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ANALYZING TALK AND TEXT

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There are two much used but distinctively different types of empirical materials in qualitative research: interviews and naturally occurring materials. Interviews consist of accounts given to the researcher about the issues in which he or she is interested. The topic of the research is not the interview itself but rather the issues discussed in the interview. In this sense, research that uses naturally occurring empirical material is different; in this type of research, the empirical materials themselves (e.g., the tape-recordings of mundane interactions, the written texts) constitute specimens of the topic of the research. Consequently, the researcher is in more direct touch with the very object that he or she is investigating.

Most qualitative research probably is based on interviews. There are good reasons for this. By using interviews, the researcher can reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible such as people's subjective experiences and attitudes. The interview is also a very convenient way of overcoming distances both in space and in time; past events or faraway experiences can be studied by interviewing people who took part in them.

In other instances, it is possible to reach the object of research directly using naturally occurring empirical materials (Silverman, 2001). If the researcher is interested in, say, strategies used by journalists in interviewing politicians (cf. Clayman & Heritage, 2002a), it might be advisable to tape-record broadcast interviews rather than to ask journalists to tell about their work. Or, if the researcher wants to study the historical evolvement of medical conceptions regarding death and dying, it might be advisable to study medical textbooks rather than to ask doctors to tell what they know about these concepts.

The contrast between interviews and naturally occurring materials should not, however, be exaggerated (cf. Potter, 2004; Speer, 2002). There are types of research materials that are between these two pure types. For example, in *informal interviews that are part of ethnographic fieldwork,* and in *focus groups,* people describe their practices and ideas to the researcher in circumstances that are much closer to "naturally occurring" than are the circumstances in ordinary research interviews. Moreover, even "ordinary" interviews can be, and have been, analyzed as specimens of interaction and reasoning practices rather than as representations of facts or ideas outside the interview situation. As Speer (2002) recently put it, "The status of pieces of data as natural or not depends largely on what the researcher intends to 'do' with them" (p. 513). Wetherell and Potter (1992), for example, analyzed the ways in which

interviewees use different linguistic and cultural resources in constructing their relation to racial and racist discourses. On the other hand, as Silverman (2001) put it, no data—not even tape recordings—are "untouched by the researcher's hands" (p. 159; see also Speer, 2002, p. 516); the researcher's activity is needed, for example, in obtaining informed consent from the participants. The difference between researcher-instigated data and naturally occurring data should, therefore, be understood as a continuum rather than as a dichotomy.

This chapter focuses on one end of this continuum. It presents some methods that can be used in analyzing and interpreting tape-recorded interactions and written texts, which probably are the types of data that come closest to the idea of "naturally occurring."

◙ ANALYZING TEXTS

Uses of Texts and Variety of Methods of Text Analysis

As Smith (1974, 1990) and Atkinson and Coffey (1997) pointed out, much of social life in modern society is mediated by written texts of different kinds. For example, modern health care would not be possible without patient records; the legal system would not be possible without laws and other juridical texts; professional training would not be possible without manuals and professional journals; and leisure would not be possible without newspapers, magazines, and advertisements. Texts of this kind have provided an abundance of material for qualitative researchers.

In many cases, qualitative researchers who use written texts as their materials do not try to follow any predefined protocol in executing their analysis. By reading and rereading their empirical materials, they try to pin down their key themes and, thereby, to draw a picture of the presuppositions and meanings that constitute the cultural world of which the textual material is a specimen. An example of this kind of informal approach is Seale's (1998) small but elegant case study on a

booklet based on a broadcast interview with the British playwright Dennis Potter (pp. 127–131). The interviewee was terminally ill at the time of the interview. Seale showed how the interview conveys a particular conception of death and dying, characterized by intensive awareness of the imminent death and special creativity arising from it.

An informal approach may, in many cases, be the best choice as a method in research focusing on written texts. Especially in research designs where the qualitative text analysis is not at the core of the research but instead is in a subsidiary or complementary role, no more sophisticated text analytical methods may be needed. That indeed was the case in Seale's (1998) study, in which the qualitative text analysis complemented a larger study drawing mostly on interview and questionnaire materials as well as on theoretical work. In projects that use solely texts as empirical materials, however, the use of different kinds of analytical procedures may be considered.

There are indeed many methods of text analysis from which the researcher can choose. The degree to which they involve predefined sets of procedures varies; some of them do to a great extent, whereas in others the emphasis is more on theoretical presuppositions concerning the cultural and social worlds to which the texts belong. Moreover, some of these methods can be used in the research of both written and spoken discourse, whereas others are exclusively fitted to written texts. In what follows, I briefly mention a few text analytical methods and then discuss two a bit more thoroughly.

Semiotics is a broad field of study concerned with signs and their use. Many tools of text analysis have arisen from this field. The most prominent of them may be *semiotic narrative analysis.* The Russian ethnologist Propp (1968) and the French sociologist Greimas (1966) developed schemes for the analysis of narrative structures. Initially their schemes were developed in fairy tales, but later on they were applied to many other kinds of texts. For example, by using Greimas's scheme, primordial structural relations (e.g., subject vs. object, sender vs. receiver, helper

vs. opponent) can be distilled from the texts. Törrönen (2000, 2003) used and developed further Greimasian concepts in analyzing newspaper editorials addressing alcohol policy, showing how these texts mobilize structural relations so as to encourage readers to take action to achieve particular political goals.

