

A Snapshot on Conversational Analysis

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Abstract

This article is exposed to scrutinize one of salient ideas in pragmatics. In this niche, we are centrally concerned with the organization of conversation. Key definitions will come up along the article, and the conversations analyzed here are borrowed from a readily available textbook of linguistics, in which two or more participants freely alternate in speaking, which generally happens outside specific institutional settings. This article tries to look into conversations, pragmatic phenomena. This also proposes a theoretical phase for a conversational analysis and therefore helps students understand the procedures in analyzing co-present conversational participants. To a certain extent, presupposition may be seen in some basic ways organized around a conversational setting: the way in which information has to be presented if it is to be introduced to particular participants with specific share assumptions and knowledge about the world they are in.

Key words: Pragmatics, Conversational Analysis, Language Usage.

Introduction

It is a truism that no human being can bear being silent for a day or so without producing a word. He/she needs to utter something that he/she has in his/her mind. And, we will never know how many words we have already produced in the course of our life. Owing to this human characteristic, fond of talking, we are then called 'talking animal.' This is supported by the notion of Eggins and Slade (1997) asserting that as socialized individuals, we spend much of our lives talking, or interacting, with other people. Interacting is not just a mechanical process of taking turns at producing sounds and words. Eggins and Slade explain that interacting is a semantic activity, a process of making meanings. When taking turns happen in any interaction, we negotiate meanings about what we think is going on in the world, how we feel about it, and how we feel about the people we interact with.

Eggins and Slade likewise mention that the process of exchanging meanings is functionally motivated: we interact with each other in order to accomplish a wide range of tasks. Very often we talk to other people to accomplish quite specific, pragmatic tasks: we talk to buy and to sell, to find out information, to pass on knowledge, to make appointments, to get jobs, and to jointly participate in practical activities. At other times, we talk simply for the sake of talking itself. Of these points, we can infer that we as social beings are bound to the social activities in which social interactions are intensively engineered through which ideas, wants, prob-

lems, etc are talked about. Thus, the core point is that we live we talk.

Talking about the function of language within the linguistic philosophy, Austin (1962) in Van Dijk (1998) proposed that language not only is a means of representation but also is used to performing social actions, such as making a promise. Sociolinguistics, then, to which CA belongs, arose within linguistics and sociology to highlight the variations found in different social contexts of speaking (formal vs informal) and among various cultural and ethnic groups.

In the stance of an anthropologist, Branislaw Malinowski as quoted by Eggins in Young and Fitzgerald (2006: 216), '... a word without linguistic context is a mere fragment and stands for nothing by itself, so in reality of a spoken living tongue, the utterance has no meaning except in the context of situation'. Roughly, it can be learnt that without knowing the context in which the language he was describing took place, what they were saying meant little.

The situation itself consists of three constructs (ibid.) seen from the systemic functional linguistic concept developed by Halliday (2004):

- Field accounts for what language is being used to talk about, accounting for the content of what is being said in different contexts;
- Tenor explains the types of interactions between interactants carried out through language in the situation;
- Mode has to do with the nature of language itself, whether it is spoken or written, or spontaneous, or planned discourse. Each

mode – spoken or written – and its sub-categories has certain characteristics that determine discursive choices in different situations.

Hence, when we examine these three constructs we can begin to see what influences the actual choices evident in a particular language event, and how each of these selections in turn reflects and influences each context. The concern is not with just any features of a situation, but only with those that are relevant to discursive choices.

Method

In this article, the writer used descriptive qualitative through library research as a means of data collection. This research, hence, employed descriptive method, which involves collecting data in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study (Gay, 1987). A descriptive study determines and reports the way things are. The writer uses some related sources found in library such as those listed in the references.

Discussion

Defining Conversations

As postulated by Myers in Culpeper et al. (2009: 501), the structure of talk is crucial to many areas of language study and talk is crucial to many social processes, from getting a

job, to trying a criminal, to making friends. Talk in Myers’ words is apparently loosely structured and even careless. Yet, in fact studies show that it is very orderly, among the most precisely ordered things human beings do. Before going further, it is important to learn the definition of conversation. Basically, It has two meanings: 1) in popular use and 2) in academic study. Academic study is understood as all interaction using language including institutional talk like teachers talk to students or lawyers questioning witnesses. These are named talk-in-interaction.

Conversation can also mean all interaction using language, including institutional talk such as as teachers talking to students or lawyers questioning witnesses. It can also mean those every use of talk such as a family talking about events of the day at the dinner table , two acquaintances passing time on a bus. These are called Mundane Conversation, which are crucially different from institutional uses, because there are typically no constraints on who can speak next, for how long or about what.

