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The “I have (someone)” method: Involving a hospital coworker in the matter at hand

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on *J'ai (quelqu'un)* statements, “I have (someone),” in French, through which speakers convey that they are attending to a third party requiring their attention. The speaker produces the statement while transitioning from the interaction’s opening to the business at hand. The statement initiates the first turn-at-talk of a recruiting sequence oriented to enlisting the recipient in new action. In the same turn-at-talk, the speaker produces the initial recruiting move, for instance, a request. We examine the focal statement in relation to the recruiting move as a preliminary statement in an independent clause, the frame of a recruiting declarative utterance, and the beginning of an extended recruiting telling. The article furthers the study of initial recruiting moves and preliminaries to them—namely, providing background information on contributing circumstances. The data are telephone calls and corridor interactions between coworkers, recorded in French, at two acute-care hospitals in Switzerland.

For this study, we examined recruiting practices (González-Martínez & Drew, 2021; Kendrick & Drew, 2016) deployed during nurses’ unscheduled telephone calls and corridor interactions with coworkers, relying on recordings collected in two hospitals in the French-speaking part of Switzerland.¹ The studied interactions are indeed often oriented toward enlisting another member of the hospital personnel (González-Martínez et al., 2016, 2018) in a course of action. Moreover, recruitment is usually the first activity speakers engage in as they transition from the interaction’s opening to the business at hand. In fact, the prospective recruiter often produces the initial recruiting move (Floyd et al., 2020; Kendrick, 2020) as soon as the recruiter shifts to the reason for engaging in talk with the prospective recruitee.

In Excerpt 1, Amaryse (May), a Surgery nurse, calls the main telephone number of Transportation Services and Leonard (Leo), a porter, takes the call (3).²

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¹This study is part of the research project *Requesting in hospital nurses’ unscheduled interprofessional interactions* (SNSF grant no: 100017_185152), which examines four activities – locating prospective coparticipants, attracting their attention, securing their availability, and sharing background information—preliminary to initial recruiting moves such as requests. The present article is the last in a series of four, each one concentrating on a specific activity. The project exploits data collected for two previous projects of the first author and principal investigator: *New on the job. Relevance-making and assessment practices of interactional competences in young nurses’ hospital telephone calls* (SNSF Grant No: CRSII1_136291) and *Mobile and contingent work interactions in the hospital care unit* (SNSF Grant No: PDFMP1_134875).

²In the transcripts, personal data, such as names, of individuals recorded or referred to in the recordings, is replaced by fictitious information. Beneath the original French talk, we provide an English translation that reflects its structure yet remains as natural as possible. Thereafter, in the Analysis section, the numbers in parentheses refer to the lines of the excerpts; see the “Data, methods, and subject of study” section for additional information.

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Excerpt 1. C100 MAY S129 0900

1 ((1.0 telephone tone))
2 (2.5)
3 LEO: (>oui<) leonard?
 yes Leonard
4 MAY: ·h oui: ↑salut c'est amaryse en Unité quatre
 yes hi it is Amaryse in Unit four
5 (0.2)
6 MAY: → ·h[hh]h est-ce que tu pourrais venir: ↓euh chercher=
 is it that you could come um pick up
7 LEO: [>oui<]
 yes
8 MAY: =la: dame au trente-trois douze pour la descendre
 the lady in the thirty-three twelve to bring her down
9 en radiolo↑gie s'il te ↑plaît?=
 in Radiology please
10 LEO: =ɛj'a↑rriveɛ=
 I am coming

In line 4, May greets Leo and self-identifies by providing her first name and the unit in which she works. Following a brief silence, May breathes in and produces the initial recruiting move (6–9), a request to pick up a patient, as she introduces the reason for the call.

In Excerpt 2, Estelle (Est), a nurse, walks from the Urgent Care Room (henceforth UCR) toward the Day Hospital Room (henceforth DHR) and summons (1) Ana (Ana), a nurse who is there with a nursing aide.

Excerpt 2. 105 20A 031213

1 EST: =Ea↑na:?
Ana
est Ewalks from UCR towards DHR--->
2 (0.2)
3 ANA: ↑oui?=
yes
4 EST: =>vous pouvez< r'tourner à l'u sE rechercher monsieur.E=
you can return to the US(Ultrasound) to pick up the
gentleman
est --->Eadopts a static positionE
5 ANA: =Eah:
ah
est Eturns torso and lower body towards the right/UCR--->
6 EST: °moi j'ai pas l'↑temps hein°=
me I do not have the time huh
7 ANA: =d'accord.*E [(>tu sais quoi<) on va y a↑ller
alright you know what one(we) are going to go there
est --->Ewalks towards UCR--->>

In response to the summons, Ana delivers a go-ahead token (3). Immediately after this, Estelle produces the initial recruiting move (4), which acts as the reason for calling out to Ana. By stating that Ana and the aide (“you”) can pick up a patient at the Ultrasound Department, Estelle enlists them to do it.

This article presents a study prompted by Excerpt 3 below. Caspar (Cas), the head nurse, summons (1) Clea (Cle), the clinic's secretary, while walking toward her, holding a cell phone to his ear with his left hand.