The term *discourse analysis* (DA) may refer, depending on context, to many different approaches of investigation of written texts (and of spoken discourse as well). In the context of linguistics, DA usually refers to research that aims at uncovering the features of text that maintain coherence in units larger than the sentence (Brown & Yule, 1983). In social psychology, DA (or *discursive psychology,* as it has been called more recently) involves research in which the language use (both written and spoken) underpinning mental realities, such as cognition and emotion, is investigated. Here, the key theoretical presupposition is that mental realities do not reside "inside" individual humans but rather are constructed linguistically (Edwards, 1997; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). *Critical discourse analysis* (CDA), developed by Fairclough (1989, 1995), constitutes yet another kind of discourse analytical approach in which some key concerns of linguistic and critical social research merge. Critical discourse analysts are interested in the ways in which texts of different kinds reproduce power and inequalities in society. Tainio's (1999) study on the language of self-help communication guidebooks for married couples is one example of a CDA study. Tainio showed, for example, how in these texts the woman is expected to change for the communication problems to be solved, whereas the man is treated as immutable.

Historical discourse analysis (HDA) constitutes yet another form of DA, and that is an approach I introduce a bit more thoroughly through a research example.

Historical Discourse Analysis: Armstrong's Work as an Example

Many scholars working with written texts have drawn insights and inspiration from the work of Michel Foucault. (For examples of his own studies, see Foucault, 1973, 1977, 1978. For examples of accessible accounts of his theories and methods, see Kendall & Wickham, 1999; McHoul & Grace, 1993.) Foucault did not propose a definite set of methods for the analysis of texts; hence, the ways of analyzing and interpreting texts of scholars inspired by him vary. For all of them, however, a primary concern is, as Potter (2004) aptly put it, how a set of "statements" comes to constitute objects and subjects. The constitution of subjects and objects is explored in historical context—or, in Foucault's terms, through *archeology* and *genealogy.*

David Armstrong's work is a good example of the Foucaultian, or historical, approach in text analysis. In a string of studies (Armstrong, 1983, 1987, 1993, 1998, 2002; Gothill & Armstrong, 1999), he investigated medical textbooks and journal articles, showing how objects such as bodies, illnesses, and death, as well as subjects such as doctors, patients, and nurses, have been constituted in these texts during the past two centuries. Armstrong's approach is radically constructionistic; he argued that these objects and subjects—in the sense that we know them now—did not exist before they were constructed through textual and other practices. For example, it has always been the case that some people die at a very early age, but according to Armstrong (1986), "infant mortality" as a discrete social object came into being around 1875. Only after that did the Registrar-General's annual reports (in Britain) orient to such a fact.

Let us examine briefly Armstrong's (1993) article on "public health spaces" so as to understand his Foucaultian way of analyzing and interpreting texts. Basically, Armstrong was concerned about hygienic rules. Using textual material derived from medical and hygienic textbooks and instructions, Armstrong showed how the rules defining the difference between the dangerous and the safe, or between the pure and the dirty, have changed during the past two centuries. In and through examining the rules and their change, Armstrong explored evolvement of the spaces in which individual identity is located.

Armstrong (1993) identified four phases, or "regimes," in the development of hygienic rules. During the *quarantine* phase (from the late Middle Ages until the first half of the 19th century), the dividing line between pure and dirty demarcated different geographic spaces. Ships carrying diseases, or towns and villages where infectious diseases were found, were separated from "clean" localities. During the *sanitary science* phase (ca. 1850–1900), the key boundary separated the human body (clean) and the substances outside the body such as (contaminated) air and water. During the *interpersonal hygiene* phase (early to mid-20th century), the dividing line went between individual bodies so as to prevent the spread of contagious diseases from one body to another. Finally, during the *new public health* phase, the danger arose from the incursion of the activities of human bodies into nature in the form of pollution of the environment. Armstrong pointed out that each hygienic regime incorporated practices of the formation of human identity. For example, the shift from quarantine to sanitary science involved dissection of the mass and recognition "of separable and calculable individuality" (p. 405), interpersonal hygiene constructed individual differences, and new public health outlined a reflective subject. Through his analysis, Armstrong also entered into discussion with sociological and anthropological writings of Durkheim (1948) and Douglas (1966), giving historical specification to their concepts and reformulating some of their assumptions regarding the social significance of the boundaries between the sacred and the profane or between the pure and the dirty.

Armstrong's results are impressive. How did he do it? How did he analyze his texts? He recently gave an illuminating account of his method (Armstrong, 2002, chap. 17). Independent of, but still in line with, his own account, I now point out a few things that appear as central in the context of this *Handbook*. In a technical sense, Armstrong's way of analyzing texts is not very different from what was referred to earlier as "the informal approach." He focused on the "propositional content" (not the linguistic forms) of the texts, trying to pin down the assumptions and presuppositions that the texts incorporated. But there were at least three additional features. First, Armstrong was very sensitive about the time of the publication of the texts. A key aspect of his analysis was showing at which time each new hygienic regime arose, and he argued that quite exact times could be documented through an historical survey of texts. Second, Armstrong's analysis was informed by theory. Along with the Foucaultian concerns, Douglas's (1966) arguments presented in her modern classic *Purity and Danger* offered him a standpoint. For Douglas, the separation between the pure and the dangerous objects was the key issue. Third, for Armstrong (as for all Foucaultians), texts and *practices* are inseparable. The medical and hygienic texts that he read had a strong instructive component in them; they not only were establishing boundaries between "ideal" objects but also served as (and Armstrong read them as) guidelines for actual social practices where these boundaries were maintained.