Conversation is also termed “speech event” that actually refers to “activities ... that are directly governed by rules or norms of the use of speech” (Hymes, 1975 quoted in Eggins and Slade, 2001: 33). According to Hymes (ibid.), any speech event comprises several components as listed in Hymes’ “SPEAKING grid” below.

Tabel 1. Hymes’ Speaking Grid

S	Setting scene	Temporal and physical circumstances subjective definition of an occasion
P	Participant	Speaker/sender/addressor/hearer/receiver/audience/addressee
E	Ends	Purposes and goals, outcomes
A	Act sequence	Message form and content
K	Key	Tone, manner
I	Instrumentalities	Channel (verbal, non-verbal, physical forms of speech drawn from community repertoire)
N	Norms of interaction and interpretation	Specific properties attached to speaking interpretation of norms within cultural belief system
G	genre	Textual categories

Hymes argues that the values of the factors identified in the SPEAKING grid on any specific occasion determine our use of language and our interpretation of what people say. The SPEAKING grid provides a necessary reminder of the textual dimensions operating in any casual

conversation. In similar vein, Finegan (2004:306) views conversation as “a series of speech acts – greetings, inquiries, congratulations, comments, invitations, requests, refusals, accusations, denials, promises, farewells. Finegan further elaborates that to accomplish the work of these speech

acts, some organization is essential: we take turns at speaking, answer questions, mark the beginning and end of a conversation, and make corrections when they are needed.

Thus, it can be inferred that conversation analysis (CA), in the words of Van Dijk (1998), is the organization of the meaningful conduct of people in society, that is, how people in society produce their activities and make sense of the world about them. The core analytic objective is to illuminate how actions, events, objects, etc., are produced and understood rather than how language and talk are organized and analytical separable phenomena.

Different Approaches

There are in fact many distinct academic approaches to every day talk, in linguistics, social psychology, anthropology, communication studies and computer science. Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson developed an approach that considered conversation as one example of the ways people create social structure in their everyday interactions (Myers in Culpeper et al., 2009: 501). Their approach is called *Conversation Analysis* or better known CA. In this approach, the analysis starts with detailed analysis of the transitions from one person speaking to another; it stays very close to what participants do and show in the data, and does not allow for inferences about what they are thinking, or why they do what they do, or assumptions about their roles and the wider social context.

The original claimants to the title *Conversation Analysis* were sociologists (like Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson) for whom conversation offered privileged data for studying how people make sense of everyday social life (Eggins and Slade 2001). These analysts were the first to engage in the close-up analysis of everyday talk, believing that "the detailed study of small phenomena may give an enormous understanding of the way humans do things" (p. 6). According to these analysts, we treat conversation as an exchange of meanings, as text, and recognize its privileged roles in the construction of social identities and interpersonal relations. This position is best stated by the functional linguist, Michael Halliday (1978) in Eggins and Slade (2001), who points out that:

"It is natural to conceive a text first and foremost as conversation: as the spontaneous interchange of meaning in ordinary, everyday interaction. It is in such contexts that reality is

constructed, in the micro semiotic encounters of daily life" (p. 7).

Despite its centrality in our daily lives, casual conversation (Eggins and Slade 2001) has not received much attention from linguists as written texts or formal spoken interactions. In addition, much of the work on conversation analysis that has been done are limited to two aspects:

1. Analysis has frequently been fragmentary, dealing only with selected features of casual talk, such as turn-taking or the occurrence of particular discourse units. The limitation is that such partial analysis cannot describe the ways in which patterns from different levels of language (such as word, clause, and turn) interact to produce the meanings of casual talk.
2. Analysis has not sought to explore the connections between the social work achieved through the micro-interactions of everyday life and the macro-social world within which conversations take place. It has not explored the critical contribution that casual conversation makes to our formation as social agents.

Steps in Conversation Analysis

Indeed there are many ways to do CA, however for practicality reasons the steps proposed by Van Dijk (1998) are worth considering here:

- Select a sequence
A consequence contains a variety of phenomena that can be investigated. Identify the sequence in which whatever interests you occurs. In order to identify a sequence, we need to look for identified boundaries. We have to try to locate the turn in which one of the participants initiated an action and /or topic that was taken up and responded to by co-participants.
- Characterize the actions in the sequence
A basic analytic concept for conversation analysts is an action. Actions are central to the way that participants produce and understand conduct; they are a fundamental part of the meaningfulness of conduct. When we say, 'Want to go to lunch?', we intend to invite him/her to lunch and expect an action in response, that is, an acceptance or declination of the invitation.
- Consider how the speakers' packaging of actions, including their selections of reference Terms; provides for certain understanding of the actions performed and the matters talked about. Consider the options for the recipient

that are set up by that packaging. By packaging, it means the ways in which speakers form up an deliver actions. For a given action, consider how the speaker formed it up and delivered it. Consider the understandings that are tied to the packaging that the speaker used in relation to alternative that might have been used but were not on this occasion. Also, consider options that the packaging the speaker used provided for the recipient.

