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‘I PLAYED IT LIKE THIS’: VOICE QUALITY AND COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT IN ITALIAN CONVERSATION

ABSTRACT

Formulation and reception of complaints is planned around the pursuit and offer of affiliative responses, prompting complainants and recipients to employ different strategies to achieve their goals. In this article, I identify *voxing* as an interactional resource that allows participants to manage their stance towards both the targets and the producers of a complaint. Through the analysis of an extended naturally occurring spontaneous interaction in Italian, I demonstrate how the modification of one’s voice quality allows speakers to re-brand their complaints, manage their situational identity, and signal acknowledgment of their interlocutors’ plans. These findings suggest that *voxing*, rather than being a correlate of direct reported speech, is a distinct full-fledged conversational device with both procedural and identity performative functions, which could be found in other languages and interactional contexts as well.

Keywords: reported speech, prosodic features, voice quality, polyphony, complaints.

I. INTRODUCTION¹

In researching the role of paralinguistic cues in interaction, particular attention has been devoted to elements such as gestures, facial expressions, laughter, and gaze. Though it has been demonstrated that listeners orient to suprasegmental elements in interaction (Levin *et al.*, 1982; Couper-Kuhlen, 1999), the role that these features play in structuring action has received less attention. In this paper, I present the concept of *voxing* as the phenomenon by which a speaker indexes the voice of someone else by using marked suprasegmental features that depart from the usual forms they employ in interaction. I argue that *voxing* plays a role in structuring complaints and that such role is indicative of the importance suprasegmental elements have in designing speech actions.

Research on voice modification in conversation has been inextricably linked to direct reported speech. In the process of recontextualizing past conversational exchanges, speakers operate a series of transformations that fulfill the speaker's goals in the present conversational context. Some of these transformations occur at the prosodic and acoustic level, and serve the function of animating and differentiating among quoted characters (Günthner, 1999). While the convergence of acoustic-phonetic forms between speakers may happen involuntarily among participants in a conversation (Pardo, 2013), in reported speech the imitation is voluntary. A variety of features can be employed to imitate an individual target. These features include intonation patterns, articulatory settings, voice quality, speech tempo, pitch register, as well as the pronunciation of specific words (Zetterholm, 2003). It has been shown that interlocutors orient toward the amount of variation in pitch to distinguish cases of plain quotation from those involving imitation of a target (Couper-Kuhlen, 1996). From a production-based perspective, however, evidence from forensic linguistics suggests that imitation relies on a blend of these features (Zetterholm, 2003; Eriksson *et al.*, 2010). In this paper I consider *voxing* to be every instance in which listeners recognize an utterance as being performed in the voice of someone else regardless of the specific element that is being modified.

Complaints are speech actions where one individual (the *complainant*) openly acknowledges issues experienced at a private level (the *complainable*), with the goal of constructing a definition of what the trouble might be (Emerson, Messinger, 1977). Usually, the state of things is attributed to an actor (the *complainee*), considered responsible for the trouble. Complaints are produced in *adjacency pairs*, ordered sequences of exchange where the second utterance is functionally dependent on the first. In complaint sequences, the first part of an adjacency pair, the complaint itself, is followed by a response (Drew, 1998). The preferred response to a complaint is a display of affiliation (*affiliative response*), which in this case takes the form of a display of support or endorsement of the complainant's stance (Stivers, 2008). Sometimes complainables are introduced but not developed into a full-fledged complaint, as it might happen that the interlocutors orient themselves differently than the initiator of the action has foreseen (Schegloff, 2005). Significant differences in the recipients' orientations can be observed depending on whether the complainee is present in the conversation or not (Dersley, Wootton, 2000). In the case in which the complaint is produced in the absence of the complainee, it is labeled a *third-party complaint*. In this article, I analyze full-fledged third-party complaints.

Complaining exposes speakers to a range of potential consequences and makes them vulnerable to their interlocutor's reaction, as other participants may not engage in this action or disaffiliate with the complainant (Monzoni, 2009; Traverso, 2009). Complaining entails taking a negative stance, and as such com-

plainants devote particular attention to the design of this action in order to manage its reception. For example, they design complaints in such a way that makes it difficult for others to disaffiliate (Mandelbaum, 1991), and carefully select the right recipient for each type of complaint (Drew, 1998). When complainants do not expect their interlocutors to affiliate, they may employ idiomatic expressions (Drew & Holt, 1988), negative observations (Schegloff, 1988), and extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986) to preemptively mitigate this possibility. I argue that voxing is yet another strategy complainants use to mitigate cases of disaffiliation. I further argue that recipients also use voxing to express affiliation with the complainant.

