Doing Being Late: The Use of the Russian Particle *-to* in Personal State Inquiries

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The paper examines interactional functions of the Russian enclitic particle –to in "howareyou" type inquiries. Drawing on a corpus of recorded telephone conversations and using the methodology of conversation analysis, this paper argues that by marking a particular "howareyou" question with -to, the speaker indicates that the inquiry is late relative to where it should have been appropriately launched. Two senses of lateness are discussed: one is "structural," dealing with the conventional ways in which conversation is organized; the other is "normative," which is meant to refer to the speaker's judgment about the question's importance relative to its placement in conversation.

This paper investigates the use of the Russian particle *-to* in "howareyou" type questions. The findings presented here are part of a larger project concerned with the use of the particle in different contexts. Among the various environments in which the particle *–to* is used, "howareyou" sequences are particularly interesting as these are contexts where complex and often delicate interactional work gets accomplished (e.g., Schegloff, 1986).

The particle *–to* (pronounced as *ta*/[t«]) has been the subject of considerable interest from Russian-language scholars due to its somewhat mysterious nature[1]. This enclitic particle can be attached, it would appear, to almost any word and its meaning cannot be readily expressed. While a complete review of the prior research on the topic is beyond the scope of this paper, several observations are in order. Prior studies have, almost exclusively, examined the particle from an information-processing perspective and focused on its cognitive rather than social functions[2, 3]. Several researchers have converged on describing the particle as marking emphasis, contrast, or "theme," though the exact meaning attached to these words is different in each study. Briefly, it has been found that the particle can be used to stress the importance of a particular word, phrase, or statement (Rathmayr, 1989; Vasilyeva, 1972). The particle may suggest the presence of contrasting elements (Bonnot, 1987; McCoy, 2001; Vasilyeva). Alternatively, it may mark something (usually the word or phrase it is attached to) as known to the interlocutors (i.e., old information, "theme," or topic), especially if it hasn't yet been activated in the discourse (Bitextin, 1994; Bonnot, 1987, 1990; McCoy; Rathmayr; Vasilyeva). The last two descriptions have been argued to relate to the particle's etymological roots in the Russian indexical pronoun *tot* ("that") (Bonnot, 1987, 1990; McCoy; Vasilyeva).

While this research[4] has significantly advanced our understanding of the particle's functions, several factors have limited its scope. First, the researchers have almost exclusively relied on literary or invented examples in their analysis, and when natural speech was used, sentences (or short segments) were usually examined in isolation from their interactional and social context[5]. The nature of the material on which the studies are based relates to the second limitation. While the descriptors presented above are useful in understanding the particle's meaning, they shed little light on the interactional functions of the particle. Specifically, even if we know that –*to* marks, for example, old information, the question remains why, in a particular context, the speaker would choose to mark something as "old information" given that such marking is optional (and rarely used). What interactional ends does this marking achieve? What are the constraints on the particle's use? What effect does it have on the interlocutor's understanding of the -*to*-marked utterance? Finally, most studies haven't differentiated between the uses of –*to* in different contexts (for example, its use in story-telling episodes versus its use in initiating actions—or first pair parts in an adjacency pair (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974)—such as questions, requests, etc.), and none have considered examples in which the particle is used in "howareyou" type inquiries. Yet, as it will be shown, in "howareyou" type questions, the particle's import in each instance of its use depends on the position of the turn to which it attaches relative to the overall structural organization of the conversation[6]. Given the limitations of the prior research, we may expect that none of the previously developed labels will fully explain the use of –*to* in this environment, and, in fact, the analysis presented in this paper will demonstrate that speakers use the particle to achieve particular interactional and social ends that go beyond the simple information processing that the previous research has focused on.

Drawing on approximately twenty hours of recorded telephone conversations[7] between Russian speakers and using the methodology of conversation analysis, the paper argues that by marking a particular "howareyou" question with -*to*, the speaker indicates that the inquiry is "late" relative to where it should have been appropriately launched. I will talk about two senses in which a "howareyou" question may be marked as "late": one is "structural," dealing with the conventional ways in which conversation is organized; the other is "normative" (or "moral"), which is meant to refer to the speaker's judgment about the question's importance relative to its placement in conversation. While both play a part in the speaker's decision to mark a particular inquiry as "late," this distinction is useful since in some cases one or the other sense of lateness appears to be the overriding one.

"HOWAREYOU" INQUIRIES IN RUSSIAN

The prototypical form of a "howareyou" inquiry in Russian is *kak dela*, most closely translated as "how are things." Many variations are, of course, possible, some specifically designed to target the addressee, a particular aspect of the

addressee's state, or a third person.

The most conventional neutral responses to a "howareyou" inquiry appear to be *nichevo* (literally, "nothing") or *normal'no* ("normal"), sometimes used in combination. These responses most closely correlate to English "fine" or "okay." The neutral responses may be upgraded or downgraded, as well as modified to suggest the presence of a "tellable" (cf. Jefferson, 1980).

The focus here will be on "howareyou" inquiries containing the particle *-to*. The particle is an enclitic, so it attaches to word endings. What word it attaches to appears to depend on the form of the "howareyou" inquiry used. In *kak dela* ("how are things") questions, *-to* is commonly placed after to the noun *dela* ("things"). In questions containing a reference to a particular person (e.g., "How is Tanya?"), *-to* is usually attached to the nominal or pronominal reference to that person:

Q: **Kak dela -TO**
how things PRT
"How are things?"

Q: **Kak Tanja -TO**
how NAME PRT
"How is Tanya?"

STRUCTURALLY LATE "HOWAREYOU" INQUIRIES

I will start with "howareyou" inquiries that are marked as late for overwhelmingly structural reasons. Two environments are prime sites for these: conversation openings and conversation closings.

