GREEK AND GERMAN TELEPHONE CLOSINGS: PATTERNS OF CONFIRMATION AND AGREEMENT¹

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1. The background

Telephone calls all over the world have presumably the same basic structure but cultural variation is to be expected (cf. e.g. Clark and French 1981) and has indeed been observed (cf. e.g. Godard 1977; Sifianou 1989; Pavlidou 1994). There is a large body of literature on openings, but relatively little (mainly by Button 1987, 1990) has been done on closings, after the seminal paper by Schegloff and Sacks (1973); even less has been done on closings in a comparative/cross-cultural perspective (cf. Pavlidou 1997 for some explanations and references).

What do closings look like? The archetype closing, as Button calls it², consists of four turns, organized in two adjacency pairs:

1. pair: first turn offers to close (first close component),
 second turn accepts the offer (second close component),
2. pair: third turn is the first terminal utterance (first terminal component),
 fourth turn reciprocates (second terminal component).

But in between the two sequences other things may take place, and even those closings consisting of the four basic turns can take various forms. Button (1990) gives an extensive description of varieties of closings. In the editor's foreword to Button's article, it is mentioned that "[Button's work] shows that sequential organization of closings is both complex and orderly" (Button 1990: 93). Having looked at closings myself, especially at Greek closings, I am fully convinced about the first, complexity, and I am eager to discover the second, orderliness, but I am still far from a full understanding of what is really going on.

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² I think that it would be preferable to talk of the constitutive parts of a closing rather than of the "archetype closing".

Part of the complexity arises from the fact that a closing sequence can only *ex post facto* prove itself to be unequivocally a closing sequence, that is, if the telephone is actually hung up. And the process of reaching the end may not only be very long, because of “movings out of the closing”, as Button (1987) puts it; it may also be the outcome of a *gradual* moving towards termination of the call. So a closing may take a certain form because of preceding sequences that prepared its coming little by little. It is such features that led me, in a preliminary examination of closings in Greek and German telephone calls (Pavlidou 1997), to concentrate on the last five turns of the call. In contrast to work done up to that point on German closings (Werlen 1984; Brinker and Sager 1989; Liefländer-Koistinen and Neuendorf 1991), which is based mainly on institutional calls, my analysis in the paper mentioned above focused on non-institutional calls, more specifically, on calls among individuals with a familiar up to a very close relationship. Examination of the turn-taking structure, the terminal exchanges, and the content of the last five turns yielded the following: the Greek closings diverged to a greater extent than the German ones from a dyadic turn-taking structure because of more overlaps and latching, more complex turns, and repetition of the parting formulae; the German closings, on the other side, were richer than the Greek ones in content and included reference to future contact, and also, to a smaller extent, wishes for the partners’ welfare and regards to their friends and loved ones.

The present paper is a continuation of my work on closings (1997) and part of a longer involvement in the cross-cultural study of Greek and German conversational styles on the telephone (cf. Pavlidou 1991, 1994). Using the same samples³ as in Pavlidou 1997, I want to examine in the following further aspects of closings in Greek and German telephone conversations and indicate some possible dimensions of cultural differentiation between the Greek and the German conversational styles in the closing section of telephone calls. Given the complications of the problem itself and the restrictions of the samples, I would like to emphasize the exploratory character of this paper: The aim is to build up a basis for formulating hypotheses which can then be tested in future work.

2. Some more findings on the structure of Greek and German closings

Button (1990) discusses fourteen variants of the archetype closing, eight of which concern a variation of the content of talk in the first and/or second closing turn. It is mainly with

³ As in Pavlidou 1997, analysis is based on 45 Greek and 27 German telephone calls. The Greek calls come from the sample that was used in Pavlidou 1994; they were initiated and tape-recorded by five young adults (calls 1-27, 28-29, and 30 were made by three women; 31-41 and 42-45 by two men). Ten of the German calls (initiated and tape-recorded by a young woman) come also from the sample described in Pavlidou 1994; another 15 calls come from the Brons-Albert (1984) corpus (14 were conducted by a young female adult, the author herself, and one by a young male adult. Finally, two additional calls, between the same two young men, are taken from the so-called Freiburger Korpus (TSG 1975). The selection of the samples was a matter of necessity rather than choice: It was all the telephone calls I could get from the above mentioned sources, given (a) some technical problems I had in the cassettes of the 1994 sample, and (b) the fact that I was interested in telephone calls between friends or relatives. A further drawback comes from the fact that no cassettes were available to me for the Brons-Albert transcribed texts or the calls from the Freiburger Korpus; this means that for intonation and prosodic features I had to rely completely on the transcribed text, where some of this information was not indicated as precisely as it would have been necessary for some aspects of this study.

