute and .hh[hhh  
Lottie: [How is she  
do|n’.  
Emma: [Ohgh; fi::ne she heard f m Bill: he arri:ve’ sa:fely:’nd (·) a: [nd uh  
Lottie: [Uh huh,  
(·)  
Emma: He’s doin’ fi:ne, . . .

Round Two (lines 15–25): Nixon's "R<sup>h</sup>i(h)ght.h" (line 18), may be picking up on a possible between-us scorn for the reporter Ron Ostrow, which Petersen is quoting himself as having expressed in the utterance, "I said there's not anything I can tell you ab<sub>gh</sub>out i<sub>ght</sub>." (lines 15 and 16).

That utterance *can* be understood to be saying, e.g., 'I have nothing that can be told to the likes of you'. We can note that the *context* set by the prior between-us skepticism of "... if there are any" may weight towards a hearing, now, of between-us scorn in "I said there's not anything I can tell you about it." And the utterance ends with a gutturalness that might be hearable as laughter-relevant.

When I first made that observation, I had nothing to back it up. The Pomerantz material that became Fragment (5) did have a bit of gutturalness in it, but it had many other possibly laugh-relevant noises. And guttural noises may be found to be doing a range of other work (see, e.g., *nviii* above, [NB:IV:13:R:14], Emma's "O<sub>hgh</sub>; fi::ne. . .etc." in response to Lottie's "How is she doin'.") It was the SBL material, now Fragment (4b), that clearly showed (a) the possible laugh-relevance of, (b) specifically, guttural speech.

Now, similar to his response to Nixon's laughter in Round One (lines 7–9), Petersen follows Nixon's "R<sup>h</sup>i(h)ght.h" with a laughter-free "Uh::" (line 19), and continues speaking. But in contrast to whatever was going on in Round One (lines 7–9), here, something like a 'misapprehension-clarification' series seems to be underway.

Roughly, Petersen now produces a 'revised recycle' of the possibly between-us scornful "I said there's not anything I can tell you ab<sub>gh</sub>out i<sub>ght</sub>." (lines 15 and 16). The revised recycle is clearly *not* a matter of material that Petersen will not transmit to 'the likes of you', but of Petersen's *own* circumstances: "Uh:: I just can't ↑say anything ↓ab<sub>gh</sub>out i<sub>ght</sub>". one way or another—I don't want to confirm and I don't want to deny it." (lines 19–22).

So far I've done as simplified an exposition as possible. But there is some especially nice detail here that I'd like to work through (lines 15–21):

In the course of that statement of his own circumstances, a couple of gutturals have occurred: "I just can't ↑say anything ↓ab<sub>gh</sub>out i<sub>ght</sub>". (line 19). We can notice that those gutturals occur in the very same words that gutturals appeared in the possibly scornful "there's not anything I can tell you ab<sub>gh</sub>out i<sub>ght</sub>." (lines 15 and 16).

Nixon, having responded to the gutturalized, possibly scornful 'nothing to say to the likes of you' proposal with a laugh-tokened acknowledgement, "R<sup>h</sup>i(h)ght." (line 18), now starts up just after the gutturals in Petersen's revised 'own circumstances' recycle. And, as Petersen has produced a revised recycle of his statement, Nixon now produces a revised recycle of his acknowledgement of that statement.

Specifically, the acknowledgement which follows Petersen's revised, but once-again-gutturalized recycle, is now free of laughter: "That's right." (lines 20 and 21):

And, e.g., in the following fragment of a telephone call, E.J. and Croft are having a bit of a dispute about electrical wiring: [TCII(a)14:3-6:50]

EJ: Well h<sub>u</sub>-where where do you get your ground and your neutra:l.  
(2.0)  
Croff: We:ll,  
EJ: Y[ou-  
Croff: → [The ground and the neutral are two separate subjects.=by the way.  
EJ: We:ll I k<sub>no</sub>w the g<sub>Y</sub>eah I that's true.

Or, where full-stop intonation is not produced, contextual features can illuminate the phenomenon, e.g., in the following fragment of a telephone call, the caller, Leslie's, first utterance to Joyce, her friend and co-member of the Women's Institute, is "... are ↑you going to the meet<sub>ing</sub> toni<sub>ght</sub>.". Several minutes into the call, having gotten onto an altogether different matter, Leslie returns to the initial business: [Holt:C85:4:MSO:4-5]

Leslie: ehh huh huh  
(0.8)  
Joyce: → Oh:: g-Oh 'n I think Carol is going, t'the [mee[tiŋ t'n]i g h t , ]  
Leslie: [·hh [ Y<sub>E</sub>: S ] that's r]i:ght

In addition to the context, there is a possible clue in the clear occurrence of two phrases, each one 'comma'-intoned: "I think Carol is going," and "t'the meeting t'night.". It seems to me that Leslie had initially produced "Oh'n I think Carol is going," as adequate reference to the meeting, and thereafter appends the specification which takes into account that the intervening talk might have made this allusive, 'skip-tied' reference problematic for her recipient.