Late "Howareyou" Inquiries in Conversation Openings

Conversation openings have a more or less stable structure in which particular sequences regularly follow each other. On the basis of English language materials, Schegloff (1986) demonstrated that conversation openings prototypically consist of the following sequences:
- summons/answer sequence (e.g., a ring followed by hello);
- identification (and/or recognition) sequence (in which participants recognize or identify each other);
- an exchange of greetings; followed by
- a pair of "howareyou" sequences (with the reciprocal "howareyou" sequence usually due after the first sequence is closed)

Not all conversations contain all of these sequences; some sequences may be preempted by either the caller or the recipient for a variety of reasons.

While no formal investigation of conversation openings in Russian has been conducted, my observations indicate that English findings can be extended, more

or less, to Russian. In order to show the distinct placement of *-to*-marked
"howareyou" inquiries in conversation openings, I will first present two examples
of conversation openings in which "howareyou" inquires are *not* marked with *–to*:
these are Excerpt 1 and Excerpt 2. As can be seen from the arrowed lines, in both
cases the unmarked "howareyou" inquires are launched immediately after greet-
ings. (Transcription conventions are described in the Appendix. Audio files are
available at www.RussianCA.org.)

Excerpt 1: Marik and Rima

1		((3 rings))	
2	**MAR:**	**(A)llo?/**	
		hello	
		Hello	
3	**RIMA:**	**.h Marachka,/**	
		NAME	
		.h Marik	
4		(0.2)	
5	**MAR:**	**Da,/**	
		yes	
		Yes	
6 →	**RIMA:**	**Zdrastvuj/ kak dela,/**	
		hello	how things
		Hello/ How are you	
7		(0.2)	
8	**MAR:**	**Nichevo:,/**	
		nothing	
		Fine	
9		(0.8)	
10	**RIMA:**	**A ty adi:n?/**	
		PRT you alone	
		Are you alone	

Excerpt 2: Raya & Rima

1		((half ring))	
2	**RAYA:**	**Allo/**	
		hello	
		Hello	

3   (.)

4   **RIMA:** **Alljo Raju[s'/**
                   hello NAME
                   Hello Raya

5   **RAYA:** **[A,/ privet/=**
                    ah hi
                   Ah Hi

6 →   **RIMA:** **=Privet/=Kak deli:shki/**
                    hi   how things
                   Hi/ How are things

7   **RAYA:** **^N'chevo/ pa[tixonechku/**
                   nothing   slowly
                   Fine/ little by little

8   **RIMA:**   **[.hhh   A ya ty znaesh chjeta t- tebja ne slyshna**
                              PRT I you know something you   not heard
                        You know I haven't heard from you

9   **ne vi:dna/=ya tebe kakta tut probavala zvanit' to:zhe da tebja ne**
           not seen   I you sometime here tried   call also to you not
           in a while/ I tried calling you but could not

10   **dazvanilas'/=[I sevodnja uzhe reshila {mesadzh} astavit'/**
           get-through I today   already decided message leave
           get through/ And today I finally decided to leave a message/

        In these two excerpts, the unmarked "howareyou" inquires are placed where
expected, after greetings, and the conversation opens in a more-or-less ordinary
fashion. Now we will turn to some environments in which "howareyou" inquiries
do receive *–to* marking.

        In Excerpt 3, Rima calls her friend Ella from a different phone because of
the poor reception on the first phone.

Excerpt 3: Ella & Rima

1   ((1 ring))

2   **ELLA:** **Allo?/**
                   hello
                   Hello

3   **RIMA:**   **El/ l<u>u:</u>?she/**
                      NAME better
                      Ella, is this better?

4   **ELLA:**   **D<u>a</u>/ xarasho/=**
                      yes good
                      Yes it's good

5   **RIMA:**   **=A-ga/=A ya v't-z- (.) da znaesh zvanila s radia telef<u>o:</u>,na/**
                       PRT   I PRT   PRT you-know called from radio phone
                       A-ha/ You know I called from a cordless phone

6   **ELLA:**   **A:/ I paetamu tam inagda prapadal[a/**
                      oh and because-of-that there sometimes disappeared
                      Oh/ And that's why your voice disappeared sometimes

7   **RIMA:**   **[A-ga,/**
                                                              PRT
                                                              Ah ha

8   (.)

9   **RIMA:**   **.h A schas zn<u>a</u>esh shto ya tebya ochen' xarash^o, slyshu zh/ no**
                          PRT now you-know what I you   very   well   hear PRT   but
                      Now you know what - I can hear you well/ but

10   **ja slyshu i sebja tozhe/<<u>Ex</u>a ta[koe idjet./**
                      I hear and myself also   echo such goes
                      I hear myself as well/ There is an echo

11   **ELLA:**   **[A nu   eta byvaet/**
                                                    PRT PRT that happens
                                                    That happens

12   **Ni[chevo strashnava/**
                      nothing scary
                      It's okay

13   →   **RIMA:**   **[.hhh A-ga/<Nu k^<u>a</u>k [dela ta/**
                         PRT how things PRT
                         A-ha/ How are things

14   **ELLA:**   **[(Chevo   ) kak u vas dela/**
                                                      what   how with you things
                                                      (What) how are things with you

15   **RIMA:** .hh Da nichev<u>o</u>:/ vsje narma:l'na/=[Vot- s"<u>e</u>zdili v <Chik<u>a</u>,ga>/

                          PRT nothing   all   normal PRT went to   Chicago

                          Fine/ everything's okay/ We went to Chicago

16   **ELLA:**   [vsje

                                          all

                                        everything

Here, the beginning of the conversation is taken up by a discussion of the clarity of the phone reception. This discussion displaces a "howareyou" sequence that would typically occur there. When Rima does eventually launch a "howareyou" sequence (line 13), it is marked with *-to*. The particle, then, appears to indicate that the inquiry is launched later than it would have been under normal circumstances. By marking the question with *-to*, Rima makes her understanding that the inquiry is misplaced evident to her interlocutor. In other words, she is "doing being late."