Direct reported speech rarely is an accurate rendition of a third party's words. Rather, it is used for a variety of reasons including decreasing the responsibility of a speaker towards the actions performed through the reported words (Goffman, 1974: 512) or providing evidence on the basis of which an interlocutor can evaluate the objectivity of an account (Holt, 2000). In complaining, it is key for the speaker to be able to design a possible complaint without having to reveal their stance, at the risk of being deemed inappropriate. As such, the potential for reported speech to decrease responsibility and perform objectivity is particularly useful for complainants. Because voxing does not necessarily have to be present for interlocutors to interpret an utterance as an occurrence of direct reported speech, it is crucial to understand what type of additional interactional meaning voxing conveys when it occurs in complaints.

2. METHODOLOGY

My data come from a conversation featuring three women aged between 25 and 35 (Laura, Sara, and myself²). We all are originally from different regions of Northern Italy, are native speakers of Italian, and employ regionally-informed versions of the standard³. We are all fluent in English. The conversation featured in this recording took place in the United States during a dinner party. At the time of recording the participants had lived in the US for one month and had met once. The event lasted 3.5 hours, and was recorded with an Edirol Roland R-9 audio recorder at a rate of 16 Hz. After recording, participants were provided with a copy of the files and given the option to erase any part of the conversation they did not want to share. The recording was annotated in ELAN (2021), an annotation tool for video and audio recording, using Discourse Functional Transcription conventions (Du Bois *et al.*, 1993). Within this theoretical framework speech is transcribed into Intonation Units (Chafe, 1993). I transcribed approximately 1 hour of conversation. I identified instances of voxing on a perceptual basis and annotated them with the label <VOX>. For this study, I treated

voicing as a binary variable and focused on its presence in or absence from an *Intonation Unit* (IU). This methodology identified 102 Intonation Units exhibiting voicing. I presented these cases to a group of four non Italian-speaking graduate students trained in Linguistics and asked them to agree or disagree with my evaluation of whether voicing was present. All cases were confirmed⁴.

A note on the gendered nature of the context in which voicing appears in this exchange is necessary. The speakers do not know each other especially well, and for this reason the conversation is rich in attempts at establishing bonds and building friendly relationships. Boxer (1993) discusses a broader gendered stylistic trend of women establishing bonds with each other by eliciting affiliative responses. It has been suggested that the tendency to use self-commiseration and complaints as a tool to build solidarity is part of this broader phenomenon (Tannen, 1994). In this exchange, instances of voicing tend to cluster inside extended complaints revolving around relationships with men. One participant did complain about her romantic relationships with other women, but these complaints did not feature voicing. While the data described here are insufficient to support empirical generalizations on the role of gender on complaint design, studying the segmental, suprasegmental, and paralinguistic features employed to perform the voice of a complainees may yield interesting insights on the nature of gender roles and expectations in Italian society. However, such analysis is beyond the scope of this paper.

3. VOICING AS A RESOURCE FOR COMPLAINING

When voicing appears in the first part of an adjacency pair, it can be employed to produce a complaint in a format that can elicit an affiliative response from the interlocutor. This function can be observed in (1), where Sara is narrating her experience flying from Italy to California. While on a connecting flight departing from Canada, Sara's seatmate, a man in his early 30s, discovers that he is an alumnus of her institution, and initiates a conversation. The original conversation took place in English.

Example 1

1	SARA;	e:h,	<i>ehm,</i>
2		ho avuto questo culo,	<i>I had this luck,</i>
3		veramente lo chiamerei?	<i>dare I say,</i>
4		sfacciato?	<i>blatant?</i>
5		di trovare un vicino di (.),	<i>that I found a,</i>
6		banco,	<i>deskmate,</i>
7		chiacchierino.	<i>a real chatterbox.</i>
8		Il quale mi ha parlato per,	<i>Who talked to me for,</i>

9		o[ttor]e ininterrottamente,	<i>eight hours without pause,</i>
10	GIORGIA;	[@@@]	<i>(LAUGHTER)</i>
11	SARA;	otto ore fije,	<i>eight hours girls,</i>
12		otto ore.	<i>eight hours.</i>
13		Pensavo di dargli una craniata a un certo punto,	<i>I considered headbutting him at a certain point,</i>
14		perché gli ho detto,	<i>because I told him,</i>
15		[no dai-] –	<i>no come on –</i>
16	LAURA;	[di cosa].	<i>about what.</i>
17	SARA;	Perché,	<i>Because.</i>
18		<VOX><L2> oh my god?	
19		You're from ~USB?	
20		I was like a freshman th- teh eh –	
21		a freshman at ~USB I come from Sacramento?	
22		Oh no <L2></VOX>?	
23		no gli ho detto,	<i>no I told him,</i>
24		[no].	<i>no.</i>
25	GIORGIA;	[@@]	<i>(LAUGHTER)</i>
26	SARA;	we met in Mo- Montreal,	
27		quindi c'era proprio la cosa del,	<i>so there was also this thing of,</i>
28		oddio <VOX><L2> oh my god you're in Canada?	<i>oh my god</i>
29		I am- you're coming from like California </L2></VOX>?	
30	GIORGIA;	che palle.	<i>what a drag.</i>

