

Conversation Analysis

1. CA
2. Turns and turn-taking
3. Adjacency pairs
4. Overall organisation (the telephone call)
5. An application: silence
6. A remark on methodology
7. Preference organisation
8. Pre-sequences

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CA: its beginnings

Late fifties early sixties: Chomsky (competence, correctness,...)

Sociologists, *actually occurring talk*, conversation – the prototypical kind of language use

Not correctness, but the organisation and structuring of conversation. **How is conversation organised? What governs conversational structure?**

There is no such thing as a correct conversation. Cases of impossible discourses are hard if not impossible to find

- Responses can address *perlocutions*

- V. heavy use of context. We operate contextually

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1. CA

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Ex.

It's getting late, Mildred

Another ex: an order (Jacob Mey):

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Why can't you shut up?

I strongly suggest you shut your mouth

Sometimes it's a good idea to shut up

I wonder if you really should do all that talking

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Remarks, statements, doubts, hints, questions,...

Among them, not one 'true' speech act of ordering

How does it work? *We know how to evaluate things in context.* We operate contextually

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I wouldn't say more if I were you

Remember that proverb, 'Speech is silver,...'?

How about if you just shut up

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CA: its methods

- Main focus: the organisation and structuring of conversation
 - Who holds the right to speak
 - What kind of rules for taking, yielding, holding floor
- Rigorously empirical approach. Transcriptions
- Avoids premature theory constructions
- Methods inductive
- As many instances as possible
- Ethnomethodology

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2. Turns and turn-taking

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Interesting findings:

- Less than 5 per cent of the speech stream is delivered in overlap
- Gaps between one person speaking & another starting, frequently just a few micro-seconds

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What is a turn?

A basic finding (an "obvious observation" acc. to Levinson): conversation is characterised by turn-taking;

A – B – A – B – ...

But what is a turn?

Levinson: control of the floor, syntactic structure, intonation

Jacob Mey: cites Harvey Sacks, 'a turn is a shift in the direction of the speaking "flow" ', and also in the sense of awaiting one's turn

Allwood: "The concept of "turn" as originally put forth in Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974 can be said to be a combination of the notions of "utterance", "sentence" and "speech act" with the notions of "right to speak", "holding the floor" and "having an audience" "

(In some cases coincide, in other not. Just what is a turn?)

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TRP

Transition relevance place

Focus: turn-taking mechanisms (a *local* management system)

The **TRP**

As TRPs:

- natural breaks (speaker: pause for breath, run out of things to say, declare contribution to be finished)
- formal rules of next-speaker selection

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Turn-taking rules

- First general rule of next-speaker selection: current speaker selects next speaker
 - “Now, we'd like to hear Jim's view on this”
- Second general rule of next-speaker selection: a next speaker selects himself

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J: But dis [person thet DID IT]
IS GOT TO BE:

V: [If I see the person]

J: .hh taken care of

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Some remarks regarding turn-taking mechanism

- A speaker may just ignore an upcoming TRP and hurry past it. Create unnatural break eg mid-sentence (this not recognised as TRP by other participants), and then..
- The non-floor-holders: back-channeling
- Where overlaps do occur, will do so in connection to TRPs
- Overlap resolution mechanism
 - One speaker generally drops out quickly
 - Otherwise, competitive allocation system, syllable-by-syllable, the one who upgrades most (increased amplitude, slowing tempo)

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3. Adjacency pairs

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Adjacency pairs

Also a local management mechanism

Ex.s question–answer, greeting–greeting, order–compliance, offer–acceptance, etc

Given one part of the pair, the other is normally predictable

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- (Adjacency:) Insertion seq.s
So, not strict adjacency, but rather certain *expectations*
Later in chapter: location vs position (pos: not nec. adjacent)

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Schegloff & Sacks (1973): Adjacency pair:
seq of two utterances that are:

(i) adjacent

(ii) produced by different speakers

(iii) ordered as a first part and a second part

(iv) typed; particular first requires particular second

Rule governing use:

Having produced first part, speaker must stop speaking, & next speaker must then produce second part

However, not quite as simple..

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A: May I have a bottle
of Mich? (Q1)

B: Are you twenty one? (Q2)

A: No (A2)

B: No (A1)

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- (Pair / First & second part:) when complex, nested dialogue – several insertion seq.s within each other – there may not necessarily be a unique second part for every first part
- (Typed:) The *range* of possible second parts (Levinson claims that preference is a solution to this)

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So far: local management across two turns: turn-taking and adjacency pairs

Management across 3-4 or more turns: **repair** and **pre-sequences**

Also: overall organisation

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4. Overall organisation (the telephone call)

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One kind of conversation w/ recognisable overall organisation: telephone call

Social activity constituted by talk itself, clear beginning & clear end

Structure:

- Opening section
- First topic slot
- Main body
- Closing section

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Opening section

Three things going on:

- Summons – answer
- Greetings
- Recognition / Identification

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First topic slot

Announcement by caller of reason for call

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C: *rings* ((SUMMONS))
R: Hello ((ANSWER))
((DISPL. FOR REC.))
C: Hi ((GREET. 1st PART))
((C HAS REC. R))
((DISL. FOR REC.))
R: Oh hi: ((GREET. 2nd PART))
((R HAS REC. C))

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Main body

Structured by topical constraints

Preference for linked transitions

No independently calculable procedure;
Topical coherence is smth *constructed* across
turns by the collaboration of participants

Can be seen as both local and global mechanism

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Closing section

Quite a delicate matter..