respect to the other six variants, that is, those concerning the form of the closing turns and the sequential organization of the closing section, that differences between Greek and German closings can be detected. Let us start with three examples from the Greek sample which demonstrate some of Button's variants of the archetype closing.⁴

Example 1 (P12)

1	B	endaksi. ejine.
Alright. Done.	
2	A	mm. afta.
Mm. That was it.	
3	B	ocei, θa peraso na se pa:ro:
Okay, I'll pick you up	//pço noris fisika=
earlier of course
4	A		//ts
ts
5	A	= <u>tim</u> bires ti δimitra?
Did you call [<u>her</u>] Dimitra?	
6	B	oçi, tora θa tim baro.
No, I'll call her now.	
7	A	mm. kala.
Mm. Good.	
—>	8	B	ocei? <—first close component
Okay?
	9	A	ejine, ne.
Done, yes.
	10	B	ejine....ade.
Done....ADE.
	11	A	ade ja.
ADE bye.

⁴ In the following, the Greek excerpts are presented in a phonetic transliteration, keeping, however, enclitics apart in order to facilitate recognition of the words; stress is not indicated. In translating the Greek (and German) examples into English, I tried to give an English equivalent that makes some sense without totally losing the original linguistic form; conversational particles in Greek or German which have no exact equivalent in English are given in capitals in the translation. The German excerpts presented here are from the Brons-Albert corpus (Brons-Albert 1984) in the original transcription form; the B-A number indicates the number of the phone calls in the Brons-Albert corpus, whereas the number after P refers to the sample in Pavlidou 1994. Utterances or parts thereof that are of interest are in bold-face.

- 12 B jaxara, ja.
Byebye, bye.

The partners proceed, with turns 1-4, towards closing the conversation, but in turns 5-7 there is a temporary moving out of the closing. Turn 8 seems to be an instance of what Button calls "question intoned first close component" (1990: 115f), whose use is equivocal since it can invite an in-conversation response. Similarly, in example 2, turn 4 can be regarded as an instance of Button's "question intoned second close component", on the assumption that turn 3 is the first close component.

Example 2 (P44)

- 1 A [...] e::, ðe θa jirisi ðilaði tora.
[...] Eh, so she won't come back now.
- 2 B ba:, ðe nomizo tora noris.
Oh no, I don't think this early.
- 3 A ejine ðimitri.
Done Dimitri.
- > 4 B ejine? <—second close component
Done?
- 5 A ne, ne, jaxa//ra.
Yes, yes, byebye.
- 6 B //kalinixta.
Goodnight.

Finally, example 3 demonstrates another sequential variant of the "archetype closing"; it is an extended closing, since B produces in turn 5 a further close component rather than proceeding directly to the first terminal. According to Button (1990: 130), "closing extensions can be used to display an availability for further conversation but without actually moving out of the closings".

Example 3 (P19)

- 1 B [...] etsi.
[...] Just like that.
- 2 A ne.
yes.
- 3 B en//daki? <—first close component
Alright?

	4	A	//ejine. Done.	<—second close component
—>	5	B	ejine //jasu.= Done. Bye.	<—further close component (instead of a first terminal)
	6	A	//n/ y(es)	
	7	A	= lipon, ocei. ja. Well, okay. Bye.	
	8	B	ja. Bye.	

What is striking about these closings is the large number of **tokens of agreement** that they contain, that is, particle-like adverbials like *ne* ("yes"), *endaksi* ("alright"), *ocei* ("okay") and so on, but also items with greater lexical import, such as *kala* ("good"), *ejine* ("done").⁵ It is certainly of no surprise that we find such elements of expressing and eliciting agreement, if we recall that two things are crucial for the termination of a telephone conversation (Schegloff and Sacks 1973):

- a) the partners have to agree to close down the last topic,
- b) the partners have to agree to move to the terminal exchange.

So sequences of offering/suggesting to close and accepting/agreeing to do so, along with sequences of confirmation, are surely to be expected in (and around) the closing section of a telephone call. But the great bulk of agreement tokens in the Greek closings seems to go beyond the minimal requirements for agreement in closings.