Sara's narrative is set up as an extended complaint composed of multiple adjacency pairs where different aspects of her companion's behavior are presented as standalone complainables. Sara initially complains about her seatmate's extroverted nature (IUs 1-15). She employs the term *chiacchierino* ('a real chatterbox'), a diminutive form that has a slightly negative connotation, to refer to her seatmate. In this first complaint, Sara frames her seatmate's behavior as not ideal. Specifically, he tried to engage in a long conversation that Sara had no interest in. Laura then asks Sara about the topic of this conversation (IU 16). This response potentially questions Sara's conduct and casts doubt over the interpretation of her seatmate's conduct as complainable. This response is not the type of affiliation that Sara is expecting, and thus she initiates a second complaint (IUs 17-29).

In the second complaint, Sara reports the exchange that took place with the seatmate. In doing so, she switches to English and produces what could plausibly be the original turn organization of the interaction: her seatmate (IUs 17-21) discovers that he studied at the same university where she is currently enrolled, and she reacts to the news with dismay (IU 22). She then represents the hypothetical response she wanted to offer but did not (IUs 23-24), and resumes

with direct reported speech (IUs 28-29). Sara voices the IUs of her interlocutor and the IUs where she is portraying her polite response. In other words, Sara uses voicing both to voice her interlocutor and also her performance of politeness.

The second complaint is designed to elicit Laura's affiliation. To achieve this goal, Sara herself goes on to embody the chatterbox type by performing small talk (IUs 18-19). In voicing her seatmate, Sara presents the target for her complaint both as this particular instantiation of the "chatterbox" as well as chatterboxes in general. In this way, she reframes her complaint in general terms, evoking the fact that she was forced to comply with her seatmate's undesirable behavior as a situation that her interlocutors might have experienced. In IU 22 Sara embodies herself performing the category-bound activity previously ascribed to the "chatterbox" (IUs 18-19), namely, making small talk for an extended period of time. This Intonation Unit allows Sara to portray her compliance with the request for interaction that was made to her and with (perhaps gendered) social expectations of courtesy towards strangers encountered in public spaces. Through voicing, Sara highlights once again the complainability of her companion's conduct, while also suggesting the appropriateness of her own conduct in response to Laura's objection (IU 16). In sum, ascribing herself to the "chatterbox" category, and performing her interaction through voicing, Sara signals to us that she had to concede to her seatmate's expectations.

The use of voicing to embody somebody instead of simply reporting the conduct which is the object of complaint serves a specific interactional function. By voicing her seatmate, Sara provides a performance of objectivity aimed at eliciting affiliative responses. The use of English positions chatterboxes as a specific cultural stereotype attributed to English-speaking Americans. English signals to me and Laura that the current interaction does not fall under the same category of the one described. In other words, the chatterbox is a specific cultural stereotype attributed to English-speaking Americans which serves the dual purpose of defining category-bound attributes and assigning membership to participants. At the time of the recording, the participants have spent less time together than Sara and her seatmate, but this interaction is more welcome than the one described even though we are engaging in similar behavior, i.e. small talk. The transitioning from English to Italian allows participants to trace clear boundaries between the two situations. Language is treated here as an attribute of "chatterboxes", and, as such, the present interlocutors are exempt from being considered part of this social category.

IU 26 is uttered in English but it is not part of the man's reported speech; rather, it is commentary that Sara provides to clarify why her embodied seatmate is about to mention Canada (IU 28), – namely, that the two of them met on a flight from Montreal to Los Angeles. Sara is not voicing herself here but is

code-switching to English: she does not attempt to modify her accent and her speech style is essentially the same as later in the recording when we briefly use English to accommodate a non-Italian speaker who joined us for dinner. This Intonation Unit allows listeners to pick up the differences with the rest of her English reported speech where Sara's voice quality is modified to perform features that the interlocutors associate with white Californian English (Slobe, 2018) and American English at large. Sara tunes in and out of her performance solely through the employment of prosodic rising contours associated with (Californian) American English, but does not realize any other phonetic feature prominently typical of the variety, eg. fronted diphthongs. Sara is thus switching her identity from being an Italian speaker conversing in English to being an Italian speaker recognizably performing as an American persona. Following this exchange, I offer an overt affiliative response (IU 30), acknowledging Sara's complaint as appropriate and moving the conversation out of this sequence.