In this case, the displacing talk is contact related. It turns out that this is true for other instances of likewise positioned *-to*-marked inquiries (Schegloff, 1986). Other examples of displacing talk include references to prior attempts to call, problems with the recipiency, etc. Inquiries of this sort are delayed by sequences dealing with other business and are, then, structurally "late."

It should be noted, however, that the use of *-to* in such contexts is not obligatory, as some similarly delayed "howareyous" are *not* marked as such. In fact, it appears that only the speaker "responsible" for the delay marks his/her inquiry with *-to*, thus specifically "doing being late" and taking the responsibility for it.

Looking back at Excerpt 3, we note that in line 14 Ella also launches a "howareyou" sequence, starting it in overlap with Rima's. Ella's question is similarly late, yet it is not marked with *-to*. Why is it left unmarked when Rima's inquiry in the same context *is* marked? It may be suggested that *-to* marking is not just a matter of "structural" lateness but a matter of moral or social accountability as well. In this case, a comparison between Ella's and Rima's interactional situations provides a clear demonstration of this. While both women launched their "howareyous" virtually at the same time, they are not equally accountable for the delay. Not only is Rima the one who initially called from a bad phone, she continues to discuss the quality of the connection even after Ella confirms that the connection is fine. Note that Rima provides an account for the bad connection in line 5 (which implicates her as the responsible party) and then complains further about the connection in lines 9-10 (a complaint Ella dismisses in lines 11-12). Rima is then arguably responsible for the delay in launching the "howareyou" inquiry while Ella is not, which explains the difference.

Similar observations apply to the next segment (Excerpt 4) in which a *reciprocal* "howareyou" is marked as late. Here, the displacing talk deals with the issue of proper recipiency of the call. Greg calls to talk to his friend, but gets the friend's wife, Zina, instead.

<u>Excerpt 4: Zina & Greg</u>

```
1          RECORDING:     A T an' T

2      ((2 rings))

3      ZINA:   Aljo/
                hello
                Hello

4      GREG:   Zi:na,/
                NAME
                Zina

5              (0.5)

6      GREG:   [Pri-  Prive:t/
                h-    hi
                      Hi

7      ZINA:   [(Da:l')/
                yes
                (Yes)

8              (0.2)

9      ZINA:   ↑Prive:t Gr↓eg/
                hi      NAME
                Hi      Greg

10     GREG:   A:a:
                ah
                A:h:

11             Kak dela:/
                How things
                How are things

12     ZINA:   Da nichevo/=Schas minu:tachku/=
                Yes nothing  now    minute
                Fine/ Just a minute

13     GREG:   =Davaj/
                Give
                Okay

14  →  ZINA:   Ka:k tam: sam      ta/   nichevo?/
                How there yourself PRT nothing
                How are you/Fine?
```

15   **GREG: V̲sje narm<u>a</u>:l'na/**
                 All   normal
                 Everything is fine

16   (0.2)

17   **Vsje narmal'na/=**
                 All   normal
                 Everything is fine

18   **ZINA: =Nu s̲lava bogu/=Schas daju/ s-schas trubachku/**
                 PRT thank god   now give   not   receiver
                 Thank god.Now I am passing the phone

19   **GREG: A-ha,/**
                 ah hah
                 Ah hah

After greetings (lines 6-9), Greg initiates a "howareyou" inquiry (line 11). Zina responds, but instead of doing a reciprocal "howareyou," she offers to pass the phone to her husband (line 12). Greg accepts, after which Zina finally does the reciprocal "howareyou" and marks it with -*to*. So in this case as well, -*to* marking indicates the delayed placement of the inquiry.

In addition to using the particle –*to* to mark structural lateness, the speaker indicates that she is accountable for the delay. Note that Zina had an opportunity to launch the reciprocal question in line 12, but chose instead to present herself as a switchboard operator and offer to pass the phone[8]. So, similar to the previous case, the issue of accountability comes into play.

In the next segment (Excerpt 5), a similar dynamic takes place. Rima is calling her friend, but her friend's husband, Marik, answers the phone.

Excerpt 5: Marik & Rima
         ((at the conversation start))

1   **MAR: D̲a/**
                 yes
                 Yes

2   **RIMA: M̲a,rik/**
                 NAME
                 Marik

3   **MAR: A̲u/**
                 yeah
                 Yeah

4	**RIMA:**	**Priv^et/**
		hi
		Hi
5	**MAR:**	**Privet/**
		hi
		Hi
6	**RIMA:**	**A ty cheyo krichish ta/**
		PRT you what shout PRT
		Why are you shouting
7	**MAR:**	**A ty krichish i ja krich[u/=A ty ploxa sly:shish/**
		PRT you shout and I shout PRT you badly hear
		You are shouting and I am shouting/ You can't hear well
8	**RIMA:**	**[Heh-heh**
		Heh heh
		Heh heh
9	**RIMA:**	**Heh-heh-heh-heh [.HH**
10	**MAR:**	**[Daleko zhe/ Rima/**
		far PRT NAME
		It's far Rima
11	**RIMA:**	**Kak dela:/**
		how things
		How are you
12	**MAR:**	**Nichevo/**
		nothing
		Fine
13		(.)
14	**RIMA:**	**Chje delaete,/**
		what do
		What are you doing
15		(0.5)
16	**MAR:**	**Da kakojta e:: (0.2) idiotskij fil'm smotrim/**
		PRT some idiotic movie watch
		We are watching some stupid movie
17	**RIMA:**	**Ah:/ Tak ja vas atadrala?/**
		oh so I you torn-away
		Oh/ So I tore you away [from it]