Armstrong's historical and Foucaultian way of analyzing and interpreting texts offers one compact alternative for qualitative text analysis. We now turn to a quite different way of reading texts in qualitative research, that is, *membership categorization analysis* (MCA).

Membership Categorization Analysis

Whereas Armstrong's Foucaultian analysis was concerned with the propositional content and not the formal properties of texts, MCA can be said to focus more on the latter. However, MCA is not about grammatical forms but rather about the normative and cognitive forms concerning social relations that are involved in the production and understanding of texts. To put it another way, Armstrong's Foucaultian approach is concerned about the assumptions that underlie *what* is said (and what is not said) in the text, whereas MCA is concerned about *the descriptive apparatus* that makes it possible to say whatever is said.

Before we start to examine MCA, I want to remind the reader about the wide range of applications that this approach has. In addition to the analysis of written texts, it can be used in the

analysis of interviews (e.g., Baker, 1997) and in the analysis of naturally occurring talk (e.g., Cuff, 1994). In the following, however, I focus on the text analytical applications.

The idea of membership categorization came from the American sociologist Sacks (1974b, 1992). *Description* was a key analytical question for Sacks; he was concerned about the conditions of description, that is, what makes it possible for us to produce and understand descriptions of people and their activities. As Silverman (2001) aptly put it, Sacks was concerned about "the apparatus through which members' descriptions are properly produced" (p. 139). This interest led Sacks to examine categorization.

People are usually referred to by using categories. The point of departure for MCA is recognition of the fact that at any event, a person may be referred to by using many alternative categories. As the author of this chapter, I may also be referred to also as a man, as a middle-aged person, as a Finn, as a sociologist, as a professor, as the father of two children, as a husband, and so forth. MCA is about the selection of categories such as these and about the conditions and consequences of this selection.

Sacks's (1974b) famous example is the beginning of a story written by a child: *The baby cried. The mommy picked it up.* There are two key categories in this story: "baby" and "mommy." Why are these categories used, and what is achieved by them? If the mommy happened to be a biologist by profession, why would the story not go like this: *The baby cried. The scientist picked it up* (Jayyusi, 1991, p. 238)? Why do we hear the story being about a baby and *its* mother and not just about any baby and any mother? MCA provides answers to questions such as these and offers a toolkit for analyzing various kinds of texts.

Sacks (1992) noted that categories form sets, that is, collections of categories that go together. Family is one such collection, and "baby," "mother," and "father" are some categories of it. "Stage of life" is another collection; it consists of categories such as "baby," "toddler," "child," and "adult." Now, "baby" could in principle be heard as belonging to both collections, but in the preceding little story we hear it as belonging to the "family"

collection. This is because in hearing (or reading) descriptions where two or more categories are used, we orient to a rule according to which we hear them as being from the same collection if they indeed can be heard in that way. Therefore, in this case we hear "baby" and "mommy" being from the device "family" (p. 247).

Categories also go together with *activities.* Sacks used the term "category-bound activities" in referring to activities that members of a culture take to be "typical" of a category (or some categories) of people. "Crying" is a category-bound activity of a baby, just as "picking a (crying) baby up" is a category-bound activity of a mother. In a similar fashion, "lecturing" is a category-bound activity of a professor. Activities such as these can be normative; it is appropriate for the baby to cry and for the mother to pick it up, but it is not appropriate for an adult to cry (like a baby) or for a mother to fail to pick a crying baby up. *Standardized relational pairs* consist of two categories where incumbents of the categories have standardized rights and obligations in relation to each other, with "mother and baby" clearly being one pair, just as "husband and wife" and "doctor and patient" are common pairs. Moreover, the receivers of descriptions can and do infer from actions to categories and vice versa. By knowing actions, we infer the categories of the agents; by knowing categories of agents, we infer what they do.

Even on the basis of these fragments of Sacks's ideas (for more thorough accounts, see Hester & Eglin, 1997; Silverman, 1998), the reader may get an impression of the potential that this account offers for the analysis of texts. Sacks's ideas are resources for the analysis of texts as sites for the production and reproduction of social, moral, and political orders. Merely by bearing in mind that there is always more than one category available for the description of a given person, the analyst always asks "Why this categorization now?"

Let us examine a brief example of MCA. Eglin and Hester (1999) gave a thoughtful account of the local newspaper coverage of a tragic event, namely the killing of 13 female students and a data processing worker by a gunman at the Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal in December 1989. Their aim was to show how a "deviant act" was

constructed by members of culture. They did this by identifying the categorical resources that were drawn on in the newspaper coverage.