Looking again at the examples above in the reverse order, we find that in example 3, turn 5, B repeats, in exactly the same form, what A said in turn 4, in order to confirm the agreement that the partners negotiated in turns 3 and 4. In example 2 turn 4, B repeats, using an echo question, what A said in turn 3, and thus elicits, once more, A's agreement in turn 5. Finally, in example 1 the first close turn (8) echoes semantically A's last part in turn 7, thus requesting a confirmation of the agreement expressed in 7. In other words, there is a common pattern underlying the above variants of closings, and that is, **repetition of tokens of agreement**⁶, more specifically, other-repetition. This pattern of other-

⁵ Items that express more generally approval, such as *θavma* ("wonderful"), *opozδipote* ("in any case"), *bravo* ("bravo"), are used, as well.

⁶ Repetition is usually discussed as related to the propositional level (cf. e.g. Brown 1996). However, if we take as a starting point a very broad definition, like the one given in Merritt ("I use the term *repetition* as a general inclusive for all kinds of "happening again" [...]", 1994: 26), I see no reason why the interactional level should not be taken into account, too. Of course, the crucial point would be whether repetition is structurally necessary, as in certain adjacency pairs, for example, in greetings:

A: Hello.
B: Hello.

repetition that involves confirmation or an explicit request for confirmation appears in 29% of the closings in the Greek sample. Moreover, such exchanges of tokens of agreement, confirmation etc. can be reiterated more than once in a closing, although no drastic moving out of the closing occurs, as shown in example 4 (items that express agreement are in bold):

Example 4 (P29)

1	A	[...] an ðen vris sinalayma stin ermu;
[...] If you don't find foreign currencies [at the bank] on Ermou
[street],
2	B	ne.
Yes.
3	A	pare mu ena telefono apo ci, apc/apo ci ce pez mu <u>ela</u> .
give me a ring from there, from/from there and tell me <u>come</u> .
4	B	ne, endaksi.
Yes, alright.
5	A	endaksi?
Alright?
6	B	endaks.
Alrigh[t].
7	A	jiro sti mia pare mu. na min...
About one o'clock give me a ring.
8	B	n(e).
Y(es).
9	A	endaksi?
All right?
10	B	ocei.
Okay.
11	A	ejine.
Done.
12	B	//filaca.
Kisses-DIMINUTIVE.
13	A	//ade fiλa. //ja.
ADE kisses. Bye.
14	B	//tsao.

Ciao.

In addition to the cases discussed above, we find self-repetition of agreement tokens even within one turn (49% of the Greek calls). Such an exuberant expressing of agreement⁷ can be achieved either by repeating one item several times or by combining different items, as example 5 shows:

Example 5 (P21)

1	B	pijene ta ola ja na su ta vali aftos. katalaves?
Take everything to him so that he can fix it. Got it?
2	A	mmm.
Mmm.
3	B	na su ta <u>vali</u> pano stin cenurja fjali.
So that he can <u>fix</u> it on top of the new bottle.
—> 4	A	ne, endaksi. kala. ejine.
Yes, alright. Good. Done.
5	B	ade.
ADE.
6	A	ade, //ja.
ADE, bye.
7	B	//tsao...ja. su pira kasetes. na kseris=
ciao...bye. I bought you some tapes. So that you know.
8	A	=a kala. ne.
Oh good. Yes.
9	B	ja.
Bye.
10	A	ja.
Bye.

Putting the instances of self- and other-repetition together (in order to get a full picture of the extent of repetition of agreement tokens), we find that 62% of the Greek telephone

⁷ Sometimes repetition of tokens of agreement can be indicative of impatience or indignation; in such a case other features of speech, like intonation, loudness, prosody etc. come into play, as well. However, this is not the case in the examples under discussion.

closings contain at least one kind of repetition of agreement tokens⁸.

Example 5 is interesting for a further reason. It could be considered as an instance of another one of Button's variants, namely that in which the first closing turn responds to a prior utterance (Button 1990: 118)⁹; however, that would not explain anything, because the real problem now is, what is the sequential function of each of the elements contained in turn 4, and as a matter of fact of turn 4 as a whole:

- Does A just give her consent to B's suggestion in a plethoric manner and, at the same time, does she close down the last topic? If yes, where is the pre-closing turn, after turn 4?
- Does turn 4 function on the whole as a pre-closing? But then, where is the closing down of the topic?
- Does turn 4 accomplish both closing of the topic and pre-closing? In that case, what part of it takes up which role?