Excerpt 3. 1102_25A_011427

```

1  CAS:      =CLE↑A
           Clea
2           €(0.9)
   cle      €turns around towards Cas--->
3  CAS: → °j'ai la microbio°=tu€ pou↑rrais me sortir un dossier?
           I have the Microbio(logy) you could get me a record out
   cas      °mimes holding a phone with Rhand°
   cle      --->€adopts a static position--->>

```

Clea responds bodily to the summons by turning around toward Caspar (2). Having secured Clea's attention, Caspar produces an "I have the Microbio(logy)" statement (3 in bold) while miming holding a phone with his right hand. The statement conveys that Caspar is attending to a third party, someone from the Microbiology Department. Immediately after this, Caspar asks Clea to take a medical record out of the secretary's cabinet (3); the request functions as the initial recruiting move and the reason for calling out to her.

This type of *J'ai (quelqu'un)* statement, "I have (Someone)" in French, in which the (Someone) element in parentheses designates a third party, produced in this specific position, as the speaker transitions from the opening to the initial recruiting move, struck us as familiar. Searching our corpora of nurses' unscheduled interactions, we indeed came out with a collection of cases. We examined them, relying on conversation (Sacks et al., 1974) and multimodal (Mondada, 2014) analysis and attempting to answer the following questions: Is the production of these "I have (Someone)" statements an interactional practice? What is it doing with respect to the recruiting move? Why is this statement particularly appropriate for doing whatever it does in the studied interactions? (Schegloff, 1996). This article presents the study we conducted to investigate the focus statement: the analytical background, the methodological approach, the collection of cases, their analysis, and the main findings, which we intend as a contribution to research on initial recruiting moves and preliminaries to them—namely, the speaker's provision of background information on contributing circumstances.

Background

This article was motivated by our study of recruitment as "the outcome of interactional methods securing involvement—assistance, cooperation or contribution—in the realisation of courses of action" (González-Martínez & Drew, 2021, p. 48). We were particularly interested in initial recruiting moves, deployed as Self, the prospective recruiter, begins soliciting or eliciting the involvement of Other, the prospective recruitee, and in the activities preliminary to them (González-Martínez & Balantani, 2025). Requests are the paradigmatic case of such recruiting moves, characterized by Self asking for a specific action to be performed; whereas reports, a different recruiting move, focus in contrast on the problem or situation to be addressed (Kendrick & Drew, 2016).

In this framework, we examined the focal "I have (Someone)" statements in connection with two bodies of conversation analytic literature. The first comprises studies on activities preliminary to initial recruiting moves produced at the beginning of a new unit of talk. For Schegloff (2007), the summons-answer sequence that initiates an interaction's opening is preparatory to an "incipient, but as-yet-unspecified, project" (p. 49) that may turn out to be a request. Through the identification/recognition and greeting sequences, the coparticipants may already establish and align their identities as requester and requestee (Zimmerman, 1992). As the interlocutors transition from the interaction's opening to its central phase, they may first produce pre-pre and pre-sequences preparatory to a base request sequence that achieves the business at hand (Schegloff, 2007). Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) thus identifies pre-requests taking the form of

an inquiry, an account and statements of Self's likes, dislikes, and wishes. Investigating shop interactions, however, Fox (2015) moves away from considering utterances such as "Do you have X?" as pre-requests, since they are often treated as requests proper: In response to them, the seller initiates the granting. The author thus concludes that requesting is the activity conventionally expected in some environments, as soon as coparticipants enter their common space, and that "the first utterance hearable as request-relevant initiates the request sequence" (p. 60).

The second body of literature relevant to our study deals with extended turns at talk that contain initial recruiting moves, such as requests, and are produced in the reason-for-the-encounter position, which is the conversational locus of the "I have (Someone)" statements under examination. Studying informal telephone calls, Couper-Kuhlen (2001a) shows, for instance, that in the anchor position, the speaker may start by producing one or more clauses that contain preparatory material and account for "a projectably upcoming action construable as the reason for the call" (p. 19)—for instance, a request. These clauses do not require, or receive, immediate uptake, other than continuers, in some cases; the interlocutors treat them as prefatory to the main business of the call. Baker et al. (2001) note that as callers to a software helpline move to the reason for the call, they produce extended turns-at-talk that may start with a description of what they are doing or have done in relation to the software before they describe the problem to be addressed by the support specialist. Callers to child helplines first produce a narrative about the problem they are experiencing, which the counselor supports by remaining silent or producing minimal uptake, before they present the reason for the call—for instance, asking for help (Danby et al., 2005); only then does the counselor start seeking further information about the problem.