Eglin and Hester (1999) showed how the description of the tragic event was entirely dependent on the resources or the "apparatus" of categorization. The headlines of the first news about the event implicated an initial pair of categories employed in describing the event, namely "offender" and "victims," which Eglin and Hester (p. 200) considered to be a special kind of a standardized relational pair. In the body of the news, these categories got transformed (e.g., "offender" got transformed into "murder suspect") and new categories, such as "police," "witnesses," "relatives," and "friends" of the victims, entered the scene. As Eglin and Hester put it,

> These categories and category pairs . . . provide, then, some of the procedural resources that news writer and news reader may use to produce and recognize, respectively, the relevance of the variety of actors and actions that appeared in the text of the articles. (p. 202)

Categories are not, however, neutral resources of description. Eglin and Hester (1999) went on to analyze how the use of categorical resources made possible an *embedded commentary,* or *assessment,* of the events. They distinguished among several different "stories" in the news coverage, with each being based on particular operations with categories. For example, *the horror story* arose from the *disjuncture* between the membership categories made relevant by *the setting* and those made relevant by *the event.* On a university campus, the setting made relevant categories such as "student," "teacher," and "staff member." The horror story involved the transformation of these category identities into those of "offender," "victims," "witnesses," and so forth. This disjuncture was encapsulated in reports such as the following: *I was doing a presentation in front of the class, and suddenly a guy came in with what I think was a semi-automatic rifle* (Canadian Press, 1989, cited in Eglin & Hester, 1999, p. 204). Another kind of commentary was involved in the *story of the tragedy.* This story drew on two categorical resources: *the stage of life* device and what Sacks

(1974b) called the *R-collection,* that is, the collection of standardized relational pairs relevant for a search for help. In terms of the stage of life, the victims were young people who had their futures ahead of them: *Fourteen young women [are] brutally mowed down in the beauty of their youth when everything seemed to assure them of a brilliant future* (Malarek, 1989, cited in Eglin & Hester, 1999, p. 205). With respect to the R-collection, the tragedy arose from the loss experienced by the incumbents of the categorical "pair parts"—parents, brothers/sisters, and friends. Yet another commentary involved *the story about the killing of women.* The victims were women who were purposefully chosen by the gunman on the basis of their gender, and the categories "man" and "woman" ran through much of the news coverage. In subsequent articles, the massacre was linked with broader issues of male violence against women and with gender relations in general.

Because all description draws on categorization, it is obvious that MCA has wide applicability in the analysis of texts. The analysis of categorization gives the researcher access to the cultural worlds and moral orders on which the texts hinge. Importantly, however, categorization analysis is not *only* about specific cultures or moralities. In developing his concepts, Sacks was not primarily concerned about the "contents" of the categorizations; rather, he was concerned about the ways in which we use them (Atkinson, 1978, p. 194). Therefore, at the end of the day, membership categorization analysis invites the qualitative researcher to explore the conditions of action of description in itself.

◨ ANALYZING TALK

Face-to-face social interaction (or other live interaction mediated by phones and other technological media) is the most immediate and the most frequently experienced social reality. The heart of our social and personal being lies in the immediate contact with other humans. Even though ethnographic observation of face-to-face social interaction has been done successfully by

sociologists and social psychologists, video and audio recordings are what provide the richest possible data for the study of talk and interaction today. Such recordings have been analyzed using the same methods that were discussed previously in the context of interpretation of written texts. CDA, MCA, and even Foucaultian DA have all of their applications in researching transcripts based on video and/or audio recordings. However, as Goffman (1983) pointed out, to be fully appreciated, the face-to-face social interaction also requires its own specific methods. The interplay of utterances and actions in live social interaction involves a complex organization that cannot be found in written texts. *Conversation analysis* (CA) is presented as a method specialized for analyzing that organization.

Origins of Conversation Analysis

CA is a method for investigating the structure and process of social interaction between humans. As their empirical materials, CA studies use video and/or audio recordings made from naturally occurring interactions. As their results, these studies offer qualitative (and sometimes quantitative) descriptions of interactional structures (e.g., turn taking, relations between adjacent utterances) and practices (e.g., telling and receiving news, making assessments).

CA was started by Sacks and his coworkers, especially Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, at the University of California during the 1960s. At the time of its birth, CA was something quite different from the rest of social science. The predominant way of investigating human social interaction was quantitative, based on coding and counting distinct, theoretically defined actions (see especially Bales, 1950). Goffman (e.g., 1955) and Garfinkel (1967) had challenged this way of understanding interaction with their studies that focused on the moral and inferential underpinnings of social interaction. Drawing part of his inspiration from them, Sacks started to study qualitatively the real-time sequential ordering of actions—the rules, patterns, and structures in the relations between consecutive actions (Silverman, 1998). Schegloff (1992a) argued that Sacks made a radical shift in the perspective of social scientific inquiry

into social interaction; instead of treating social interaction as a screen on which other processes (Balesian categories or moral and inferential processes) were projected, Sacks started to study the very structures of the interaction itself (p. xviii).

Basic Theoretical Assumptions

In the first place, CA is not a theoretical enterprise but rather a very concretely empirical one. Conversation analysts make video and/or audio recordings of naturally occurring interactions, and they transcribe these recordings using a detailed notation system (see appendix). They search, in the recordings and transcripts, for recurrent distinct interactive practices that then become their research topics. These practices can involve, for example, specific sequences (e.g., news delivery [Maynard, 2003]) or specific ways of designing utterances (e.g., "oh"-prefaced answers to questions [Heritage, 1998]). Then, through careful listening, comparison of instances, and exploration of the context of them, conversation analysts describe in detail the properties and tasks that the practices have.