Button's discussion of the variants of closings presupposes that there is a clear cut-off point between the last topic and the initiation of the closing section, which is not always the case, as example 5 shows. The problem arises, at least partly, from the fact that the same items, e.g. *ne* ("yes"), *endaksi* ("alright"), *kala* ("good"), *ejine* ("done") and so forth, can take up all functions mentioned above. In other words, markers of agreement, especially those with less lexical import, are used as discourse markers as well, taking, among others, the role of a (possible) pre-closing. This is of course something that we may expect, since—as Schegloff and Sacks (1973) explicitly state—pre-closings (like English *well*, *O.K.* with downward intonation) are only *possible* pre-closings.

Example 5, however, raises yet another issue: The partners proceed to the terminal exchange without any (overt) confirmation on B's side after turn 4, which seems to run counter to what we have seen up to now. Button discusses a similar variant under the heading "second turn no-response" (1990: 127) and remarks that "no-response in second turn can be oriented to by other speaker as indicating reluctance for closure" (1990: 128). In example 5, the response to the first closing-turn (turn 5) is not exactly no-response or silence, but a turn containing the particle *ade*. *Ade* has no longer any lexical import and it is usually described as a hortative particle¹⁰; it is normally used in informal contexts and is in general indicative of familiarity between the conversationalists.

As it turns out, the particle *ade* is an almost indispensable element in the Greek sample: in only four of the 45 instances of Greek closings leave-taking is accomplished without this feature. It can function as pre-closing, but it can also appear in almost any utterance in the closing section. *ade* signals the speaker's willingness to reach the end of

⁸ This is not just simply adding the frequencies of self- and other-repetition of agreement tokens together because in some closings both kinds of repetition occur.

⁹ Cf. Button's third example on p.118. "Responses to a prior utterance in a first closing turn that follow a first close component do not project to next turns some sequentially appropriate object, and, hence, [although they do not operate to move out of closings], next turns can be occupied with a second close component."

¹⁰ Cf. E.g. Tzartanos 1991: 130. Etymologically, *ade* is derived from the Ancient Greek verb form *ajete* (Imperative, second person plural of the verb *aγo* meaning 'to lead, carry'). It goes without saying, that Greek *ade* (stressed on the first syllable) should not be confused by those who speak German with the parting formula *ade* (stressed on the last syllable) which is used in some German varieties.

the conversation on the assumption that mutual consensus to proceed to the end obtains.¹¹ It is exactly this assumption of mutual consensus that makes the occurrence of *ade* at a point where confirmation is expected possible, as in example 5, turn 5. This is even more evident in the next example, where A instead of giving an answer to B's request for confirmation (turn 3) proceeds to the first terminal utterance which, however, contains *ade*.

Example 6 (P43)

	1	B	me mov ftera.
With purple feathers.
	2	A	maasta. endaksi. ejine.
Yes. All right. Done.
	3	B	endaksi?
All right?
—>	4	A	ade ja.
ADE bye.
	5	B	ade ja, ja.
ADE bye.

What I am claiming, then, is that *ade*, via the assumed consensus, can function implicitly as an agreement marker, even when confirmation is explicitly asked for. In other words, *ade* indicates an orientation towards termination of the call, on the condition that this orientation is shared/accepted by the other participant.

The variants of closings discussed up to now can be also found in the German closings, but they are by far not as frequent. The pattern of other-repetition of agreement tokens, which was found in 29% of the Greek closings as already mentioned, appears in only 15% of the German closings. As for the pattern of self-repetition of agreement tokens discussed above, which was even more frequent in the Greek calls (49%), we find it in only 19% of the German closings. This amounts to a total (cf. footnote 7 above) of 26% of repetition of agreement tokens of either kind in the German closings, as compared to 62% in the Greek closings. In other words, repetition of the type discussed above¹² seems to be a more important feature in expressing agreement and eliciting confirmation in the Greek calls. On the other hand, the typical strategy for seeking confirmation or eliciting agreement in the German closings consists in the use of tag-questions.

¹¹ It can also indicate impatience on the speaker's part, if accompanied by appropriate intonation, or if it is repeated by the same speaker within one turn ("ade, ade").

¹² There are of course other kinds of repetition to be found in the Greek and German closings which are not discussed here, e.g. repetition of the parting formulae as in example 3 (turns 5-8), example 4 (turns 12-14), example 6 (turn 5), example 8 (turn 1-3), but see Pavlidou 1997.