These studies underscore the complexities and relevance of distinguishing between preliminary materials and the introduction of the main business of an exchange. This is certainly the case for recruiting moves—for instance, requests—since they can be produced through a wide array of utterances and turns-at-talk types (Fox & Heinemann, 2016; Kendrick, 2020). Turning to our own data, Sterie and González-Martínez (2017) demonstrate that a nurse's extended telling about a problematic situation with a patient can solicit the intervention of a doctor even when there is no mention of what should be done or who should do it. González-Martínez and Drew (2021) show that in telephone calls to coworkers, nurses produce brief factual declarative utterances that do not refer to a need, a want, or a trouble or to anything that could be done, yet still trigger responsive practical action from the recipient. González-Martínez (2023) focused on nudges produced through *il y a x* statements ("there is X"), in French, such as, "there is an emergency," that also serve to elicit practical action responsive to the referred-to circumstances. These cases raise the question of how speakers form their utterances to implement a recruiting action and how recipients ascribe this function to them (Levinson, 2013; Schegloff, 2007). In the absence of any explicit formulation of the utterances' practical implications, participants make and further inferences (Drew, 2018; Pomerantz, 2017) based on formal, sequential, and interactional properties to be studied.

This conversation analytic research formed the context in which we examined "I have (Someone)" statements produced by hospital personnel at the beginning of turns-at-talk that implemented an initial recruiting move, which was observably constructed as the reason for the speaker to engage in talk with a coworker.

Data, methods, and subject of study

This article presents a study based on data drawn from two corpora. The NTH-3 corpus was collected in the framework of a mixed-methods research project on nurses' intrahospital telephone activity in an acute-care hospital in the French-speaking part of Switzerland; see González-Martínez et al. (2018) for full details. The corpus is formed of 374 telephone calls between three newcomer Surgery nurses and other members of the personnel of 14 hospital departments (Surgery, Transportation Services, Recovery Room, Social Services, Nutrition Services, Intensive Care, etc.). The research team collected the calls directly from the hospital switchboard center using a service offered by the hospital's telecommunications provider. The research protocol was approved by the hospital's board of directors. The employees involved in the study were informed by written and oral means of the research project and the fact that recordings would be made, and they were given the opportunity to freely opt

out of the study. The research team fully transcribed the calls of the three newcomer nurses, who had previously given voluntary written informed consent. The research protocol allows transcripts of the corresponding audio recordings to be reproduced for use in scientific publications.

The H-MIC corpus was collected for a video-based field study on hospital staff corridor conversations conducted in an outpatient clinic of a second acute-care hospital in the French-speaking part of Switzerland; see González-Martínez et al. (2017) for full details. As part of the fieldwork, the research team collected 331 hours of video recordings of activity taking place in the clinic's corridors using a recording setup composed of four video cameras suspended from the ceiling with their corresponding internal microphones, eight wireless microphones suspended from mural light fixtures, and a reception/mixing/editing station. The hospital's board of directors approved the research protocol and the clinic staff consented to participate in it and have their corridor activities video-recorded. Other individuals entering the clinic premises, such as the patients and their relatives, were also informed, by written and oral means, of the study, the recordings, and the fact that these could be interrupted at any time at their request. In keeping with the research protocol, the research team used only those videos featuring the clinic staff and six other members of the hospital personnel (34 individuals in total) who had also given voluntary oral informed consent in advance. The research protocol allows talk from the recordings to be transcribed and still images to be taken from the footage for use in scientific publications.

So far, we have identified over 500 interactions in the corpora in which a recruiting activity is the first and main order of business, introduced following the opening of a new unit of talk. For this article, we focused on 28 cases in which the upcoming recruiter produces a *J'ai (quelqu'un)*/'I have (Someone)' statement as they transition from the opening to the business at hand. We transcribed these cases following the Jefferson (2004) conventions for talk-in-interaction and, when relevant, Mondada's (2019) conventions for multimodal conduct. Relying on conversation (Sacks et al., 1974) and multimodal (Mondada, 2014) analysis, we examined the interplay between the sequential organization of talk-in-interaction and the production of social action by the participants.

The studied cases have some common features. They all include the focal *J'ai (quelqu'un)*/'I have (Someone)' statement: a factual declarative with a subject + verb + complement structure, formed by the first-person personal pronoun "I," the verb "to have" inflected in the present tense and a noun phrase referring to a third party, the "(Someone)" element. In this statement, the verb "to have" does not convey possession but rather "presence in the speaker's care." The statement voices something that is happening at the time of the interaction between interlocutors A and B: The speaker is attending to a third party. This party is either on the phone, physically located next to A or in contact with A by other means. The party may be an individual or a group, like "the family of Mr. Réno." The exact formulation of the "(Someone)" element varies. Indeed, this element serves as a hypernym (for this reason, we place it between parentheses), more specific than "X" or other ways of referring to a third party. As a matter of fact, the speaker always uses more specific terms than the indefinite pronoun "someone," of which we did not find a single instance. Speakers tend to refer to a general category, such as "a gentleman," "a lady," or "a patient." Another way of referring to the third party is to use a title-plus-surname formulation, for instance, "Mr. Joly," and therefore to name the specific person. Speakers also use relational expressions like "the wife of Mr. Tabo" (Stivers, 2007). In some cases, a speaker will refer to a patient by the medical care they are receiving—for instance, "a Remicade" for someone having this medication administered to them, or by their status in terms of care provision, such as "a late admission." Another practice is to refer to a third party by the institutional body to which they belong, like a hospital department, "the Microbio(logy)," or a health-care facility, as in "the office of Dr. Stöckli."