Now, one of the candidate cases I've collected of 'latched modification' is *virtually* seamless. In this case, Timothy has phoned Michael to voice his concern about Michael's wife, who is having back trouble. It seems to me that in his answer to Timothy's question, Michael appends a clarification, "the house", i.e., that she's not "walking' round" in general. [Heritage:0II:2:4:2]

Timothy: =izh [is she : stilll fl<sub>a</sub>[t on her b]ack on a [on the on:]  
Michael: [Mm. [O<sub>h</sub> y e s] [n : N o : s]he's: vuh-  
→ ve:rtic'l 'n walking rou::nd th[e hou:se,]  
Timothy: [A h yes, ]

Although the 'join' between "... walking' round" and "the house" is seamless, there is a similar sense of 'doubling' as in the prior fragment; here in the intonational contours of "walking 'rou::nd" and "th<sup>e</sup> hou:se.". The utterance in effect finishes and then re-finishes, in contrast to, e.g., "walking' round the hou:se.". I'm wondering if Petersen's "... a rep<sup>h</sup>orter'v character if there are any," might not be added to the collection, as perhaps a *perfectly* seamless instance of 'latched modification'.

- 15–16 Peterson: → I said there's nodn anything I c'n tell you 'b<sub>gh</sub>out i<sub>gh</sub>t.  
 17 (0.4)  
 18 Nixon: → R<sup>h</sup>i(h)ight.h[-huh  
 19 Peterson: → [Uh:: I jis(-)tuh cain't ↑say anything ↓ab<sub>gh</sub>out i<sub>gh</sub>t. o[ne way]=  
 20 Nixon: ↳ [Thet's ]  
 21 Nixon: ↳ =[r j g h t.]  
 22 Peterson: [er anow]ther

It appears that (a) by producing a statement that clearly is not denigrating Ron Ostrow but setting forth Petersen's own circumstances, *and* producing that statement with some of the same words as the possibly degenerative statement, i.e., "...about it...", *and* producing those same words similarly to the way they had been produced in the possibly degenerative statement, i.e., including gutturals in both versions of "...ab<sub>gh</sub>out i<sub>gh</sub>t...", Petersen can be conveying to Nixon that degeneration of the reporter Ron Ostrow was not intended. And (b) by producing similar acknowledgments to both versions, *but* producing the version which follows Petersen's 'clarification' free of laughter, Nixon can be showing his understanding that Petersen's gutturals were not produced to be heard as laugh-relevant.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4. About context

Having touched on the working of context for hearing possibly laugh-relevant noises as laugh-relevant in the Nixon-Petersen material, I became aware of an interesting possibility in fragment (5), the interaction between the intern with a frog in his throat and the laughing senior physician.

Initially when working with Fragment (5), I noticed only the 'possibly laughter-relevant noises followed by laughter' phenomenon. Specifically, it didn't occur to me to try to *motivate* Jill, the senior physician's, laughter beyond that it was responsive to the noises Ted, the intern, was making.

But, with the contextual relevance of 'between-us skepticism/scorn' so blatantly present in fragment (6), when I went back to work with fragment (5), there it was!

Ted reports: "He sa:ys th<sub>ghh</sub>at u<sub>gh</sub>:h:m ·t·*huhhhh* hè-ukhh hu:m. ·pth·t·k He always eats:: befo:*hhre*. training." (lines 5 and 6).

What popped out as a possible issue here is that Jill may be hearing in Ted's report a between-us skepticism about what the patient "says" he "always" does—with, then, the collection of gutturals and breathinesses inviting her to affiliate with his skepticism by herself laughing. Where, then, her soft laugh plus acknowledgement token "°h<sub>h</sub>ehYh<sub>h</sub>eh." (line 7), could be a sort of "Yeah sure, we know about what patients 'say' they 'always' do."

If something like this is going on here, Jill, the senior physician, may have been responding as a sophisticated, knowledgeable expert to such 'cues' as "he says that. ..." plus "he always. ...", while the intern, Ted is simply accepting what the patient has said. (Note that when he recycles that segment of the report the doubt-invoking "he says" is no longer present. Now it's, "He always eats before tra<sub>in</sub>ing." (line 12).<sup>6</sup> Which, for the purposes of the report he is producing, sets aside whether or not the patient actually does eat before training as *an issue*, and sets up for some other causative factor than not-eating before training. And Jill may be holding off responding to this altered formulation until she see where the thing is now going. (See lines 12–20: apparently the problem, as Ted, the intern, sees it is that the patient doesn't always eat soon enough *after* training.)

As with a range of discrete sequences, it begins to look as if studying 'possibly laugh-relevant noise followed by laughter' can lead to somewhat broader sorts of considerations. That is, it may be that there are ways to *context* any such discrete occurrence as 'possibly laugh-relevant noises followed by laughter'.