However, through empirical studies—in an "inductive" way—a body of theoretical knowledge about the organization of conversation has been accumulated. The actual "techniques" in doing CA can be understood and appreciated only against the backdrop of these basic theoretical assumptions of CA. In what follows, I try to sketch some of the basic assumptions concerning the organization of conversation that arise from these studies. There are perhaps three most fundamental assumptions of this kind (cf. Heritage, 1984, chap. 8; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998), namely that (a) talk is action, (b) action is structurally organized, and (c) talk creates and maintains intersubjective reality.

Talk is action. As in some other philosophical and social scientific approaches, in CA talk is understood first and foremost as a vehicle of human action (Schegloff, 1991). The capacity of language to convey ideas is seen as being derived from this more fundamental task. In accomplishing actions, talk is seamlessly intertwined with (other) corporeal means of action such as gaze and gesture (Goodwin, 1981). Some CA studies

have as their topics the organization of actions that are recognizable as distinct actions even from a vernacular point of view. Thus, conversation analysts have studied, for example, openings (Schegloff, 1968) and closings (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973) of conversations, assessments and ways in which the recipients agree or disagree with them (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992; Pomerantz, 1984), storytelling (Mandelbaum, 1992; Sachs, 1974a), complaints (Drew & Holt, 1988), telling and receiving news (Maynard, 2003), and laughter (Haakana, 2001; Jefferson, 1984). Many CA studies have as their topic actions that are typical in some institutional environment. Examples include diagnosis (Heath, 1992; Maynard, 1991, 1992; Peräkylä, 1998, 2002; ten Have, 1995) and physical examination (Heritage & Stivers, 1999) in medical consultations, questioning and answering practices in cross-examinations (Drew, 1992), ways of managing disagreements in news interviews (Greatbatch, 1992), and advice giving in a number of different environments (Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Silverman, 1997; Vehviläinen, 2001). Finally, many important CA studies focus on fundamental aspects of conversational organization that make any action possible. These include turn taking (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974), repair (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977; Schegloff, 1992c), and the general ways in which sequences of action are built (Schegloff, 1995).

Action is structurally organized. In the CA view, the practical actions that comprise the heart of social life are thoroughly structured and organized. In pursuing their goals, the actors have to orient themselves to rules and structures that only make their actions possible. These rules and structures concern mostly the relations between actions. Single acts are parts of larger, structurally organized entities. These entities may be called "sequences" (Schegloff, 1995).

The most basic and the most important sequence is called the "adjacency pair" (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). It is a sequence of two actions in which the first action ("first pair part"), performed by one interactant, invites a particular type of second action ("second pair part") to

be performed by another interactant. Typical examples of adjacency pairs include question–answer, greeting–greeting, request–grant/refusal, and invitation–acceptance/declination. The relation between the first and second pair parts is strict and normative; if the second pair part does not come forth, the first speaker can, for example, repeat the first action or seek explanations for the fact that the second action is missing (Atkinson & Drew, 1979, pp. 52–57; Merritt, 1976, p. 329).

Adjacency pairs often serve as a core around which even larger sequences are built (Schegloff, 1995). So, a *preexpansion* can precede an adjacency pair, for example, in cases where the speaker first asks about the other's plans for the evening and only thereafter (if it turns out that the other is not otherwise engaged) issues an invitation. An *insert expansion* involves actions that occur between the first and second pair parts and makes possible the production of the latter, for example, in cases where the speaker requests specification of an offer or a request before responding to it. Finally, in *postexpansion,* the speakers produce actions that somehow follow from the basic adjacency pair, with the simplest example being "okay" or "thank you" to close a sequence of a question and an answer or of a request and a grant (Schegloff, 1995).

Talk creates and maintains the intersubjective reality. CA has sometimes been criticized for neglecting the "meaning" of talk at the expense of the "form" of talk (cf. Alexander, 1988, p. 243; Taylor & Cameron, 1987, pp. 99–107). This is, however, a misunderstanding, perhaps arising from the impression created by technical exactness of CA studies. Closer reading of CA studies reveals that in such studies, talk and interaction are examined as a site where intersubjective understanding about the participants' intentions is created and maintained (Heritage & Atkinson, 1984, p. 11). As such, CA gives access to the construction of meaning in real time. But it is important to notice that the conversation analytical "gaze" focuses exclusively on meanings and understandings that are made public through conversational action and that it remains

"agnostic" regarding people's intrapsychological experience (Heritage, 1984).

The most fundamental level of intersubjective understanding—which in fact constitutes the basis for any other type of intersubjective understanding—concerns *the understanding of the preceding turn displayed by the current speaker.* Just like any turn of talk that is produced in the context shaped by the previous turn, it also displays its speaker's understanding of that previous turn (Atkinson & Drew, 1979, p. 48). Thus, in simple cases, when producing a turn of talk that is hearable as an answer, the speaker also shows that he or she understood the preceding turn as a question. Sometimes these choices can be crucial for the unfolding of the interaction and the social relation of its participants, for example, in cases where a turn of talk is potentially hearable in two ways (e.g., as an announcement or a request, as an informing or a complaint) and the recipient makes the choice in the next turn. In case the first speaker considers the understanding concerning his talk to be incorrect or problematic, as displayed in the second speaker's utterance, the first speaker has an opportunity to correct this understanding in the "third position" (Schegloff, 1992c), for example, by saying "I didn't mean to criticize you; I just meant to tell you about the problem."