18   **MAR:**   **Da ne,t/ Tanja vsegda s-gatova (0.2) sbrọsit' eta dela/**
                 PRT no NAME always   ready   throw that thing
                 No/ Tanya is always ready to get out of it

19   **RIMA:** **Heh-heh-he [.HH**

20   **MAR:**   **[°pamojmu/**
                        in-my-opinion
                        I think

21   **RIMA:** **Nu [davaj ja tebja atpuschạju/**
                 PRT okay   I you let-go
                 Okay I'll let you go

22   **MAR:**   **[°(Kak u vas dela/)°**
                  how with you things
                  How are you

23 → **MAR:**   **Kak u vas delạ ta/=**
                 how with you things PRT
                 How are you

24   **RIMA:** **=.hhNich'vo/=Pamalẹnichku/<Vchera [byli na Ghamlẹ:te,/**
                 nothing   little-by-little   yesterday were on Hamlet
                  Fine/ Little by little/ Yesterday we went to Hamlet

25   **MAR:**   **[°( )**

              (.)

26   **MAR:**   **A kto (evo etava) ispalnjaet/**
                 PRT how it that   play
                 Who's playing it

         ((talk continues about Hamlet))

In Line 11, Rima launches a routine "howareyou" inquiry (in this case delayed by a discussion of Marik's voice). Marik responds with "fine" (line 12), but fails to launch a reciprocal "howareyou" (or offer to pass the phone to his wife, for that matter). After a brief pause (line 13), Rima asks another question (arguably, a pre-request to getting Marik's wife on the line). In line 21, she makes a move to close the conversation. In overlap with that, Marik launches a reciprocal "howareyou" (not -*to*-marked if the hearing is correct) which he then repeats in the clear in line 23, now marking it with -*to*. This reciprocal inquiry is late on several counts: It didn't occur immediately after the first "howareyou" sequence (in line 13), and it is now positioned after a conversation closing has been launched. By marking the question with -*to*, Marik conveys his responsibility for being late, as

he had an early opportunity (or even several opportunities) to launch it.

Thus, we can see that in all cases, -*to*-marked "howareyou" inquiries are initiated from structurally late positions. Additionally, we observed that structural "lateness" does not necessarily warrant –*to* marking, as some technically late questions are left unmarked. It appears that by marking an inquiry with -*to*, the speaker doesn't only indicate that the inquiry is late, but that it should have been launched earlier. In other words, -*to* marking conveys a degree of moral responsibility on the part of the speaker.

Late "Howareyou" Inquiries in Conversation Closings

The last example offers a transition to another environment in which "howareyou" inquiries are marked as late for largely (but not exclusively) structural reasons—conversation closings. As we just saw in Excerpt 5, Marik's second attempt to ask a "howareyou" question (in line 23, unlike the one in line 22) takes place after Rima's offer to close the conversation (line 21) and is marked as late (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). The question is in no way responsive to Rima's closing move; in effect, it reopens the conversation from a late position.

In Excerpt 6, a "howareyou" type inquiry is also placed in a pre-closing environment: after talking about arrangements. The segment begins with Greg and Lev closing a discussion about the weather, followed by a sequence in which Lev (who lives in Russia) inquires about when Greg will visit him there.

Excerpt 6: Greg & Lev
((talk about the weather in Moscow and Minnesota))

1   GREG: >Nu Le- nu kh u nas vabsche< klimat bliskij/ (.) k-m- kh mezhdu:
             PRT   PRT   with us in-general climate close   between
             In general we have a very similar climate

2   (.) Minnesotaj i Maskvoj >primerna tozhe< samae./
             minnesota and moscow about   the same
             Minnesota and Moscow are about the same

3   LEV: Pan'[atna/ Nu vot u nas znachit pri[merna adinakova i est'/
             understood PRT PRT with us meant about   the-same and be
             I see/ So it is about the same

4   GREG: [.hh #eh#   [kmh

5   GREG: Y[a-
             cl(ear)
             Cl(ear)

6   **LEV:**   **[↑(A) kagda ty priedesh/**
           PRT when you will-come
           When are you coming/

7   **GREG:** **L̲j̲ev/ priedu priedu/**
           NAME will-come will-come
           Lev/ I will I will

8   (0.5)

9   **GREG:** **#uh:# ya tebe t̲u̲tzhe saabschu kogda: #v:# [budet/**
           I you right-away let-know when   will-be
           I'll let you know right away when it will be

10   **LEV:**   **[↑Davaj a ty**
                                        let's and you
                                       Come or you'll

11   **(pri'sh) ne zastanesh ↓<nicherta>./**
           arrive   not catch   nothing ((slang))
           come and not see a damn thing

12   **GREG:** **D(h)a n(h)u:!/ ne mozhet ta[ko-**
           PRT   PRT   not can   such
           No/ it's impossible

13   **LEV:**   **[(nu-) (.) n̲u̲ ne n̲u̲**
                                PRT   PRT not PRT
                                     Not

14   **a vot tebe n̲u̲/**
           PRT PRT you PRT
           It could happen

15   **GREG:** **A nu- zd- Nu l̲a̲dna ty kanch(h)aj/**
           PRT PRT   PRT okay you stop
           Just stop it