Another particularly evident case of voicing as resource for repackaging complaints takes place in (2), where I am describing the end of a romantic relationship with an Italian man. In setting the narrative, I describe my and my former partner's diverging expectations towards the relationship. The narrative setup takes the form of an extended complaint, which Sara does not immediately recognize.

Example 2

615	GIORGIA;	non ce la facevo a venire in ¬Francia e a lasciarlo,	<i>I could not move to ¬France and leave him,</i>
616	SARA;	oh che [amore],	<i>oh how [loving],</i>
617	GIORGIA;	[e lui invece],	<i>[he on the other hand],</i>
618	SARA;	che bel[₂ lo]?	<i>how wonder[₂ful]?</i>
619	GIORGIA;	[₂ Si Jeh proprio @,	<i>[₂Oh] yes sure @,</i>
620	SARA;	ah [₃ beh?	<i>oh [₃ well</i>
621	GIORGIA;	[₃ E] [₄ lui],	<i>[₃ and] [₄ he],</i>
622	SARA;	[₄ non] importa,	<i>[₄ it doesn't] matter,</i>
623	GIORGIA;	[₅ <VOX> ah no] ma io:,	<i>[₅ <VOX> oh well] but I,</i>
624	SARA;	[₅ ma è se-] –	<i>[₅ in any case it's] –</i>
625	GIORGIA;	no è che sai dovevo scegliere tra te e un'altra,	<i>well you know I had to choose between you and another woman,</i>
626		e cioè è che,	<i>and I mean the point is that,</i>
627		a me piacciono le ragazze magre </VOX> @ @ @.	<i>I like slim girls </VOX> @ @ @.</i>
628	SARA;	No va beh però è un demente [₆ Giorgia],	<i>No ok but he is an idiot [₆Giorgia],</i>
629	GIORGIA;	[₆ @ @ @ @] [₇ fa] –	<i>[₆ @ @ @ @] [₇ and he says] –</i>
630	SARA;	[₇ ciòè abbiamo fa][₈ tto bene a lascia]=	<i>[₇I mean we to][₈ok the right decision in]=</i>
631	GIORGIA;	[₈ (H)]	

632	SARA;	= ₉ rlo dove cazzo stava],	= ₉ leaving him wherever the fuck he was],
633	GIORGIA;	[₉ e:h @ ca][pi:to,	[₉ now you s][ee,
634	SARA;	[è un demente.	[he is an idiot.
635	GIORGIA;	E] tu sei lì e dici,	And] you are there and say,
636		<VOX> no comunque grazie.	<VOX> thanks anyway.
637		@ (H)	@ (H)
638		adesso vado là nell'altra stanza e piango </VOX> @.	now I'll go to the other room to cry </VOX> @.
639	SARA;	No va beh,	Whatever,
640	GIORGIA;	(Hx)	
641	SARA;	no ma è un demente?	no but he is an idiot?
642	GIORGIA;	No un cretino totale,	No a complete dumbass,

As I am wrapping up my narrative, Sara interprets the words in IU 615 as expressing a 'loving' stance, and promptly offers an affiliative response (IU 616). Because of the high degree of overlap, I do not realize the dissonance between what I am saying and how Sara is interpreting it, until IU 619, where I acknowledge that Sara's response is not the preferred one for this action, and thus reject her interpretation of the episode.

As Sara continues disaligning with me (IUs 620, 622, and 624), I modify my voice quality, shift to use the second person singular to refer to myself, and perform four IUs of direct reported speech in the persona of my former partner (IUs 623, 625-627). Voxing here allows me as the speaker to address the misalignment between the design of the story as a complaint and its reception as a report of a positive 'loving' relationship. As it becomes clear that the original action has not resulted in the preferred response, voxing allows the repackaging of the complaint in a different and more explicit way by performing a re-enacted version of the complaine's conduct, so that the recipient of the complaint can directly assess it.