In terms of position and sequential organization, the "I have (Someone)" statement is produced as the interlocutors transition from the opening of the interaction to the business at hand (Schegloff, 1986). In most of the corridor interactions, the focal statement immediately follows the summons-answer sequence, which aligns with staff members' general pattern of quickly getting down to business when calling upon a coworker in the hospital. In most telephone calls, the focal statement is produced immediately after the verbal identification/recognition of the interlocutors, which aligns with the same pattern. The interaction's initiator, who is the caller/summoner and prospective recruiter, produces a turn-at-talk that starts with the focal statement or includes it in postinitial position. In the same turn-

at-talk, the speaker produces the initial verbal recruiting move. This move is oriented toward securing the realization of a practical action, the provision of verbal information or the granting of permission in relation to the situation with the third party to whom the statement refers. In response, the recipient gets involved in action related to the reported situation.³

In terms of the broader institutional and interactional context, the studied interactions are organized around highly dynamic and intricate considerations associated with division of labor and professional responsibility; see A. Strauss et al. (1963) for a classic account of hospital work organization. Identifying who has the right to recruit whom, when, and for what purpose and who benefits from it, in structural or situated terms, is a challenging task for participants and analysts alike. By and large, the studied hospital personnel interact with the underlying assumption that a member calls upon a coworker to enlist them for matters that are beneficial to the patients and the hospital organization, and that they act on tenable grounds. Nevertheless, the participants are also cautious, preferring not to jump to responsive action but rather to attempt to discern what exactly is required of them and to determine the order of priorities (Yanchus et al., 2018).

Analysis

In our collection of “I have (Someone)” cases, the target statement features in three different linguistic and pragmatic structures: (a) as a full independent clause preliminary to the reason for the summoning and the initial recruiting move, which is produced immediately after it in a second independent clause (Section “A preliminary statement”); (b) as the frame of a declarative utterance that conveys the reason for the summoning and enacts the initial recruiting move (Section “The frame of a recruiting declarative”); (c) as the beginning of an extended telling deployed in a complex turn-at-talk that conveys the reason for the encounter and enacts the initial recruiting move (Section “The beginning of an extended telling”).

A preliminary statement

Couper-Kuhlen (2001b) shows that the anchor position in the opening of a telephone call can be occupied by talk that does not project a specific action but has some precedence over the reason for the call. In some “I have (Someone)” cases, the target statement features similarly as something that the speaker has to say before moving to the reason for reaching out to the recipient. In this section, we will examine two cases starting with Excerpt 3, the one that prompted our study, that we have already discussed. Clea (Cle), the clinic’s secretary, is walking from Reception toward the UCR. After she passes by the entrance of the DHR, she is summoned (1) by Caspar (Cas), the head nurse, who is walking from the DHR toward Clea, holding a cell phone to his ear with his left hand.

Clea responds bodily to the summons by turning around toward Caspar and looking at him (2). Having secured Clea’s attention, Caspar produces an “I have (Someone)” statement (3, in bold) while miming holding a phone with his right hand. Caspar conveys that he is involved in dealings with a third party, a member of a hospital department, who requires his attention.

Excerpt 3. 1102_25A_011427

- 1 CAS: =CLE↑A
Clea
- 2 €(0.9)
cle €turns around towards Cas--->
- 3 CAS: → °j'ai la microbio°=tu€ pou↑rrais me sortir un dossier?
I have the Microbio(logy) you could get me a record out
cas °mimes holding a phone with Rhand°
cle --->€adopts a static position--->>

³In our study, we considered the responding move of the studied sequences in the sense of Kendrick (2020, p. 132): “not only actions that complete the sequence, such as a move to fulfil a request, but also actions that, in one way or another, orient to the recruitment but leave the sequence open.”

This accounts for his mobilizing of Clea's own attention, but it is not clear at this point what is expected from her other than that. The statement takes the form of a full independent clause and constitutes a first turn constructional unit that Caspar bridges to a second one as it approaches a possible completion point. He reduces the last word ("Microbio") and starts a new unit in the same breath, in a level tone, without a medial gap of silence. The rush-through (Schegloff, 1982) invites Clea to refrain from speaking and is instrumental in Caspar extending his turn into a second unit. The new clause is a declarative with an intonational contour characteristic of utterances implementing a question, which is common in French (Coveney, 2011). Through it, Caspar asks Clea to take a medical record out of the secretary's cabinet (3): he spells out what is to be done, the identity of the agent, and the fact that the requested action will benefit him. The request (Kendrick & Drew, 2016) is the initial recruiting move and the reason for Caspar to reach out to Clea, who is responsible for filing the patient's records. Afterward, Caspar gives the details of the record in question to Clea, who, at the end of the interaction, walks away, presumably to do as asked; in the interest of space, we have not reproduced this part of the interaction.

In Excerpt 4, Hazel (Haz), the triage nurse, is walking along the clinic's central corridor and calls out to Ophelia (Oph), a nurse aide, who replies from the DHR. Hazel approaches the DHR's entrance, checks whether Ophelia is available (7–8), which she is, and waits for her to come out. As Ophelia approaches, Hazel produces an "I have (Someone)" statement (11, in bold).