Another important level of intersubjective understanding concerns the *context* of the talk. This is particularly salient in institutional interaction, that is, in interaction that takes place to accomplish some institutionally ascribed tasks of the participants (e.g., psychotherapy, medical consultations, news interviews) (Drew & Heritage, 1992). The participants' understanding of the institutional context of their talk is documented in their actions. As Schegloff (1991, 1992b) and Drew and Heritage (1992) pointed out, if the "institutional context" is relevant for interaction, it can be observed in the details of the participants' actions—in their ways of giving and receiving information, asking and answering questions, presenting arguments, and so forth. CA research that focuses on institutional interactions explores the exact ways in which the performers of different institutional tasks shape their actions to achieve their goals.

Research Example

After these rather abstract considerations, let us consider a concrete example of CA research. In my own work on AIDS counseling (Peräkylä, 1995), one of the topics was a practice called "circular questioning" in therapeutic theory. The clients in these sessions were HIV-positive patients and their family members or other significant others. In circular questions, the counselor asked one client to describe the thoughts or experiences of another person; for example, the counselor might ask the mother of an HIV-positive patient to describe what her (copresent) son's greatest concern is. In my analysis, I showed how such questioning involves a powerful practice to incite the clients to talk about matters that they otherwise would be reluctant to discuss. In circular questions, it was not only the counselors who encouraged the clients to talk about their fears and worries. A local interactional context where the clients encouraged each other to talk was built.

One type of evidence for this "function" of the circular questions comes from the structure of such questioning sequences. Without exception, each circular question was followed by the person whose experience was described ("the owner of the experience") himself or herself giving an account of the experience in question. Often the counselor asked the "owner's" view directly after hearing the coparticipant's version, and sometimes the owner volunteered his or her view. In both cases, the pattern of questioning made the owner of the experience speak about his or her fears and worries. In what follows, Extract 1 provides an example of such a sequence. The participants are an HIV-positive patient (P), his boyfriend (BF), and the counselor (C). Arrows 1 to 4 stand for the initiation of key utterances: 1 for the counselor's circular question, 2 for the boyfriend's answer, 3 for the follow-up question to the owner of the experience, and 4 for his response. Here, as in many other cases that I analyzed, the circular question leads the owner of the experience to disclose his deep worries (see especially lines 45–61). For transcription symbols, see the appendix.

Extract 1 (AIDS Counselling *[Peräkylä, 1995, p. 110]*):