Interactionally, voxing here also serves the purpose of signaling to the interlocutor that the misalignment is treated as stemming from a lack of comprehension of the original action, rather than as an explicit decision to display disagreement. In other words, voxing is employed to signal to Sara a potential occasion for reformulating her response in a manner that aligns with her interlocutor's interactional goals. This reorientation is immediate and explicit. Sara overtly insults my former partner and addresses me by my first name at the end of her turn (IU 628) a move that serves the function of displaying sincere alignment with me (Clayman, 2010). Sara continues her strong display of affiliation through the use of the first person plural (IU 630), portraying my action of ending the relationship as if it were a joint action that she and I might perform. Only at this point (IU 633), I overtly acknowledge that Sara's new course of action is indeed aligning with my stance. To solidify this interpretation, I resume my nar-

rative and vox myself in an hypothetical response that I might have offered my partner (IU 635-638). In self-reporting what I present as my feelings at the time, I perform a moral evaluation of my former partner's conduct that once again serves the purpose of identifying this sequence as a complaint. Sara once again states her solidarity with me (IU 641) repeating nearly identically the interpretation that she already offered just a moment earlier (IU 628 and 634). Through repetition of her previous IUs, Sara builds a continuity across her responses to my complaint, and repetition is employed to display the strength in her commitment to affiliating with me. I acknowledge this commitment in IU 642. Only at this point, once Sara has aligned herself with my stance on the story, do I exit the complaint sequence and resume the original narrative.

In the previous examples, voxing is employed as the first part of an adjacency pair, functioning as a resource for setting up a complaint and pursuing affiliation. Through the enactment of the complaine'e's speech, voxing aids the speaker by presenting their report as an objective rendition of the conduct that led to their complaining. Through this resource, therefore, the complainant can both condemn the conduct of the complaine'e and elicit a positive moral assessment towards themselves. In some occasions, voxing can be employed to reformat and express complaints when the recipient responds in a less affiliative way than desired. In this case, voxing appears in situations where the speaker treats the eventual misalignment as involuntary, rather than as an explicit attempt at antagonism, and thus use it to offer the interlocutor a possibility of adjusting their course of action.

4. VOXING AS A RESOURCE FOR AFFILIATION

Voxing can also be employed in the second part of an adjacency pair, with the purpose of displaying an affiliative response to complaints. When in this position, the tendency is to vox generalized members of a category, rather than a specific complaine'e. This inclination aligns with previous findings on the mechanisms that regulate co-constructed third-party complaints, and in particular with the observation that escalating a complaint on behalf of another participant does not always yield the anticipated results (Drew & Walker, 2009). It is plausible to consider the voxing of a specific complaine'e as an escalation that could result in disaffiliation from the interlocutor. For this reason, the instances of voxing in second parts of adjacency pairs tend not to feature individual complaine'es, but rather a generalized persona which is less face-threatening.

In this conversation, when voxing is employed as a device to display affiliation, it typically appears in clusters following a voxed utterance serving as a complaint. In other words, participants in the conversation do not initiate voxing

unless the complainant has already employed it in the first portion of the pair. An example of this phenomenon can be seen in (3). Laura has initiated an extended complaint about her partner's reluctance to commitment and offers an example of his conduct, reporting a phone interaction following a sudden cancellation of plans on his part. The original interaction took place in English.

Example 3

963	LAURA;	Va beh.	<i>Whatever.</i>
964		Infatti io lo chiamo e dico,	<i>Anyway I call him and tell him,</i>
965		scusa.	<i>excuse me.</i>
966		Però senza rompere il cazzo verame- –	<i>without being annoying at all –</i>
967		cioè dicevo,	<i>I mean I said,</i>
968		<VOX> dai?	<i><VOX> come on?</i>
969		stavo già facendo la pizza?	<i>I was already kneading the pizza?</i>
970		Dai di' che venga anche lui?	<i>Please tell him to come as well?</i>
971		invito le mie amiche? </VOX>	<i>I'll invite my girlfriends? <VOX></i>
972		cioè,	<i>I mean,</i>
973		l'avevo buttata [così],	<i>I played it [like that],</i>
974	SARA;	[ma certo],	<i>[of course],</i>
975	LAURA;	non,	<i>and not,</i>
976	SARA;	faccia[₂ mo serata].	<i>let's ha[₂ ve a party].</i>
977	LAURA;	[₂ <VOX> ah gna gna] gna gna </VOX>?	
978		[₃ No]?	<i>[₃ Didn't I]?</i>
979	SARA;	[₃ <VOX> Che cazzo] fai </VOX>.	<i>[₃ <VOX> What the fuck] are you doing </VOX>.</i>
980	LAURA;	eh esatto,	<i>exactly,</i>
981		e:,	<i>and,</i>
982		e gli ho detto,	<i>and I told him,</i>

Laura starts her complaint by signaling that the following utterances will be composed of a stretch of direct reported speech (IU 964), displaying that she will give a somewhat verbatim report of the exchange. In commencing her report (IU 965), Laura retains the use of Italian and employs a falling intonation contour. This prosodic cue suggests that the lexical material found in this utterance (*scusa* 'excuse me') is not performing an apology to her partner, but rather is there to project a direct confrontation. To forestall a disaffiliative response from her interlocutors and present her own conduct as non complainable, Laura offers a meta-comment on her conduct (IU 966). She then explicitly interrupts herself (IU 966) and signals the intention to resume the report (IU 967). She then adjusts her embodied performance to re-design the report (IUs 968-971) and to re-package the complaint in a stronger form. In particular, she makes use of elements typically associated with "women's language", such as rising intonation

contours, usage of expressions meant to attenuate the force of a statement (*hedging*), and polite requests (Lakoff, 1973).