Excerpt 4. 520_22A_035427

- 1 HAZ: OpheLI↑A?
Ophelia
- 2 (1.9)
- 3 OPH: >oui<
yes
- 4 (1.9)
- 5 OPH: suis ↑là:
(I) am there
- 6 (0.7)
- 7 HAZ: tu es de- tu as: (je t-) est-ce ↑que t'es disponible
you are (x) you have I (you) is it that you are available
- 8 pour mo[i?]
for me
- 9 OPH: [oui]
yes
- 10 (1.1) @ (3.5) @ + (0.4) + (2.0)
haz @clicks button at the top of pen@
haz +shakes head+
- 11 HAZ: → <+***j'ai un+ monsieur** >avec<=une \$histoire bizarre
I have a gentleman with an odd story/matter
haz +shakes head+
oph \$walks from DHR towards
Haz--->
- 12 il faudrait me faire un ecg au tri.* h\$
it should COND be done for me an ECG(electrocardiogram)
at the tri(age)
- oph --->\$
- 13 \$(0.4)
oph \$walks towards triage room--->>
- 14 OPH: ↑au tr[i]
at the tri(age)

While waiting for Ophelia to join her in the corridor, Hazel looks at her intently, clicking the top of her pen and shaking her head (10). The utterance “I have a gentleman with an odd story/matter” (11) accounts for the summons, for her checking Ophelia’s availability and for Hazel’s own restlessness. It is produced at a low volume, conveying the confidential nature of the situation and Hazel’s concern about it. The general category “gentleman” refers to an adult male benefitting from some form of social consideration but not yet a patient; this is in fact the case as this person is about to be triaged. The phrase “with an odd story/matter” complements the “I have (Someone)” statement and characterizes the third party, albeit only minimally. The gentleman has a condition that is difficult to identify, probably because he does not present common symptoms. Attention is therefore required from Hazel, the triage nurse, and, by association, from Ophelia, the nursing aide. However, Ophelia cannot do much else at this point on the sole basis of the characterization provided. What is to be done is specified in a new independent clause that Hazel goes on to begin without any noticeable gap of silence or inbreath, and using the same level tone of voice. Hazel produces an impersonal deontic statement functioning as a request (Rossi & Zinken, 2016): *il faudrait me faire un ecg au tri*, literally, “it should be done for me an ECG at the tri(age)” (12), which is the initial recruiting move and the reason for addressing Ophelia. *Il faudrait*, produced with the third-person singular form of the verb *falloir* in the conditional tense, refers to an obligation, something that ought to be done.⁴ This is a medical investigation that nurses perform in the clinic with the assistance of aides and that may be useful for shedding light on the “odd story/matter” affecting the gentleman waiting for triage. The recruiting utterance conveys that doing the ECG involves assisting Hazel (“for me”) but does not explicitly mention who should be the agent; this is left for the aide to infer. The aide displays understanding and acceptance of the solicitation when she starts walking toward the triage room (13).

In the cases just examined, the “I have (Someone)” statement, which may be complemented by a phrase minimally characterizing the third party, is produced as a full independent clause immediately followed by a second one that enacts the initial recruiting move. The statement is preliminary to the recruiting move: it accounts for the summons and projects more to come. It informs about the pressing circumstances contributing to the summons: A third party requires the speaker’s immediate attention. The speaker comes across as attentive to the “priorities assessment” (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973) relevant when summoning a coworker; this is especially important for corridor summoning, which competes with observable existing involvements and may come across as oriented mainly to the contingent availability of the summoned party.⁵ Other than requiring the recipient’s attention, the focal statement is not in itself actionable or embedded in an actionable recruitment-relevant utterance. This derives from formal and interactional properties: The speaker portrays the third party—“the Microbio(logy)” (Excerpt 3), “a gentleman” (Excerpt 4)—as requiring their attention, without conveying that the recipient also has any direct responsibility for dealing with them.⁶ This is confirmed when the speaker recruits the recipient only in an adjuvant capacity (“get me,” Excerpt 3, 3; “for me,” Excerpt 4, 12). Besides, the speaker does not provide the recipient with the opportunity to speak following the target statement and the recipient does hold off talking. For the recipient, the statement’s sequential implication (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973) is not to reply right away and enlist in a new practical involvement, but rather “wait and listen.” They understand that their attention is required for a pressing matter about to be presented.

⁴We could have translated line 12 as “it is necessary” but in French this is conveyed with *il est nécessaire* (“it is necessary”) or *j’ai besoin* (“I need”) statements. We therefore opted to use the auxiliary verb “should” to convey obligation instead of necessity; see Rossi and Zinken (2016) on this distinction.

⁵We identified cases of the focal statement in both corpora, but only six out of 28 cases in the corridor interactions. Moreover, the statement in the first structure appears only in corridor interactions; in the second, in cases from both corpora; and in the third, only in telephone calls. We can only hypothesize that some of these differences may depend on whether the speaker is able to observe the summoned party’s competing involvements and whether they need to draw attention to something that the recipient cannot see or hear by themselves.

⁶Here, we are referencing an insight shared by one of the anonymous reviewers about the relationship between the third party’s identity and the recipient’s responsibility to get involved in action.