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01 C:(1)        →       What are some of things that you think E:dward might
02                      have to do.=He says he doesn't know where to go
03                      from here maybe: and awaiting results and things.
04                      (0.6)
05 C:                   What d'you think's worrying him.
06                      (0.4)
07 BF:(2)       →       Uh::m hhhhhh I think it's just fear of the unknow:n.
08 P:                   Mm[:
09 C:                      [Oka:y.
10 BF:                     [At- at the present ti:me. (0.2) Uh: m (.) once:
11                      he's (0.5) got a better understanding of (0.2) what
12                      could happen
13 C:                   Mm:
14 BF:                  uh:m how .hh this will progre:ss then: I think (.)
15                      things will be a little more [settled in his
16 C:                                                [Mm
17 BF:                  own mi:nd.
18 C:                   Mm:
19                      (.)
20 P:                   Mm[:
21 C:(3)        →          [E:dward (.) from what you know:: (0.5) wha- what-
22                      what do you think could happen. (0.8) I mean we're
23                      talking hypothetically [now because I know
24 P:                                          [Mm:: (well)-
25 C:                   no [more than you do about your actual state of=
26 P:                      [uh::
27 C:                   health except that we do: know,=
28 P:                   =uh
29 C:                   .hhh you're carrying the virus::, (.6) as far as-
30                      (.3) the- that first test is concerned.
31 P:                   Umh
32                      (1.4)
33 P:(4)        →       (Well I feel) I see like two different extremes.=I
34                      see [that I can just- (.8) carry on (in an)
35 C:                       [umh
36 P:                   incubation state:, [for many years [and (up)
37 C:                                      [umh            [umh
38 P:                   .hhhh you know just being very careful about (it)
39                      [sexually:.
40 C:                   [uhm:
41                      (.4)
42 P:                   [and: er (.3) can go on with a normal life.
43 C:                   [umh
44 C:                   umh
45 P:                   And then I get my greatest fears: that- (.2) you
46                      know just when I've get my life go:ing: you know a
47                      good job=
48 C:                   =um:h=
49 P:                   things going very well,
50 C:                   uhm::
51                      (.3)
52                      P: that (I[::) er:: (.2) my immunity will collapse,
53 C:                             [umh
54 C:                   um[h
55 P:                     [you know: (and I will) become very ill:: (.2)
56                      >quickly?<
57                      (1.0)
58 P:                   .hhh[hh an]d lose control of th- the situation,
59 C:                       [um::h]
60 C:                   umh:
61 P:                   That's my greatest fear actually.
```

The frequent sequence structure in circular questioning posed a kind of a puzzle for the researcher: Why do the owners of the experience always give their authoritative versions after their experience has been described by somebody else, often even without the counselor asking for it? By examining the minute aspects of the recordings, I started to grasp how the owners' special status vis-à-vis these descriptions, and thereby the relevance of their eventual utterance, was collaboratively and consistently built up in these sequences. *Response tokens* and *postural orientation* were among the means of this buildup.

Response tokens are little particles through which the receivers of an utterance can "receipt" what they have heard and, among other things, indicate that they have no need to ask for clarification or to initiate any other kind of repair, thereby "passing back" the turn of talk to the initial speaker (Schegloff, 1982; Sorjonen, 2001). Usually in question–answer sequences, response tokens would be produced by the questioners. However, in circular questions, the owners of the experience regularly produced response tokens when their significant others were describing the owners' minds and circumstances. As such, the owners indicated their special involvement in the matters that were discussed. That was also the case in Extract 1; in lines 8 and 20, P responded to BF's answer to C's questions with "Mm:"s. He showed his ownership of the matters that were spoken about, thereby also building up the relevance of his own description of them.

The same orientation was shown by the participants through their body posture. The clients who answered the circular question regularly shifted their gaze to the owner at the beginning of the answer, and only toward the end of it did they gaze at the counselor (to whom the answer is given). This organization of gaze contributes to the relevancy of the owner's utterance where he or she eventually describes his or her concerns. A segment from Extract 1 shows this pattern:

At the beginning of his answer, BF was not oriented to the questioner (the counselor); rather, he was oriented to the person whose mind he was describing (P). Likewise, P was gazing at BF; thus, they are in a mutual gaze contact. BF, the speaker, turned his gaze to the counselor at the end of the first sentence of his answer, and shortly after that P withdrew his gaze from the speaker and also turned to the counselor. Through these actions, P's special status vis-à-vis the things spoken about was collaboratively recognized.

The analysis of circular questioning led me to conclude that in this way of asking questions, a special context was created for the clients' talk
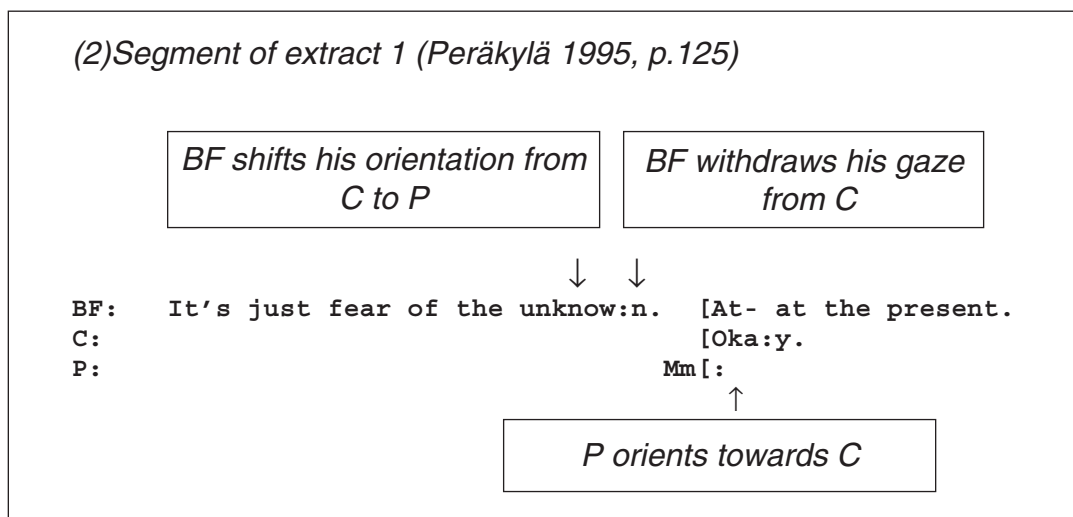
---

(2)Segment of extract 1 (Peräkylä 1995, p.125)

| BF shifts his orientation from C to P | BF withdraws his gaze from C |

↓   ↓