Voxing here performs a complex task: interactionally, it functions as the first half of a complaint sequence, allowing Laura to invite her interlocutors to affiliate with her. Discursively, it brings gender into the conversation, introducing it as a relevant component for the exchange that is about to be reported. By using voxing, Laura conveys her interpretation of the conversation with her partner through a depiction of what she considers to have been her situational identity (Zimmerman, 1998) in the context. She can thus reenact her identity as someone who took on a placating role rather than that of the initiator of an argument. More specifically, Laura is seeking to avoid being identified with the persona that is briefly evoked in IU 966, that is a woman who is demanding and does not want her partner to hang out with his friends. She is, instead, a cool and flexible host that gives her partner and another member of the band the opportunity to taste genuine homemade Italian food. Through voxing and her stylistic knowledge Laura can untangle the moral expectations of her interlocutors. Voxing is thus crucial in providing a direct basis for Laura's claim that she was not being "annoying", as through the performance of the exchange she can perform an objective reenactment of the interaction.

IU 973 ('I played it like this') reveals that voxing is essential to this "re-branding". It indicates how Laura is perfectly aware of the necessity to embody a persona that is not as demanding if she wants to adhere to the cultural expectations concerning which behaviors are appropriate at this stage of a relationship. Sara acknowledges this stance as legitimate (IU 974) and sanctions it as expected. She then proceeds to perform, without modifying her voice quality, what I argue is the persona Laura designs her actions to convey: the "chill girlfriend". This explicit affiliative response from Sara, although giving clear evidence that the action designed by Laura has been successful, is not enough for the participants, who move along in the conversation by jointly constructing the persona of "the nag" (IUs 977-979).

In IU 977, Laura openly voxes the "nag" persona through a series of non-sensical words that index annoying sounds and evoke childish mockery. It is implausible that these words would be used in a serious conversation with a partner, so Laura here is not reporting a possible answer that a hypothetical "nag" would say, rather she is relying on voxing alone to enact this persona. Laura uses voxing to present the persona that directly contrasts with what she claims to have actually done. In other words, she distances herself from the "nag" persona through mockery. Laura's partner's conduct can then be considered legitimately complainable by the other participants to the conversation. Next, Laura directly addresses her recipients to check whether they are affiliating with her (IU 978). She overlaps with Sara who, prompted by the previous Intonation Unit,

shows alignment with Laura through the enactment of the same “nag” persona. Through this re-enactment, Sara shows, rather than merely claims, understanding of the “nag” persona invoked by Laura. By including voxing in her response to Laura’s complaint, Sara manages the double task of openly affiliating with Laura and presents herself as someone who does not belong to that category as well. Put differently, Sara both affiliates with Laura by not considering her a “nag” and resonates with Laura by presenting herself as somebody outside of the category through voxing.

Laura treats IU 979 as the appropriate response to her plan and having secured her interlocutors’ affiliation, she returns to her complaint. She acknowledges her interlocutors’ stance by openly validating it as correct (IU 980), and moves on to the next section of her narrative. As in the previous cases, speakers employ voxing as a means to conduct moral work. In this specific example, voxing is used to mitigate a potential negative assessment of a speaker’s conduct in response to the target of their complaint.

Another case of voxing functioning as a resource for displaying affiliation can be found in (4). Asked about how she met her partner, Laura discusses her experience on online dating apps in the US and Italy. In presenting the prototypical users of such apps that she encountered in the US, she initiates a complaint that gets co-constructed with the help of her two interlocutors.