The German language has a number of special tag particles like *ne*, *ge*, *wa*,¹³ which have only this use, along with the adverbs *nicht* ("don't", "doesn't"), *ja* ("yes"), with question intonation. Such tag-questions do not necessarily expect an answer, especially when they occur at an intra-turn position. More than 3/4 of the closings in the German sample contain such tags, the most prevailing being *ne*. In Greek, on the other hand, tags are found in only about 1/4 of the closings. For one thing, there are no special tag particles¹⁴ (that is, particles having only this function), as in German; so other markers of agreement with question intonation are used at turn final position: *etsi?* ("Is that so?"), *endaksi?* ("alright?"), *ne?* ("yes?"). Besides, tags in the Greek sample usually -compared to German- expect (and also get) an answer; they, thus, request explicitly a confirmation and make the partner express his/her agreement once more.

Rehbein (1979), who has given an excellent account of German tags including the particle *ne?*, argues that when using tag-questions the speaker expects/perceives etc. an aberration in the reception¹⁵ of his/her speech act(s); s/he uses a tag in order to signal that the hearer is supposed to counterbalance this aberration by augmenting the speech act(s) under question with elements of their common knowledge. In other words, the function of the tag is to activate such elements, given the (perceived, hypothesized etc.) aberration. On a similar line, though less explicit about motivation for using tags¹⁶, Jucker and Smith discuss tag-questions as a means of negotiating common ground implicitly: "[...] tag questions help convey assumptions about the speaker's beliefs concerning the hearer's knowledge and beliefs, and they offer the hearer the opportunity to confirm or deny those assumptions" (Jucker and Smith 1996: 10). Such seems to be the case in the following example:

Example 7 (P18)

1	B	Gut also Nina bis ah ja in zwei Wochen ist es, ne?
Well so Nina until uh yes it is in two weeks, isn't it?
2	A	Genau. //(Samstag.)
Exactly. (Saturday.)
3	B	//Genau.
Exactly.
4	A	Tschüs, erstmal.
Bye, for the time being.

¹³ In Jefferson 1980 *ne* is translated into English as *right*. In my understanding *right* has a heavier lexical load than *ne*. Probably *don't you*, *doesn't she* etc. would be a more adequate translation.

¹⁴ The only exception is probably *e* with rising intonation, but there is hardly anything on this particle; Setatos (1993) mentions *e* (with exclamatory intonation) as an interjection.

¹⁵ "Reception" stands for the whole process (on the hearer's part) of perceiving, identifying etc. of a speech act up to accepting its consequences (Rehbein 1979: 61).

¹⁶ Jucker and Smith (1996) do not discuss German tags in particular and do not make any reference to Rehbein (1979).

- 5 B Also, tschüs.
Bye, then.

In turn 1 B moves towards closing of the telephone call (“Gut also Nina ...”) and is about to wrap it up by making reference to her future contact¹⁷ with A (“... bis ...”), as arranged previously in the call; she then becomes uncertain about the exact time arrangement —notice the hesitation sign “uh”— but then seems to recall it again (“... ja in zwei Wochen ist es ...”), and ends up her turn by asking for confirmation (“... ne?”), which A gives in turn 2.

In most occurrences of *ne* (or similar tags) in the German closings of my sample, however, it is not confirmation of some propositional content (assumptions, beliefs, knowledge etc.) that is called for, as example 8 illustrates:

Example 8 (P14, B-A31)

- 1 B [...] Naja, ich wünsch euch trotzdem non schönen
 [...] All right, I wish you nevertheless a nice

 Abend, dann bis nächste Woche, **ne?**
 evening, till next week, **NE?**
- 2 A Bis nächste Woche, **ne.**
 Till next week, **NE.**
- 3 B Schönen Gruß an den T, **ne?**
 Nice regards to T, **NE?**
- 4 A Ja, mach ich.
 Yes, I 'll do that.
- 5 B Un, also, schüs, **ne!**
 And, so, bye, **NE!**
- 6 A Tschöhö!
 Byeye!