Excerpt 6. C161_LEA_S77_2004

1 LEA: =·h oui c'est leandra U quatre=
 yes it is Leandra U(nit) four
 2 → =j'ai: la femme à monsieur tabo qui aimerait vous parler
 I have the wife of Mr. Tabo who would like to speak to you
 3 (0.3)
 4 LEA: j:'t'la ↑pa[sse?]
 I put her through to you
 5 MAE: [>ah-<] ah: oui a↓lors écoute justement, h
 ah ah yes so listen precisely
 6 ·h j'allais téléphoner j'ai la permission de le faire
 I was going to call I have the permission to make him
 7 monter mainte↓nant h
 go up now

As in the previous excerpt, the “I have (Someone)” statement in line 2 refers to a person identified by title-plus-surname, most likely a patient, and is followed by a relative clause that voices a wish. In this case, the wish is explicitly connected to the recipient’s department, to which the speaker refers with the pronoun *vous* (“you” in French). Leandra states that she is attending to the patient’s wife, who would like to talk to the Recovery Room, meaning to a member of its staff. She conveys that Maeva is somehow responsible for dealing with the reported wish, which is recruitment-relevant. The utterance is thus already actionable by Maeva, and Leandra leaves a beat of silence for her to step in (3). In the absence of immediate responsive action, however, Leandra makes plain how she could grant the third party’s wish in an utterance that functions as a new, more explicit, recruiting move (“I put her through to you,” 4). The utterance has a declarative form but features an intonational contour characteristic of questions in French (Coveney, 2011). Leandra is expeditiously seeking Maeva’s agreement to talk to the wife. In response, Maeva gets involved in addressing the motivation behind the wife’s wish: learning how the patient is recovering (5–7).

Here, in contrast to the previous section, we examined a linguistic and pragmatic structure in which the focal statement is not a preliminary to but rather part and parcel of the reason-for-the call utterance and the initial recruiting move. The statement serves as the frame of a broader clause that is actionable in the sense of response-ready for the recipient to get involved in dealing with the reported situation. The clause serves as the entire delivery of the initial recruiting action. It is not providing information about the circumstances surrounding an upcoming call for action but is already directly requesting action. In this structure, the statement plays a role in accounting for the summoning and the recruiting move, while showing that the speaker is attentive to the priorities assessment connected to calling upon a coworker. The recipient is prompted to make inferences about the utterance’s possible implications based on its formal and interactional properties: It refers to a third party, the patient’s relatives, toward which the recipient has some responsibility, and to a third party’s wish connected to the recipient’s own activities: learning how the patient is recovering. Both features index the recipient’s strong accountability in terms of dealing with the reported situation personally. If the recipient does not engage immediately in responsive action, the speaker makes plain what is expected from them in a subsequent, more explicit, recruiting utterance. In both cases, the recipient ascribes a recruiting action to the speaker’s turn-at-talk as they produce an adequate action in response (Levinson, 2013; Schegloff, 2007). The sequential implication of the focal “I have (Someone)” utterance is for the recipient to treat it as soon as possible as recruitment-relevant—namely, to get involved at the earliest point possible in dealing with the reported situation.

The beginning of an extended telling

The focal “I have (Someone)” statement also features in a third and last linguistic and pragmatic structure. It begins an extended telling about a purpose, a wish, or a need connected to the third party that the speaker deploys in a complex turn-at-talk conveying the reason for the encounter and enacting the initial recruiting move. The focal statement is embedded in the turn’s initial clause, which projects more to come and thus requires no immediate uptake. In this section, we will present two excerpts in which the extended telling corresponds specifically to a problem story: The speaker reports on some trouble materializing a wish or a purpose, which needs to be addressed, and conveys that the recipient can assist in doing it; see Drew and Walker (2010), Sterie and González-Martínez (2017), and Zimmerman (1992) on similar tellings. Gradually, the speaker builds a complex reason-for-the-encounter turn (Couper-Kuhlen, 2001a) that is recruitment-relevant and involves the recipient in responding to the reported problematic situation.

In Excerpt 7, Leandra (Lea), the Surgery nurse, calls the number of the triage nurse in the Emergency Department and Tania (Tan) responds. Lea transitions to the reason for the call with the generic preface *je vous appelle parce que* (“I call you because,” 2), which projects an extended telling (Couper-Kuhlen, 2001a) followed by the focal statement (in bold).

Excerpt 7. C302_LEA_S81_1714

- 1 LEA: ·h ↑oui leandra Unité quatre bonjour
 yes Leandra Unit four good morning
- 2 → ·h euh: j'vous ap↑pelle parce que **j'ai: Jun: une patiente**
 um I call you because I have a a patient
- 3 qui part main'nant son dossier a déjà été envoyé
 who leaves now her record has already been sent
- 4 aux ar↑chives et on aimerait le récupérer
 to the archives and one(we) would like to retrieve it
- 5 >(et) j'sais qu'vous< ↑faites souvent ↑ça
 and I know that you often do that
- 6 vous savez comment j'dois m'y prendre?=
 you know how I have to go about it
- 7 TAN: =alors ↑non. (.) un ins↑tant h
 so no one moment