Example 4

651	LAURA;	anche lì una povertà,	<i>there is a scarcity there as well,</i>
652		va beh comunque,	<i>anyway,</i>
653		tutti a farsi delle foto,	<i>everybody taking pictures,</i>
654		with dogs,	<i>coi cani,</i>
655		[i pesci],	<i>[fish],</i>
656	SARA;	[(H) @]	
657	LAURA;	perché qua va l- –	<i>because here what’s popular is th- –</i>
658		l’ <L2> outdoor type </L2>,	<i>the outdoor type,</i>
659		no?	<i>isn’t it?</i>
660	SARA;	[ghe sbo-] –	<i>[dav-] –</i>
661	GIORGIA;	[che sb][₂ atta].	<i>[bo][₂ ring].</i>
662	LAURA;	[₂ Che a me non me la] –	<i>[₂ And to me I don’t]–</i>
663		[₃ a me che cazzo] [₄ che vai a pesca],	<i>[₃ should I give a fuck] [₄ that you go fishing],</i>
664	SARA;	[₄ <VOX><L2> I love],	
665		[₅ hiki:ng </L2></VOX>]?	
666	LAURA;	[₅ Che ti svegli alle cinque del] mattino e mi sai [₆ di verme,	
			<i>[₅ That you wake up at 5] a.m. and you smell [₆ of worms,</i>
667	SARA;	[₆ ma sti cazzi:],	<i>[₆ no fucks given],</i>

668	LAURA;	no:]?	<i>shouldn't I:]?</i>
669	SARA;	Ma sti [₇ cazzi].	<i>No fucks [₇ given].</i>
670	LAURA;	[₇ O,	<i>[₇ Or,</i>
671		<VOX> hai] un <L2> cute dog </L2></VOX>,	<i><VOX> you have] a cute dog </VOX>,</i>
672		sì ma [₈ non me ne frega un cazzo],	<i>ok but [₈ I don't give a fuck],</i>
673	SARA;	[₈ sì ma non me ne sbatte],	<i>[₈ ok but I don't care],</i>
674	LAURA;	[₉ sei sempre pieno di peli],	<i>[₉ you are always covered in dog hair],</i>
675	SARA;	[₉ neanche a me],	<i>[₉ me neither],</i>
676		[ma infatti non me ne sba][₂ tte un ca]zzo,	<i>[exactly I don't gi][₂ve a fu]ck,</i>
677	GIORGIA;	[che schifo] [₂ @ @]	<i>[gross][₂@ @]</i>
678	SARA;	bra[₃ va].	<i>go[₃od].</i>
679	LAURA;	[₃ Ma] a loro,	<i>[₃But] they,</i>
680		a loro piace 'ste [₄ cose qui],	<i>they like this [₄ kind of stuff],</i>
681	SARA;	[₄ a loro] piace,	<i>[₄ they] like it,</i>
682	GIORGIA;	@ @	
683	SARA;	<VOX><L2> Outdoor,	
684		I like outdoor </L2></VOX>,	
685	LAURA;	<VOX><L2> I like outdoor </L2></VOX>,	
686		ma a me no?	<i>but I don't?</i>
687	SARA;	Ma neanche a me,	<i>Me neither,</i>

Laura opens her complaint by stating that she could not find interesting potential partners in the US (IU 651), using the typical practice of noting the absence of the qualities she is interested in (Schegloff, 1988). She highlights this scarcity of interesting potential partners, by framing as overly plentiful the types of people she is not interested in. In explaining the reason for her lack of interest in this type, she explicitly invokes a persona, which she labels the “outdoor type” man (IU 658), ascribes this persona to the US specifically (IU 657) and treats it as a category (Schegloff, 2007). She enumerates a list of category-tied predicates that belong to this social type, starting with the fact that such a man usually likes animals (IUs 653-655), basing her description on common-sense knowledge of what people of this category are like in their everyday interactions (Schegloff, 2007:469). Her stance becomes evident in IU 655, where she uses the extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) of taking pictures with one’s goldfish as a way to negatively assess app users that feature animals in their profile. In mocking the “outdoor type”, Laura is laying the ground for the interpretation of her complaint about the online dating scene in the area where she lives and establishing what the relevant responses that she is expecting from her interlocutors are. Sara and I have no difficulty in identifying her stance, and promptly affiliate with her in IUs 660-661.

At this point, Laura openly states that she does not find this type of man attractive. She assigns fishing as a category-bound activity that pertains to “outdoor types” (IUs 663) and details some aspects of this activity that she does not like (IU

666). Sara aligns with Laura's stance in IUs 664 and 665. She rises her pitch and employs a rising intonation, mirroring the prosodic features which she associates with the "outdoor type", to vox what she poses as a prototypical utterance of this type. Sara is not reporting any previous conversation, rather she is creating the material on the spot, plausibly drawing upon widespread representations of Americans in Italy or upon local depictions of the "sportsman" persona (Love-Nichols, 2020). Voxing is therefore employed as a resource to align with Laura's stance on the object of complaint, conveying a moral evaluation of the "outdoor type" and contributing to the construction of a list of category-bound activities for this type. Laura interprets Sara's turn as a demonstration of alignment, and employs the same practice few Intonation Units later (IUs 671-672), again reporting a hypothetical comment. Through voicing, Laura can expand her complaint on the lack of desirable partners by explicitly mocking the members of the type for which there is an oversupply. Voxing can thus function as a performance-based instrument to substantiate a complaint through direct mockery of the category which is being criticized.