```
BF:     It's just fear of the unknow:n.  [At- at the present.
C:                                       [Oka:y.
P:                               Mm[:
```

↑

P orients towards C

Figure 34.1.

about sensitive issues. Unlike "direct" questions, circular questions mobilize *the clients* in the work of eliciting and encouraging each other's talk. CA as a method for analyzing talk made it possible to examine this elicitation in detail.

◨ CONCLUSION

It is a special concern of the third edition of this *Handbook* to be explicit politically, that is, to advance a democratic project committed to social justice. To conclude this chapter, therefore, I compare some of the methods discussed in terms of their relation to issues of *power* and *social change.* I focus on the three methods discussed most thoroughly: HDA, MCA, and CA.

The HDA exemplified in the chapter by Armstrong's work is most directly a method for investigating social change. Armstrong showed us the evolvement of hygienic regimes. At the same time, his analysis of texts was about power— about the discourses and practices through which the boundary between pure and dirty had been established and, in relation to that, through which human identities had been formed. Armstrong, like all Foucaultians, treated power here as a productive force—as something that calls realities into being rather than suppresses them.

The potential of MCA in dealing with questions pertaining to power and social change is well shown in a key text by Sacks (1992), "'Hotrodders' as a Revolutionary Category" (pp. 169–174; see also Sacks, 1979). There are at least two relevant aspects of categorization involved here. The more obvious one is the linkage between categorization and racial and other prejudice. By identifying the actors who have committed crimes or other "evils" by racial or other categories, we can create a link between *all* members of the category and the evil that was done by an individual. Thus, categorization, which is an inherent property of language and thought, is a central resource for racism. However, as Silverman (1998) pointed out, the categorical references can also be used in "benign" ways, for example, in invoking and maintaining institutional identities such as "doctor" (p. 18). The

other relevant aspect to categorization is more subtle. Sacks (1992) argued that categories can be *owned, resisted,* and *enforced* (p. 172). Following his examples, young persons may be categorized as "teenagers." In (contemporary Western) society, this category is owned by those who are not teenagers, that is, those who are called "adults." It is adults who enforce and administer this categorization. Those who are categorized as "teenagers" can, however, resist this categorization by constructing their own categorizations and by deciding themselves to whom it will be applied. In Sacks's environment, one such categorization was "hotrodders"; it was a category set up by young people themselves, the incumbency of which they controlled. So far as the "others" (e.g., adults) adopted this new categorization, the revolution in categorization was successful. As a whole, Sacks's examples showed how categorization is a field of changing power relations. Analyzing texts using MCA offers one way in which to analyze them.

The relation of CA to questions of power and social change is more complex. CA that focuses on generic practices and structures of mundane everyday talk might seem irrelevant in terms of power and social change. Billig (1998) argued that this irrelevance may, in fact, imply politically conservative choices. Even in researching institutional interaction, the fact that conversation analysts often focus on small details of video- or audio-recorded talk might seem to render their studies impotent for the analysis of social relations and processes *not* incorporated in talk (cf. Hak, 1999).

From the CA point of view, two responses can be given to these criticisms. First, the significance of orderly organization of face-to-face (or other "live") interaction for *all* social life needs to be restated. No "larger scale" social institutions could operate without the substratum of the interaction order. It is largely through questions, answers, assessments, accusations, accounts, interpretations, and the like that these institutions operate. Hence, even when not focusing on hot social and political issues that we read about in the newspapers, CA is providing knowledge about the basic organizations of social life that make these issues,

as well as their possible solutions and the debate about them, possible in the first place.

There is, however, also CA research that is more directly relevant for political and social concerns. For example, many CA studies have contributed to our understanding of the ways in which specific interactional practices contribute to the maintenance or change of the *gender system*. Work by West (1979) and Zimmerman (Zimmerman & West, 1975) on male–female interruptions is widely cited. More recently, Kitzinger (2000) explored the implications of preference organization for the politics of rape prevention and turn-taking organization for the practices of "coming out" as gay or lesbian. In a somewhat more linguistic CA study, Tainio (2002) explored how syntactical and semantic properties of utterances are used in the construction of heterosexual identities in elderly couples' talk. Studies such as these (for a fresh overview, see McIlvenny, 2002) also amply demonstrate the *critical* potential of CA. Yet a different CA study on social change was offered in Clayman and Heritage's (2002b) work on question design in U.S. presidential press conferences. By combining qualitative and quantitative techniques, they showed how the relative proportions of different types of journalist questions, exhibiting different degrees of "adversarialness," have changed over time. As such, they explored the historical change in the U.S. presidential institution and media.

The "dissection" of practices of talk may, therefore, lead to insights that may have some political significance. As a final note, consider again the analysis of circular questioning briefly presented in the preceding section. I sought to show how the recurrent structure of the questioning sequence, as well as the use of discourse particles and the postural orientation, contributed to a context where the patients and their significant others were *incited to speak* about their fears and worries. Now, as scholars working with the methods of historical text analysis have shown (Armstrong, 1984; Arney & Bergen, 1984), a clinic that incites patients to talk about their experience is a relatively new development that evolved during the latter half of the 20th century. Prior to that, Western medicine was not concerned about patients' subjective experience and focused on the body only. AIDS was arguably an illness that was more penetrated by this new medical gaze than was any other illness previously (Peräkylä, 1995, p. 340). Therefore, in observing the skillful practices through which AIDS counselors encourage their clients to talk about their subjective experiences, we were also observing the operation of an institution, involving power relations and bodies of knowledge, at a particular moment in its historical development.

In analyzing AIDS counseling, the results of historical text analysis provided a context for the understanding of the significance of the results of CA. Here, different methods of analyzing and interpreting talk and text complemented each other. This does not mean, however, that these methods could or should merge; the research object and the procedures of analysis in CA and HDA remain different. So, rather than combining different methods (which might be what, e.g., Wetherell, 1998, would propose), we should perhaps let each method do its job in its own way and on its own field and then, only at the end of that, let their results cross-illuminate each other.

APPENDIX

◨ TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS IN CA

[	Starting point of overlapping speech.
]	End point of overlapping speech
(2.4)	Silence measured in seconds
(.)	Pause of less than 0.2 seconds
↑	Upward shift in pitch
↓	Downward shift in pitch
w*o*rd	Emphasis
wo:rd	Prolongation of sound
□word□	Section of talk produced in lower volume than the surrounding talk
WORD	Section of talk produced in higher volume than the surrounding talk
w#ord#	Creaky voice
£word£	Smile voice
wo(h)rd	Laugh particle inserted within a word
wo-	Cut off in the middle of a word
word<	Abruptly completed word
>word<	Section of talk uttered in a quicker pace than the surrounding talk
<word>	Section of talk uttered in a slower pace than the surround talk
(word)	Section of talk that is difficult to hear but is likely as transcribed
( )	Inaudible word
.hhh	Inhalation
hhh	Exhalation
.	Falling intonation at the end of an utterance
?	Rising intonation at the end of an utterance
,	Flat intonation at the end of an utterance
word.=word	"Rush through" without the normal gap into a new utterance
((word))	Transcriber's comments

Source: Adapted from Drew and Heritage (Eds.). (1992). *Talk at work: Interaction in institutional settings.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

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