The preface “I call you because” conveys that calling the Emergency Department is accountable (Sterie & González-Martínez, 2017). In this telephone conversation, the speaker calls about a matter that, contrary to the cases of the patients they have in common, does not correspond to the business that the interlocutors typically handle. The situation to be reported nevertheless justifies not only a call but also a telephone conversation with this specific department (Sacks, 1992). The formulation starts building up to the call’s exceptional nature. With the “I have (Someone)” statement (2, in bold) embedded in the initial clause, Leandra places a third party she is attending to at the forefront. She describes her as a female patient in a situation requiring immediate action (she is about to be discharged, 3) but does not give her name, thus indexing no direct responsibility for the recipient. Gradually, Leandra builds up a telling about a problem. There is a discrepancy between a past action of the nursing unit and their present wish: the patient’s record has already been sent to the archives and the Surgery unit would now like to retrieve it (3–4). Leandra involves Tania/her department in helping to find a solution, alluding to

their experience with retrieving records (5).⁷ Finally, Leandra recruits Tania/her department for advice on how she herself can proceed (6). As it turns out, Tania cannot provide the requested information but confirms the relevance of calling her department by transferring the call to a colleague (7), thus moving the recruiting activity forward.

In Excerpt 8, Leandra, the Surgery nurse, talks with a technician, Joel (Joe) of the hospital's Technical Services. As in the previous excerpt, Leandra transitions to the reason for the call with the generic preface “I call you because” (2) followed by the focal statement (in bold).

Excerpt 8. C94_LEA_S154(149)_1419

- 1 LEA: oui bonjour leandra en Unité quatre
yes good morning Leandra in Unit four
 2 (0.4)
- 3 LEA: → euh: j'vous ap[↑]pelle parce qu'**j'ai une pati[↑]ente**
um I call you because I have a patient
 4 son ma[↑]ri essaie désespérément d'la join:dre
her husband tries desperately to reach her
 5 dans sa [↑]chambre >avec le téléphone d'la chambre<
in her room with the telephone of the room
 6 mais ça fonctionne ↓pas
but it does not function
 7 (0.5)
- 8 LEA: est-ce que vous voulez v'nir [↑]voir?
is it that you want to come see
 9 (1.3)
- 10 JOE: >oui< en Unité qua:tre on a- [↑]ah oui c'est
yes in Unit four one(we) has- ah yes it is
 11 ça- (0.2) [(ils ont fait une-)]
that they have done one
- 12 LEA: [(à la) dix-neuf fe]↓nêtre
at the nineteen window
 13 (1.2)
- 14 JOE: ↓ouais >dix-neuf fenêtre< ↓j'vais passer ↓ouais
yeah nineteen window I am going to come by yeah

As in the previous case, in this excerpt, the preface “I call you because” conveys that the call is accountable and projects an extended telling. Surgery nurses are not common interlocutors of Technical Services, but Leandra is about to report a problematic situation justifying contacting them. When she begins presenting the reason for the call, she immediately makes it clear that it concerns a patient to whom she is attending through the “I have (Someone)” statement (3, in bold) embedded in the initial clause. She then reports an insistent but unsuccessful endeavor, the patient's husband's attempts to reach her, using an extreme case formulation (“desperately,” 4; Pomerantz, 1986) and points to what the obstacle might be: something related to the telephone in the patient's room (5–6). Leandra presents a technical problem, and since she is calling the Technical Services, the telling is already actionable, in the sense of recruitment-relevant. Moreover, it is concluded with a falling intonation and followed by a 0.5-second pause (7) through which Leandra prompts the recipient to come in with responsive action. In the absence of immediate uptake, however, Leandra makes the pragmatic orientation of her turn-at-talk plain with a new, more explicit recruiting move in

⁷In French, the pronoun *vous* (“you”) can be used to refer either to a collective entity, like the Emergency Department, to any other group of two or more people, or to a single person to show politeness or respect. This offers the advantage of leaving to the recipient's discretion who exactly is being addressed and should take action to redress the problematic situation being reported.

line 8. The interrogative cues Joel/his department to check the source of the problem and treats them both as responsible for doing so but also as potentially interested in knowing about the problem and finding a solution. First, Joel shows recognition of the problem and its location (10–11), which Leandra specifies next (12). He then agrees to deal with it by doing as suggested (14).

Here, as in the previous section, we examined the target “I have (Someone)” statement as part of a recruitment-relevant turn-at-talk reporting a purpose, a need, or a wish. However, in the structure analyzed in this section, the statement is not the frame of a response-ready recruiting declarative but is embedded in the initial clause of a complex reason-for-the-encounter turn that contains an extended telling and gradually involves the recipient in dealing with the matter at hand. The statement plays a role in accounting for the summons and the upcoming recruiting move, while showing that the speaker is attentive to the priority assessment connected to calling upon a coworker. At the beginning, the recipient is not addressed as the person accountable for the situation to be reported; the patient is not named in order to convey their direct responsibility. The sequential implication of the initial clause containing the “I have (Someone)” statement is that the recipient should listen to the projected telling to understand where it is leading, in terms of its practical relevance for them. The recipient is involved gradually as the speaker deploys the telling and points to a way of materializing the underlying purpose or wish. In Excerpt 7, the telling is immediately followed—with no time allotted for the recipient to come in—by a question that functions as a request for advice. In Excerpt 8, the telling itself is designed by the speaker as actionable since she reports a technical problem to Technical Services. This first attempt to elicit responsive action being unsuccessful, the speaker produces a new, more explicit, recruiting move. In both cases, the recipient ascribes a recruiting action to the speaker’s turn-at-talk as they produce an adequate action in response and enlist in dealing with the matter at hand.