16   **heh-[heh-hah-hah-HAH-HAH-HAH-HAH .hh**

17   **LEV:**   **[hih-hih-heh-heh**

18   **GREG:** **[eh-**

19   **LEV:**   **[£Dav̲a̲j vyb'r̲a̲jsja/ Xot' pasmatret' na tvaju mos'ku panimaesh.£/**
           come-on come-out at-least look   at your face? you-understand
           Come on get out here/ We'd like to at least take a look at your
           face you know

20		**GREG:**	**£Xarash<u>o</u>:/ Lj<u>e</u>v£/**
			good NAME
			Okay Lev

21			**Abja[z<u>a</u>tel'na/**
			for-sure
			For sure

22	→	**LEV:**	**[Nu shto- k<u>a</u>k u R<u>i</u>ty t' dela./**
			PRT what how with NAME PRT things
			So how are things with Rita

23		**GREG:**	**Nu u neje vsje narma:l'na./**
			PRT with her all normal
			Everything is fine with her

24		**LEV:**	**Nu ana med<u>a</u>l' paluch<u>i</u>:?la/**
			PRT she medal received
			Did she receive the medal

25		**GREG:**	**D<u>a</u>:/ vsje paluchila/**
			yes all received
			Yes she received everything

26			**=Vot my vje- vmeste- vmeste ezdili v Chika,ga/**
			PRT we together together went to Chicago
			We went to Chicago together

27		**LEV:**	**A-gha,/**
			Ah hah
			Ah hah

Here Lev's inquiry about Greg's wife (in line 22) is launched after pre-closing talk — and is, thus, structurally late. Additionally, by marking the inquiry with *-to*, Lev indicates that the question occurs later than where it should have been asked—and that he is accountable for the delay. Several factors play into this. First, the inquiry takes place after a commonplace topic, such as the weather (which is arguably of lesser moral import than a discussion of family members' well-being). Second, aside from being closure relevant, the sequence in which Lev inquires about Greg's coming to visit is expanded by Lev with a half-joking criticism directed at Greg for not yet coming (lines 10-19)[9]. Criticizing the interlocutor is a delicate activity (as evidenced by the presence of laugh tokens and smile voice throughout) that draws attention to the needs or wishes of the critic over the person who is being criticized. Lev, who launched this activity, is now in the delicate situation of somebody who initiated a self-attentive action before properly dealing with addressee-attentive matters. Moreover, as we can see from Lev's follow-up

question (in line 24) to the "howareyou," there is a particular reason to ask about Greg's wife as there are important events in their lives that Lev is accountable for knowing and inquiring about (such as the wife getting a medal for work achievements). Given this interactional context, Lev's "howareyou" inquiry is normatively late.

Thus, we have seen that by marking a "howareyou" inquiry with *-to*, the speaker not only orients to it being *structurally* late, but also to it being *normatively* late⸺or to the disparity between the question's positioning in the conversation and its social and interactional import. Here, then, the issues of moral responsibility and accountability come to the forefront.

Special Cases of Personal State Inquiries: "How Was Your Drive?"

This section will discuss a sub-case of "howareyou" inquiries that clearly illustrates the use of this particle to indicate the normatively special status of the question vis-à-vis its placement in conversation. These are inquiries of the form "how was your drive," asked about a short trip to the destination where the recipient of the call is now located. The caller knows when the trip took place and the approximate time of arrival. So in these cases there is a clearly timed instigating event that is known to both parties, and accessible to the analyst.

For a contrastive analysis, we will first examine a segment in which a "how was your drive" question is not *-to*-marked. In Excerpt 7, Dusya calls her daughter Lora who was just visiting at Dusya's with her baby granddaughter:

Excerpt 7: Dusya & Lora
1		((2 rings))

2	**LORA:**	**Hello:?/**
		hello
		Hello

3	**DUS:**	**Lorachka,/**
		NAME
		Lora

4	**LORA:**	**Aga,/=**
		yes
		Yeah

5	**DUS:**	**=Eta ja/**
		this I
		It's me

6	**LORA:**	**Da/**
		yes
		Yes

7 → **DUS:**   **Nu kak vy daexali,/**
              PRT how you got
              How was your drive

8   **(.)**

9   **LORA: N^u (.) pakapriznichali [nemnozhka./**
              PRT   were-capricious a-little
              She [the baby] was a little fussy

10   **DUS:**   [N-   **Nda:?/**
                                          yes
                                   R-- Really

11   **Nu vobschem vy uzhe doma?/**
              PRT generally you already home
              So are you already home

12   (0.8)

13   **LORA: Da[:/**
              yes
              Yes

Note that the "how was your drive" inquiry (in line 6) occurs immediately after greetings as the reason for the call. The call is timed so as to reach the addressee right at or soon after the time of arrival at the destination. So the placement of the question corresponds to its importance; in fact, it's been asked at the first possible opportunity.

Let's compare this situation with Excerpt 8. Anna calls Mira several hours after Mira reached her destination. The segment starts several minutes into the call:

Excerpt 8: Mira & Anna
1   ((about drinking coffee))

2   **MIRA: Schas vot pap"ju,/**
              now   PRT drink
              Now I'll drink [some coffee]

3   (.)

4   **MIRA: [(i)**

5 → **ANNA: [Ty xarasho? daexala ta/**
               you well   got   PRT
              Did you get there okay

6   MIRA: .hh O:j/ da   ty shto ja za <u>ch^as</u> daexala/=<u>A</u>nja./=
                         oy   PRT you what I for hour got   NAME
                         Oy/ absolutely I got there in [just] an hour Anya

7   ANNA: =A:
                         ah
                         Ah

8   MIRA: .hh Ja vyshla pjat<u>na</u>tsat' min<u>u</u>,t Anja/
                         I left   fifteen   minutes NAME
                         I left fifteen minutes after [the hour] Anya

9   ANNA: Hm-mm/
                         Hm mm
                         Hm mm

           ((talk continues about Mira's trip))

Here, the "how was your drive" inquiry (line 4) is marked with *-to*. Note that the interactional context in which it occurs is quite different from the previous case. First, the inquiry is launched later in the call, after several topics have already been discussed. Second, the call is placed several hours after the addressee's arrival at the destination. So the inquiry is delayed temporally and marked as such by the speaker. Here, *-to* marking indicates that the speaker had been meaning to ask about the trip earlier, that the position of the question in the conversation (and the overall timeline of events) does not represent the degree of the speaker's concern about the addressee.