In addition to constructing the "outdoor type", the interlocutors are also managing their identity by marking their distance from this type. Because the linguistic features indexing the "outdoor type" belongs to white Californian American English, voicing also allows the participants to position themselves as external to this category. Laura explicitly acknowledges this distance in IU 679, where she employs a third person plural (*loro*) to indicate that the participants to this conversation are not among those who appreciate this type. Following yet another instance of mocking (IU 683 and IU 684-685), Sara and Laura explicitly position themselves as someone who does not like the activities that are bound to the "outdoor type" itself (IU 686 and IU 687). This identity is constructed in two steps: first, the speakers distance themselves from the people who might date an "outdoor type", and then they position themselves as external to the type itself. Having co-constructed a shared understanding of the situation, the participants move out of the sequence.

In the last two examples, voicing is employed as the second part of an adjacency pair, functioning as a resource for expressing affiliation with a complainant and managing one's situational and conversational identities. Through the voicing of discourse material that is considered to be prototypical of a persona, the recipient of the complaint can ascribe the conduct of the complaine to a more general portion of the population (a social type) and express affiliation with the complainant. Voxing also allows for the indexing of specific characteristics to the type being complained about. These characteristics are indexed in a way that allows the interlocutors to mark their distance from the complaine's type. When used in the second part of an adjacency pair, voicing thus serves the double function of expressing affiliation to the complainant and acknowledging that the current interlocutors are morally distant from the complaine.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has explored aspects of the use of *voxing* in the context of third-party complaint sequences in naturally occurring spontaneous conversation. I defined *voxing* as a phenomenon by which a speaker indexes the voice of someone else by using marked suprasegmental features that depart from the usual forms they employ in interaction. Though *voxing* does appear in instances of direct reported speech, it is not necessary for every instance of direct reported speech to display *voxing*. Because these two practices are not always co-occurring, it is reasonable to assume that *voxing* alone fulfills some sort of interactional function in the positions where it occurs. My analysis has revealed that third-party complaints are particularly rich in this phenomenon, though it bears reminding that the use of *voxing* need not be restricted to complaint sequences alone. This paper has shown that *voxing* fulfills specific interactional functions in the context of third-party complaints. As demonstrated in the first part of this paper, when occurring in the first part of a complaint, *voxing* is employed to re-package complaints that did not immediately receive a preferred affiliative response from interlocutors. Adding *voxing* to the target's reported material, complainants explicitly portray their action as a complaint, providing the chance for their interlocutors to correct their interpretation of the exchange through the display of an affiliative response. The second part of the paper has demonstrated that *voxing* can also be used by the recipients of a complaint to display affiliation to the complainant. In such cases, it can also be used to manage the interlocutors' situational identity, expressing their distance from the category presented as target of the complaint. The salient point that emerges from my analysis is that *voxing* is a resource used to repair the complaint sequence in points that the interlocutors might deem as problematic in both members of the adjacency pair. This reparation function appears independently of the presence of direct reported speech, which in turn suggests that paralinguistic features alone can play a role in the structuring of speech actions.

Transcription Notations (Du Bois, 2006)

laughter	@	one per pulse of laughter
overlap (first set)	[]	align left square brackets vertically
overlap (n set)	[_n]	align left brackets, subscript numeral co-indexed
terminative intonation	.	
continuative intonation	,	
appeal intonation	?	
truncated intonation unit	—	aborting projected IU
truncated/cut-off word	wor-	aborting projected word
vox	<VOX> </VOX>	voice of another
code-switching	<L2> </L2>	
pseudonym	¬ France	indicating a substitution from the original

NOTES

¹ This paper has been greatly improved through the helpful comments of Sandra Thompson, Kevin Whitehead, John Du Bois, Chloe Willis, and various anonymous reviewers, whom I all wholeheartedly thank. All mistakes remain mine.

² The recording was completed for a different project than the one presented in this paper. The research question presented here has been selected 18 months after the recording was completed.

³ For a discussion over the concept of *generalizability* in Conversation Analysis that touches upon the reasons for using data coming from a single group of speakers see Peräkylä (2004) and Whitehead (2011).

⁴ The speakers featured in this conversation are involved in highly overlapping exchange and are carrying out operations like cooking, eating, and washing dishes while interacting. The presence of overlap and background noise made it impossible to trace the intonational contours of the exchange with specialized software.

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