Discussion and conclusion

In response to the research questions, the analysis provides grounds for considering the situated deployment of the focal *j’ai quelqu’un*/“I have (Someone)” statements to be an interactional practice (Enfield, 2013; Heritage & Stivers, 2013; Schegloff, 1996). First, the statement is a verbal construction with distinct formal properties: specific elements running together in an identical order. Second, the statement is produced in a specific sequential environment as the speaker transitions to the reason for summoning the recipient and is about to recruit them for a new course of action. Moreover, the statement has a conventional, taken for granted, yet unsaid and understudied meaning: the presence of a third party in the speaker’s care. The speaker is attending to a third party and has them “on their hands” at the time that they are addressing the recipient. Finally, the statement is readily produced and receipted, by different interlocutors, in several instances of interaction of two different types: telephone calls and corridor interactions.⁸

For conversation analysis, practices are “tools for carrying out actions, specifically by getting others to recognize the actions being done” (adapted from Enfield, 2013, p. 94). In its various containing structures, the focal statement has some similar functions. It emphasizes that the speaker is attending to a third party at the time of the interaction with the recipient and conveys that there is a matter related to the Someone that requires immediate attention. It also informs the recipient of the third party’s identity and, through the very reference terms used, the degree to which the recipient may be responsible for dealing with them. The statement thus plays a role in involving the recipient in the matter at hand. Unscheduled interactions in work-intensive environments compete with the existing undertakings of summoned parties; accounting for new solicitations is crucial. Overall, the focal statement supports the priorities assessment (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973) that the summoning sets in motion: It conveys that the speaker has legitimate grounds for going ahead with the matter at hand and therefore giving it priority over the recipient’s ongoing involvements. Acknowledging the

⁸Additional research would be needed to determine whether the studied practice is also at work in other types of interactions and languages and whether it accommodates variations in the person of the subject, the tense of the verb, and the nature of the object.

ethnomethodological foundations of conversation analysis (Sacks, 1992), we name this pairing of a practice and interactional work relevant to social organization “a method” (Garfinkel, 1967).

The “I have (Someone)” method may be particularly suitable for involving and recruiting the recipient in dealing with a matter at hand in service-oriented, work-intensive settings like hospitals. It corresponds to a ruling principle in the health-care sector, which is “put people first,” especially if they are patients (Horne, 2010; National Health Service England [NHS], 2013). Patients are, after all, the reason for the hospitals’ very existence, the key focus of their activities, and the main driver of their functioning. From the patients, the principle extends onward to their relatives and the professionals providing direct care to them; attending to what they may require is meant to be a priority. Hospital nurses are considered the advocates of patients and their relatives (Mallik, 1997) and help them navigate the system, constantly coordinating other professionals’ activities on their behalf (Strauss et al., 1985/1997). When calling on a colleague on behalf of Someone, the nurse is not asking for a personal favor but acting *for* the third party as part of their professional responsibilities. By putting Someone first, the nurse claims the relevance of going first with their own concern related to that party.

Having provided a tentative answer to the research questions, we will now conclude by suggesting some broader implications that our study may have for research on initial recruiting moves. We have shown that in some rare cases the prospective recruiter engages in preliminary talk that reports pressing circumstances contributing to the summons. With respect to the other cases, the study confirms that talk in anchor position tends to be oriented toward introducing and moving forward with the business at hand; the recruitment in the studied interactions. As in the service encounters examined by Fox (2015), the studied hospital coworkers tend to produce and hear talk in anchor position as recruitment-relevant. In contrast to the immediacy of providing simple goods for awaited clients, hospital coworkers strive nevertheless to properly understand what to contribute when an impromptu solicitation arises while also trying not to overburden themselves (Yanchus et al., 2018). We identified a method through which participants deal with the priorities assessment related to summoning a coworker: immediately referring to a third party with a pressing matter. Our study also confirms that declarative utterances (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014; Fox & Heinemann, 2016) and extended tellings (Drew & Walker, 2010; Sterie & González-Martínez, 2017; Zimmerman, 1992) about wishes and purposes are recruitment-relevant even in the absence of explicit reference to responsive action; they solicit practical involvement in dealing with the matters at hand. All in all, the study exemplifies an approach to examining the inferential work underlying action formation and ascription (Levinson, 2013; Schegloff, 2007). To answer the question of “how that practice can yield that action” (Schegloff, 1996, p. 173), we examined formal, sequential and interactional features that achieve coparticipants’ situated identities, reciprocal obligations, and shared knowledge (Drew, 2018; Heritage, 2013; Pomerantz, 2017).

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Data availability statement

Due to the sensitive nature of the data, participants were assured that the raw data would remain confidential and would not be shared.

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