By comparing the two cases, we can see that the particle *-to* may indicate the question's normative misplacement, suggesting that the question is more important to the speaker that its location would otherwise imply.

NORMATIVELY LATE "HOWAREYOU" INQUIRIES

This section will examine some other "howareyou" questions that are marked as late primarily on the basis of the speaker's orientation to the normative/moral ordering of conversational topics. These inquiries receive *–to* marking to indicate that the question is being launched later for reasons that are unrelated to its structural placement in conversation. Instead, the question has a sort of "normative or moral priority" not accurately represented by its actual positioning.

The following example will illustrate the use of *–to* for marking normative lateness. Kara and Dusya are two elderly women. Dusya has been having problems with her foot.

Excerpt 9: Dusya & Kara

9		((2 rings))

10	**DUS:**	**Allo?/**
		hello
		Hello

11	**KAR:**	**Dobrae utra/**
		good morning
		Good morning

12	**DUS:**	**Dobrae utra/**
		good morning
		Good morning

13 →	**KAR:**	**[Nu kak del<u>a</u> ta/**
		PRT how things PRT
		How are things

14	**DUS:**	**[.h h h**

15	**DUS:**	**Da K<u>a</u>ra u menja vsjetaki perel<u>o</u>m/**
		PRT NAME with me after-all fracture
		Kara it's a fracture after all

16	**KAR:**	**Go:sp[adi/ ↑V kakom m<u>e</u>ste/**
		god in what place
		Oh god/ In what location

17	**DUS:**	**[.HHH**

18	**DUS:**	**Vtaroj fal<u>a</u>,ngi/**
		second phalanx
		The second phalanx

((talk continues about the foot))

Note that Kara's "howareyou" question (line 5) is launched very early in the conversation—immediately after greetings—yet, it receives –*to* marking. Why is the question in this early position -*to*-marked? After all, there is no earlier place where it could have been reasonably placed. The explanation lies in the difference between structural and normative lateness. While the question is obviously not late from the structural point of view, by marking it with -*to*, the speaker indicates that the question is normatively late—that the question is so important that even this early positioning in the conversation does not do justice to the speaker's con-cern. In a way, the lateness here is not as much a matter of fact as a matter of treatment: the speaker marks the question *as if* it was late, *as if* she intended to call

earlier to ask about it, but didn't. The particle *-to* thus functions as a marker of urgency or normative priority of the question.

Additionally, note that Dusya treats Kara's question as pursuing an update on a particular situation (specifically, the results of her visit to the doctor)—rather than a general account of her well-being. This understanding is evident in Dusya's response (line 7) as she gives only one piece of information (the diagnosis), and gives it immediately in the first turn-constructional unit (TCU)[10]. This way of responding contrasts sharply with responses to unmarked "howareyou" inquiries, as in those cases the news is often delayed by several TCUs that claim the absence of "tellables." This pattern of responding to unmarked "howareyous" is evident in the following example (Excerpt 10):

Excerpt 10: Rima & Regina

19	**REG:**	**Ya:sna/=Nu chevo eschje xarosheva,/**
		clear PRT what else good
		I see/ What else is new

20	**RIMA:**	**N^u: nichevo: tak/ Vsje: vrode kak panevmozhechku/**
		PRT nothing so all seems like little
		Nothing / Everything seems to be little by little

21	→	**Vot Mishka moj dom sabralsja pakupat'/**
		PRT NAME my house plans buy
		My Misha is planning to buy a house

22	**REG:**	**Da ty shto/ Nu:,/**
		PRT you what PRT
		Wow/ So?

23	**RIMA:**	**Da:/ Vot oni (0.8) tk ((swallows?)) prismatreli {madel house,}/**
		yes PRT they found model house
		Yes/ They found a model house

24		**uzhe sastavili kupchiju/**
		already wrote deed-of-purchase
		already put together a deed of purchase

The "howareyou" question in line 1 ("what else is new?") is in the form of a topic solicitation, inviting the recipient to nominate a topic for discussion. In response to the question, Rima does not immediately report the news (even though the question specifically searches for it). In fact, the first two TCUs of the response claim absence of any "tellables" (lines 3-4). Only after that, does Rima offer the news.

The contrast between Rima's and Dusya's response (in Excerpt 10) suggests that by using *-to* in a "howareyou" inquiry, the speaker may indicate that the ques-

tion is topically targeted in that it requests an update on a particular on-going situation (known to the speaker and recognizable by the recipient).

Excerpt 11 presents additional evidence in point. Here, the recipient of an early *-to*-marked "howareyou" inquiry does not have any significant news to report, yet the given response indicates the speaker's awareness that the question is pursuing an update on a particular situation:

Excerpt 11: Sofa & Rima
              ((Rima has just changed phones))

1   **SOFA:**   **All<u>o</u>/**
                       hello
                       Hello

2   **RIMA:**   **A-xa/<.h<u>S</u>of/=**
                       a-ha   NAME
                       Ah ha/   Sofia

3   **SOFA:**   **=A[:/**
                       ah
                       Yeah

4   **RIMA:**   **[Nu chevo/ kak e- kak dela ta h/**
                          PRT what   how   how things PRT
                          So how are things

5   (.)