<sup>5</sup> In *niv* above, re fragment (4b), I pointed to the possible 'mirroring' in Chloe's gutturalized exit from a guttural-initiated laughing-together, i.e., her summary "Ohgh: it wz fu:n wunit.". Conceivably Nixon's gutturalized, 'serious' return to Petersen's gutturally prefaced announcement of a reporter's mention of a rumor of the White House throwing its people to the wolves (lines 9–12), i.e., his summary "So they'll probably write a story<sub>gh</sub>on th<sub>gh</sub>at:t" (line 24), might be doing a similar sort of exit-adjunctive mirroring.

<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Ted may have attempted a more subtle revision in his initial version (lines 5 and 6). Note that the transcript shows two discrete segments. The first (line 5), is incomplete (in standard orthography, noises omitted: 'He says that uhm he-'). It is followed by further noises, the last of which ("hu:m.") is shown as 'period-intoned': "·tch·hh He sa:ys th<sub>ghh</sub>at u<sub>gh</sub>:h:m ·t·*huhhhh* hè-ukhh hu:m.". The second segment (lines 5 and 6), is shown as a 'new start' (in standard orthography, 'He always eats before training.')

Further, the detailed version, "·tch·hh He always eats:: befo:*hhre*. training.", shows the second segment initiated with what strikes me as a similar sort of inbreath to the first's "·tch·hh He ...", now it's "·pth·t·k He..." It may be that the doubt-invoking 'He says that. ...' segment is to be heard as abandoned and replaced by the simply-conveying-what-was-said 'He always...' segment.

Oh, and lookee here. We may have another case of 'appended modification'. 'He always eats: befo:*hhre*.' comes to full stop. It is immediately followed by a specification of what it is that the eating occurs 'before', i.e., "training." "He always eats:: befo:*hhre*. training."; the appended modification re-specifying the key activity, 'training', which had been mentioned just prior to the incursion of the business about the frog in Ted's throat (see line 1, "It's not summing that happened ·hh during or immediately following training"). This resonates with Leslie's "Oh'n I think Carol is going, t'the meeting t'night," where the appended modification re-specifies the key event and 'reason for the call', i.e., 'the meeting tonight', which had been followed by talk about an altogether different matter (see the introduction to, and consideration of [Holt: C85:4:MSO:4-5] *nivii*, above).



As it happens, the contexting in each of the two cases I've so far noticed is of one sort; that in the utterance containing those noises, there is some possible conveying of a 'between-us' attitude, position, etc., toward what is being reported; for which, say, affiliation might then be seen as a relevant next action by the recipient.

This has got to be a fluke! It goes against the intuitive grain to suppose that there are not ranges of contexting issues.<sup>7</sup> But then, that's the point of observation. Sometimes the counter-intuitive turns out to be the facts of the matter. Whether there are other contexting issues, and what they might be, remains to be discovered.

## 5. Pushing the envelope

Perhaps a lot of this is 'going too far'. But, as Sacks said when a student asked, re some remarks Sacks had made about Poetics in ordinary talk, "Couldn't that be carried too far?" Sacks responded: "The whole problem is that it's nowhere in the first instance. The issue is to pull it out and raise the possibility of its operation." [1995: 325]

I like the image that recurs in Tom Wolfe's *The Right Stuff*: 'pushing the envelope'. So, it's possibly 'going too far'. So, go ahead and push the envelope. Maybe the consideration you come up with won't go into your final draft—maybe it won't go anywhere in the first place. But to start off with, if it's nowhere in the first place, what is there to lose? Get out there and Push The Envelope!

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<sup>7</sup> Another salient fluke-like feature is that in each case the relationship between the two participants can be characterized as superordinate-subordinate, with the superordinate participant treating a subordinate's (incidentally) gutturalized utterance as a (joking) allusion to 'between-us' scorn of some 'them', and appreciating it with laughter. My guess is that in each case the superordinate is (mis)apprehending the subordinate's talk as an instance of a base-phenomenon, the most generalized characterization of which would be 'sycophancy', with these two instances belonging to a subset, call it (for want at this point of a better phrase), Budding Up (with emphasis on the 'Up'). Most roughly, a subordinate, 'knowing' a superordinate's (whether categorial, in this case A Doctor's or personal, in this case Richard Nixon's) attitude toward, opinion of, etc., some 'them' (Patients and Reporters respectively), makes a little joke which involves proposing his superordinate's position as his own—which the superordinate rewards with a little laugh. This 'budding up' may be something that a superordinate becomes accustomed to receiving, and to rewarding. In these two cases we may be seeing a superordinate misapprehending a 'straight' bit of talk, incidentally gutturalized, as an instance of 'budding up' produced as a between-us little joke, and mistakenly responding to it as such, rewarding it with a little laugh.