In the closing above, all occurrences of *ne* are at turn-final position, and so its use might be interpreted as an attempt on the speaker's part to elicit a confirmation by the hearer. A look at the individual turns (e.g. turn 3: “Schönen Gruß an den T, **ne?**”), however, reveals that it can not be beliefs or assumptions, at least not in the same sense, as in example 7, turn 1 (“... in zwei Wochen ist es, **ne?**”) for which confirmation is asked for; rather, it is future actions, e.g. meeting each other next week (turns 1-2), giving regards to somebody else (turn 3) etc. for which, eventually, confirmation is wanted. But even so, it can be argued that *ne* does not play a crucial role in eliciting confirmation of these actions, since it can be omitted with no resulting change in the structure of the adjacency pairs. Compare, for example turns 3-4

¹⁷About the importance of reference to future contact in German closings of telephone calls see Pavlidou 1997.

(“Schönen Gruß an den T, **ne?**” - “Ja, mach ich.”) with turns 3-4 in example 9:

Example 9 (P10, B-A13)

1	B	[...] Gut. Mach's gut!
[...] Fine. Take care!
2	A	Du auch!
You, too!
3	B	Bestell viele Grüße!
Give my regards!
4	A	Jau! Tschö!
Jap! Bye!
5	B	Tschö!
Bye!

Besides, even if one were willing to grant *ne* some credit in the eliciting of confirmation of some action to be taken (future contact, regards to somebody etc.), it would be difficult to do the same, when coming to the terminal exchange of the closing. The *ne* in turn 5, example 8 ("Un, also, schüs, **ne!**") could hardly be interpreted as asking for confirmation of the parting.

In the examples up to now *ne* occurs at turn-final position, but it can also appear within one turn in the closing section, as in the next example:

Example 10 (P6, B-A9)

1	B	[...] Ja, Mensch, denn grüß ma schoma den X, ne! Dann
[...] Yes, gosh, so give now my regards to X, NE! Then

erholt euch mal bißchen und dann kommter nachher
have a little rest and drop by later on.

vorbei. Ne! Bis dann!
NE! Till then! |
| 2 | A | Bis dann! Tschö!
Till then! Bye! |
| 3 | B | Prima! Tschüs, A!
Great! Bye, A! |

Turn 1 in the example above sort of condenses the first components of several adjacency pairs together (pre-closing, giving regards to somebody else, summary of the arrangement to meet later on, and, finally, a ritual reference to future contact “bis dann!”); and at two boundaries *ne* (with non-rising intonation) is used. One could hardly argue that with such intra-turn uses of *ne* B tries to solicit an explicit response from A.

What is then to be concluded from the above discussion about the function of *ne* (or similar particles) in the closing section of telephone calls? As we have seen, the particle *ne* can feature with almost any component of the closing section without having always an unequivocal role in the process of confirmation of and agreement on knowledge or actions. This being so, we could not simply adopt e.g. Rehbein's analysis, unless we make certain amendments¹⁸. But I do think that the tags discussed above aim at activating presuppositions that both speaker and hearer share or elements of their common ground. However, these elements of common ground have to do with the partner's relationship, and more specifically with the (alleged) fact that it is a "good" relationship, which consequently has nothing to fear when the contact between the two breaks, at the end of the telephone call. That is, Rehbein's "aberration" in these cases would have to do with the function of the closing section as a whole and not with single speech acts within this section. Moreover, through the use of tag particles the speaker arouses the impression of expecting an answer; thus, s/he ensures the hearer's availability and interactional involvement.

3. Concluding remarks

The analysis above took as its starting point some variants of the archetype closing that concern the form of the closing turns and the sequential organization of the closing section (cf. Button 1990) and focused on certain aspects of confirmation and agreement in Greek and German telephone closings. It was found that in the Greek sample patterns of repetition of agreement tokens in the closing section of the telephone call occur more frequently than in the German sample (62% vs. 26%). Moreover, almost all of the Greek closings contain the particle *ade*. Tag-questions that usually expect, and also get, an answer are found in only 1/4 of the Greek closings. On the other hand, the German closings are characterized by a high frequency of tag-particles which do not necessarily expect an answer. As already mentioned, all these features have to do with expressing one's agreement to do something or confirming what the other said.¹⁹

Two issues are of relevance at this point: (a) Are the patterns of confirmation and agreement discussed above characteristic of Greek and German conversational styles *in general* or are they specific to telephone closings? (b) If these patterns of agreement and confirmation go beyond the minimal requirements for agreement with respect to the closing section, what is their function? With respect to the first question, although there is some evidence that the features discussed above are not exclusive to closings of telephone conversations, I would not be willing to make any general statements or even hypotheses, before it is at least shown that the features under discussion are found to a similar extent in the other phases of a telephone conversation, as well.