6   →   **SOF:**   **Oj Rima ya ne znˇ<u>a:</u>ju shthohhh/**
                       oy NAME   I not know   what
                       Oy Rima I don't know what

7   **Nichevo ne magu skazat' vam/**
                       nothing not can say you
                       I can't tell you anything

8   **RIMA:**   **mTa:,k/**
                          so
                          Right

9   **SOFA:**   **Oni skazali shto atvet dadut v techenii dvux nedel',/**
                       They said   that answer will-give in during 2 week
                       They said they'll give a response without two weeks

10   **RIMA:**   **[A:/**
                       oh
                       Oh

11   **SOFA:**   **[Na toj nedeli oni budut intervi̯,ravat'/**
                    on next week they will interview
                    They'll be interviewing next week

12   **RIMA:**   **A-ga,/**
                    a-ha
                    Ah hah

13   **SOFA:**   **A: na sle̲dushej nedeli ani budut reshat' (   )**
                    and on next   week they will decide
                    And the week after they'll be deciding

The first TCU of Sofa's response (in line 6) provides an update on the situation Rima is inquiring about by indicating that it is still uncertain. While to an outside analyst the target of Rima's question in line 4 is opaque, Sofa's response indicates not only her understanding that the question is targeting something particular, but also what the specific target is[11]. Remarkably, even in the absence of "tellables," a -*to*-marked question in this position is treated differently from an unmarked question as the recipient packages the "no-news" response as being "tellable" while a recipient of an unmarked question (as in Excerpt 10) designs her very newsworthy response as a "no-news" one. The differential treatment of unmarked and early -*to*-marked "howareyou" questions suggests that marked inquires are topically targeted[12].

Why would -*to* be used both to indicate the question's lateness and its topical target-ness? It appears that inquiries into ongoing problems (or happy events) should be launched early rather than late as they are used by participants as ways of indexing the state of their relationship. A failure to ask about an ongoing problem or to ask about it "early enough" may be indicative of "not caring" and, therefore, potentially sanctionable. By marking a very early "howareyou" inquiry as late, the speaker displays continuing orientation to the personal state of the other even when they are *not* actually interacting. Thus, -*to* in this context marks a particular kind of relationship between the parties, suggesting that the speaker was concerned about the other even before she made the call.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we have seen that –*to* marking can be used in a variety of contexts to indicate the question's structural and/or normative lateness, and is, thus, an important resource for maintaining and negotiating social relationships. Marking with -*to* provides an interesting insight into participants' understanding of the overall structural organization of conversation as well as the organization of social and moral accountability. What it marks is not most importantly grammatical, but social and interactional. The particle indexes the state of the relationship between the parties as defined by what they have or have not said and when they

said it relative to when they could or should have said it. In other words, the particle serves as a link between grammar, organization of talk-in-interaction, and sociality.

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APPENDIX

The transcripts are based on standard conversation analytic transcription conventions developed by Gail Jefferson (see, e.g., Ochs, Schegloff, & Thompson, 1996, pp. 461-465). The following frequently used symbols not included in the above reference have also been employed:

£ word £   "smile" voice
\# word \#   creaky voice
{ word }   code switch into English

Instead of the standard ways in which unit boundary intonation is transcribed in English, the following modifications to the conventions are made to account for the particulars of Russian intonation:

, ? !   are placed after the syllable carrying the distinct intonation contour (comma intonation, question, or exclamatory intonation) that will be actualized at the unit boundary

/   marks a unit boundary. If no intonation symbol (such as , ? !) is placed in the preceding unit, it marks a default, somewhat falling pitch contour

./   marks a final pitch drop that is larger that the default, unmarked pitch drop

Additional intonation symbols:

w^ord   marks a distinct pitch peak on the following syllable or vowel (higher than underline and shorter than ↑arrow)

wˇord   marks a dip in pitch on the following stressed vowel (as opposed to the common rise on the stressed vowel)

Cyrillic	LoC	IPA	Transcript	Cyrillic	LoC	IPA	Transcript
а	a	a	a	с	s	s	s
б	b	b	b	т	t	t	t
в	v	v	v	у	u	u	u
г	g	g	g	ф	f	f	f
д	d	d	d	х	kh	x	x
е	e	jɛ/ɛ	e	ц	ts	ts	ts
ё	e	ʲɔ/ɔ	je	ч	ch	tʃʲ	ch
ж	zh	ʒ	zh	ш	sh	ʃ	sh
з	z	z	z	щ	shch	ʃʲ	sch
и	i	i	i	ъ			″
й	i	j	j	ы	y	ɨ	y
к	k	k	k	ь	'	j	′
л	l	l	l	э	e	ɛ	e
м	m	m	m	ю	iu	ʲu	ju
н	n	n	n	я	ia	ʲa	ja
о	o	ɔ	o	а/о (unstressed)		ə	a
п	p	p	p	г (dialectical)		ɣ	gh
р	r	r	r	non-standard reduced deleted vowel(s)			`

Table 1: Correspondences between Russian Cyrillic alphabet, Library of Congress (LoC) Cyrillic transliteration conventions, IPA, and symbols used in the transcript