Achieve coordinated exit from conversation
/ Mutual agreement

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Lund 1

[opening]

\$P: hup

\$J: [1 {j}a:]1

\$P: [1 ö:m]1 // flyg ti{ll}
paris

\$J: mm / ska [2 du ha:]2
en returbiljett

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Closing section; one very general schema:

- A closing down of some topic, typically a closing implicative topic
- One or more pairs of passing turns with pre-closing items (*Okay, All right, So::,..*)
- If appropriate, a typing of the call (Favour requested and done; *Thank you*. Checking state of health; *Well I just wanted to..*)
- Final exchange of terminal elem.s. *Bye, Righteo,..*

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Lund 1

[closing]

\$J: men påsken e0 ju ganska
svår

\$P: {j}a [19 jo]19

\$J: [19 mm]19

\$J: {j}a

\$P: okej / [20 {j}a men+]20

\$J: [20 du få{r}]20 fundera
lite du e0 välkommen igen

\$P: {j}a:

\$J: mm

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Lund 5

[closing]

\$A: ska [17 bara hem och]17
[18 fixa]18 / pengar /

\$B: [17 tar den]17

\$B: [18 jada]18

\$B: gör du de{t} ///

\$A: tack /

\$B: får du den också / tack tack

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Göteborg 1

[closing]

\$K: [16 {j}a ja okej]16 men de{t}
e0 jättebra

\$R: ja

\$K: < tack så mycke{t} >

@ < mood: happy >

\$R: < tack >

@ < mood: happy >

\$K: tack

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Göteborg 1

[opening]

\$R: hej

\$K: hej / ja{g} tänkte bara höra
me{d} dej / ja{g} vet inte / /
hur de{t} funkar me{d}
vi:sa om man..

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Göteborg 2

[closing]

\$S: [50 nä men dom /
ja ja nä nä /
nä precis //]50

\$S: [51 jättebra / jättefint
tack]51

\$R: tack hej

\$S: {j}a tack hej

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Nyman & Schultz a2

[opening]

@ < event: signals from phone >

\$K: resebyrån karin dal

\$B: ja gomorron mitt namn va{r}
bengt bengtson ja{g} ringe
från / ja{g} jobba{r} på
företaget data i haninge
ja{g} tänkte få hjälp me{d}
en liten / boka lite / rese+

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5. An application: silence

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Nyman & Schultz a1

[closing]

\$K: då va{r} re0 bokat å0 klart

\$B: va{d} bra

\$K: okej

\$B: tack ska [507 ru ha]507 hej

\$K: [507 tack]507

\$K: hej

@ < event: signal from phone
when they hang up >

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Silence

- Not a homogeneous phenomenon. Any unitary account will be fundamentally misguided
- *The turn-taking system assigns different values*

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- **Gap:** silence before next speaker self-selects (when no next speaker chosen), ie *delay*
- **Lapse:** non-application of (any) rules
- Selected speaker's **significant / attributable silence**
- Silence indicating problem
 - *What's the time - by the clock?* (exam-type q)
 - C: ((rings))
R: Hello
C: Hello Charles
(0.2)
This is Yolc

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CA: the importance of evidence that 'actually so conceived by *participants*' (as opposed to analyst's statement that *can* so function)

Ex. next speaker selected + indication of neg (here dispreferred) answer

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6. A remark on methodology

C: So I was wondering would you be in your office on Monday (.) by any chance?

(2.0)

C: Probably not

R: Hmm yes

C: You would?

R: Ya

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7. Preference organisation

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(a)

S: You're over 21, aren't you?

C: Sure

S: OK, here's your beer

(b)

S: You're over 21 aren't you?

C: Well, er, yes, my birthday was actually yesterday, and we're having a party tonight...

S: All right, may I see your ID?

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Preference

A very important factor in the organisation of conversation

Operates in many different places

- Second turns in adjacency pairs
- Sequences
- E.g recognition / identification on the phone

Feature: markedness

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Potential markedness features of dispreferred seconds

- Delays
- Prefaces
- Accounts (reason)
- Declination component

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On preferred second turns

FIRST PART	PREFERRED SECOND PART	DISPREF. SECOND PART
Request	Acceptance	Refusal
Offer	Acceptance	Refusal
Assessment	Agreement	Disagr.ment
Question	Expected answer	Unexpected answer or non-answer

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8. Pre-sequences

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Preferred sequences

Repair

1. Self-initiated self-repair
2. Other-initiated self-repair
3. Other-initiated other-repair

Sequence types

- Prompting offer preferable to performing request (special utility: pre-request)

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Pre-sequences; ex.s

Pre-invitations

A: Watcha doing?
B: Nothing
A: Wanna drink?

Pre-requests

A: Do you have hot chocolate?
B: mmm
A: Can I have hot chocolate with whipped cream
B: Sure ((leaves to get))

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Location vs. position

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On indirect speech acts:

Cf seq.s:

Pos 1 – Pos 2 – Pos 3 – Pos 4

Pos 1 – Pos 4

Post hoc distinction to say that Pos 1 in first seq is a pre-request, whereas Pos 1 in second seq is an indirect request

So, here 'so-called indirect speech acts are Pos 1 turns – pre-requests – formulated so as to expect Pos 4 responses in second turn. Q.s about literal vs indirect force simply do not arise'

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Pre-requests: a re-analysis of indirect speech acts

Pos. 1 A: Do you have.. PRE-REQUEST

Pos. 2 B: Yes GO AHEAD

Pos. 3 A: Can I have.. REQUEST
I'll have..

Pos. 4 B: RESPONSE

Pos. 1 turn: checks the most likely grounds for rejection

Most preferred: Pos 1 – Pos 4

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