¹⁸ This holds for the kind of expected aberration (cf. Rehbein's classification of tags according to the expected aberration (1979: 63f)) and for the kind of common knowledge that the tags activate (cf. Rehbein 1979: 71f).

¹⁹ Accordingly, one could talk of strategies of positive politeness, more specifically, of strategies with which a speaker claims common ground with the hearer (Brown and Levinson 1987: 103-124). Given, however, the problems connected with this theory (cf. e.g. Pavlidou 1994), I am rather reluctant to apply it selectively, as some do, for certain sections or aspects of (telephone) conversation.

To answer the second question, we have to consider what functions the closing section of a telephone conversation serves. Having satisfied the reason for making the telephone call²⁰, the partners are faced not only with the organizational problem of closing the (telephone) conversation²¹, but also with the problem of how to do this without causing any bad feelings²². Definitely, one way of achieving the latter is by using tokens of phatic communion, as Laver (1975, 1981) has shown. Another, I would like to maintain, is to *elaborate on the mutuality of their decision to close the conversation, thus creating greater involvement in one another and enhancing their relationship*.

In the German closings, this elaboration on the mutuality of the decision to close the telephone call seems to exploit mechanisms of implicit negotiation of agreement (cf. the use of tag particles). In the Greek closings, implicit negotiations (cf. the use of particle *ade*) go along with more explicit strategies (other- or self-repetition of tokens of agreement), in which a speaker overtly expresses his/her own agreement or tries to get the partner explicitly involved in the process of agreeing with one another. An obvious effect of the explicit strategies is the greater length of Greek closings. Taking into account that repetition of the parting formulae beyond the minimal requirements in the terminal exchanges is also to be found quite frequently in the Greek closings (cf. Pavlidou 1997), and if we accept that the over-arching purpose of repetition is to create personal involvement (Tannen 1989: 52, 97), we can formulate the following hypothesis: although both Greek and German closings among familiars have an amicability that surpasses structural requirements, it takes Greeks longer than Germans to close a telephone conversation due to greater investments on the interactional level. This would be on a par with my earlier findings about closings as well as my results about the use of phatic utterances (Pavlidou 1994), namely, that it takes Greeks longer than Germans to get started with the reason for calling²³. However, this orientation toward continuation of talk, on the Greek side, should be cross-checked against other variants, like "foreshortening in first and second turn" (Button 1990: 129), before any definitive conclusions about cultural variation in German and Greek closings can be drawn.

²⁰ As discussed in Pavlidou 1994, the reason for making the call may in some cases be simply to talk with a friend or relative or arrange with them to meet, to do something together etc. This type of reasons for calling is characterized as *social* and is distinguished from *practical* reasons, involving giving or getting some information mainly within a transactional context.

²¹ According to Schegloff and Sacks (1973: 294f) the problem consists in how to organize the simultaneous arrival at a point where one speaker's completion of his/her utterance will not occasion another speaker's talk, and that will not be heard as some speaker's silence.

²² In his discussion of the function of phatic communion in the closing part of interaction, Laver (1975: 230-231, 232f) indicates that it consists in the mitigation of feelings "of rejection that a participant might feel when his [sic] fellow participant initiates the closing phase" and in the consolidation of the relationship with comments on "the enjoyable quality of the encounter", with "the promise of a continuation of the relationship, the assertion of mutual solidarity" etc.

²³ Recall also Button's comments on variants of closings like the ones manifested in examples 1-3 ("equivocality of the closing elements", "availability for further talk" etc.), which also seem to point at an orientation towards continuation of talk.

Transcription conventions

(xxx)	Text in single parentheses means that this part has not been fully comprehended.
/	Single slash indicates self-repair.
//	Double slash indicates point at which the current utterance is overlapped by the one transcribed below. In order to represent simultaneity, sometimes longer blanks appear in the transcripts; they do not signify anything.
=	Equality sign at the end of an utterance and the beginning of the next means latching.
xxx:	Double dot indicates vowel prolongation.
<u>xxx</u>	Underlining means emphasis.
[...]	Brackets enclosing three periods mean that part of a turn, or turn sequence, has been left out.
. . .	More than one periods indicate pauses roughly longer than a 'normal' full stop.
Punctuation markers are used to indicate roughly different intonation patterns, in the usual manner.	

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