Transcription/transliteration of Russian speech

Due to the particular demands imposed by conversation-analytic approach, no standard transliteration conventions for Slavic languages (such as Library of Congress, International Standardization Organization ISO 9, or International Scholarly System ISS) are used for transcribing the conversational Russian. The main reason is that these conventions are designed to represent written language while conversation analysis focuses on representing how people actually talk and *not* how they should talk or how their speech should be represented in standard orthography. On the other hand, a standard phonetic transcription (such as the International Phonetic Alphabet) is also unfeasible as it is designed for transcribing very short segments of talk (usually isolated words or phrases) for a linguistic analysis. Using a standard phonetic transcription for representing hours of data is prohibitive in terms of the demands it would place both on the transcriber and the reader, who would have to at least be familiar with the complex, often non-intuitive system used in this field of study (see Sacks et al., 1974, p. 734 for a discussion of this issue for English materials). Additionally, a standard phonetic transcription system forces on the transcriber (and on the reader) a set of theoretical orientations that a conversation analyst may not want to subscribe to, which, in turn, affects not only the product of the transcribing (the transcript) but the analysis as well (Kelly & Local, 1989; Ochs, 1979). For these reasons (and in accordance with the conversation analytic tradition), the transcripts are represented in a system that relies on the basic rules of reading the Roman alphabet and is sensitive to the sound system of the Russian language. In order to accommodate understanding without losing track of the details of talk, the words are represented the way "they sound" to an experienced transcriber, but not necessarily a professional phonetician. In other words, not every single detail of sound production that might be seen on a spectrogram is represented – but only those that appear salient, and especially those that previous conversation analytic research has found to be of consequence (such as timing, pitch, volume, aspiration, etc.)[13]. This, of course, is a matter of judgment as additional details of talk may appear more salient and turn out to be consequential for the analysis at hand. Every transcript should thus be considered a work in progress, and subject to change on any subsequent rehearing.

The Russian-speaking reader is advised to read the transcript out loud if any understanding problems are encountered. Additionally, to facilitate access to the data, audio recordings of the segments included in this paper are made available at www.RussianCA.org. Table 1 shows correspondences between the Russian Cyrillic alphabet, relevant Library of Congress transliteration symbols (without diacritics), standard IPA symbols, and the symbols used in the transcripts.

The first line of the transcript represents Russian data using the conventions shown in Table 1. The second line is a word for word translation into English ("PRT" stands for "particle"). The third line (in italics) is idiomatic translation (without information about sound production).

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NOTES

[1] There is one very different use of the particle –to that will not be considered in this paper: in indefinite constructions like *shto-to* ("something"), *kto-to* ("somebody"), *kakoj-to* ("some kind"), etc. The "indefinite –to" is a grammatical particle that is quite regular and distinct from the "non-indefinite –to" we will focus on here (Heingartner, 1996).

[2] One exception to the literature's emphasis on information-processing is Heingartner (1996) where the particle is considered from a sociolinguistic perspective. However, Heingartner's conclusion that it is used to mark power in discourse appears to be weakly supported.

[3] A comprehensive review of several information-processing approaches to discourse relevant to the study of –to and some other Russian particles can be found in McCoy (2001).

[4] In the interests of space, some studies (either smaller in scope or only touching upon the particle -to) have not been included in the brief review: Apresjan (1986), Bonnot (1988), and Grenoble (1998).

[5] For a discussion of importance of natural recorded data, see, for example, Heritage (1984).

[6] The fact that both "composition" and "position" of a particular turn are important in understanding its interactional import has been repeatedly demonstrated in conversation analytic literature. For one example, see Schegloff & Sacks (1973, p. 299-300).

[7] The corpus yielded approximately 150 instances of –to in first part parts (questions, requests, etc.), about 25 of which are "howareyou" type questions.

[8] Note that Zina continues in her role as a switchboard operator even when she finally launches the reciprocal "howareyou." By offering a candidate no-problem response (*nichevo* ("fine") in line 15), Zina indicates that her inquiry is only pro-forma, designed to get a minimal agreement from Greg.

[9] I'd like to thank an anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to the interactional work accomplished in this sequence.
[10] As pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, an additional piece of evidence that supports the argument is Dusya's use of *vsje-taki* ("after all") which highlights the fact the question addresses a particular, previously discussed issue.

[11] As it becomes clearer to us later, Rima is asking for an update on Sofa's (or her relative's) job search.

[12] There is a similarity between the finding presented here with regards to topic-targetness of certain -to-marked "howareyou" type inquiries and the use of –to as a marker of "theme" or "old information" discussed in the literature (Bitextin, 1994; Bonnot, 1987; McCoy, 2001; Rathmayr, 1989; Vasilyeva, 1972). Indeed, -to marking on the questions analyzed in this section suggests to the recipient that the question refers to something known to both interlocutors (or "old information"). However, the analysis presented in this paper differs from the analyses in the literature that focus on information processing. First, as it has been shown, not only is the question's composition (the presence of –to, for example) important, but also its positioning in the conversation. Thus, for example, delayed -to-marked "howareyou" inquiries are not topic-targetted – and, thus, would not be accounted for within the information-processing tradition (other than perhaps to say that these questions are emphatic which leaves the issue of why they would be marked as such unresolved). For a variety of reasons (some of which are briefly examined in the introduction), studies that focus on the information-processing properties of the particle –to fail to take into account the positioning of -to-marked utterances within the overall organization of conversation, and, thus, overlook an important source of information available to the interlocutors in interpreting the particle's meaning. Second, information exchange is not the only thing the interlocutors are oriented to. If there were, the "howareyou" questions discussed in the section would not differ in function or import from questions like "how is your foot?" or "what did the doctor say about your foot?" or an announcement ("I have a toe fracture") followed by some reaction from the recipient. In fact, given the relative ease of information processing, these alternatives may be preferable. Yet they are not likely to appear in the same position in conversation and do not carry, at first glance at least, the same interactional connotation as -to-marked "howareyou" questions. Empirical research in this matter would, of course, be needed to support these claims.

[13] Zemskaia & Kapanadze (1978) discuss some of the issues involved in transcribing colloquial Russian and include several types of transcripts in Cyrillic alphabet (phonetic, intonation, and orthographic).