- Consider how the timing and taking of turns provide for certain understandings of the actions and the matters talked about.
- For each turn, in the sequence, describe how the speaker obtained the turn, the timing of the initiation of the turn, the termination of the turn, and whether the speaker selected a next speaker.
- Consider how the ways the actions were accomplished implicate certain identities, roles and/or relationships for interactants. Do the ways they packaged their actions implicate particular identities, rules, and/or relationships? Do they ways that the interactants took their turns (or declined to) implicate identities, roles, and / or relationships?

Turn-taking, gaps and overlaps

According to Levinson (2000), conversation analysis (CA) can be started with the obvious observation that conversation is characterized by **turn-taking**: one participant, A, talks, stops; another, B, starts, talks, stops; and so we obtain an A-B-A-B-A-B distribution of talk across two participants. Participants must tacitly agree on who should speak when. A useful way to uncover the conventions of turn-taking is to observe what happens when they break down. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson in Levinson (ibid.) suggest that mechanism that governs turn-taking, and accounts for the properties noted, is a set of rules with ordered options which operates on a turn-by-turn basis, and can thus be termed a **local management system**. Such an allocational system will require minimal units over which it will operate, such units being the units from which **turns** at talk are constructed. These units are determined by various features of linguistic surface structure: they are syntactic units (sentences, clauses, noun phrases, and so on) identified as turn-units in part by prosodic, and especially intonational, means. A speaker will be assigned initially just one of these turn-constructional units. The characterization of such units should allow for the **projectability** or predictability of each unit's end.

It is predicted that when silence—the absence of vocalization—occurs, it will be differently assigned, on the basis of the rules, as either a **gap** before a subsequent application of rules, or **lapse** on the non-application of rules or a selected next speaker's **significant, or attributable, silence** after the application of rule.

Conversation analysis begins with the observation that people who are talking to each other do not generally talk at the same time, or leaves gaps. The issue for conversation analysis is how people signal to each other when they can talk, and what can come next.

Mum: Hello:
 Les: Oh hello how're you?
 Mum: Very well thank you love and you?
 Les: Yes tha:nk you
 Mum: That's good (0.5)
 Mum: We had torrential rain today.
 (Drew and Chilton, 2000)

As usually happens at the beginnings of phone calls, the participants follow a regular routine of greetings and inquiries. Of course, conversation analysts are not saying that people don't ever leave gaps or overlap. For instance, here there is a half-second pause, indicated by (0.5). In this case, Drew and Chilton point out that it is more typical for the caller (Les) to introduce the first topic. Mum concludes the opening greetings, waits a bit, and only then introduces the first topic herself.

Conversation analysts are not saying that people don't ever leave gaps or overlap. Conversation analysts argue that any variation from the expectation will be accountable; participants may interpret it, comment it, justify or criticize it. Participants are aware of the patterns as they talk. Here the (1.0) in the transcription indicates a second of silence between the turns:

Roger: well it struck me funny (1.0)
 Al: ha, ha-ha-ha
 Ken: hh
 Roger: thank you
 (Jefferson, 1979)

Roger has apparently told what he thought was a joke, and has then pointed out that it was a joke. Normally, laughter would follow. When it doesn't, Al makes an issue of the lack of laughter by doing a mock laugh, and Ken laughs at that. Roger then responds as if they had indeed laughed as they were prompted to do. Similar silences after invitations or statements

of opinion can also be interpreted as meaningful in themselves.

Similarly, overlapping talk may occur in any conversation, but the participants, as well as the analyst, pay attention to it. The overlapping can be heard as competitive, each speaker trying to get the floor, but in some cases it can be collaborative, showing that each participant is following very closely what the others are saying.

Joe: we were in in automobile discussion.
 Henry: discussin' the psychological motives fer ?:
 hhh (hhhh hh
 Mel: drag racing on the streets
 (Sacks, 1992)

Here Joe, Henry and Mel together produce a complete sentence, Henry adding on the adverbial that specifies what 'automobile discussion' means, and Mel completing the prepositional phrase, while another participant laughs. This sort of collaboration is a normal feature of fast-paced group talk among acquaintances; it indicates that other participants can project how an utterance might continue, and time their contributions so that they all come together as if one person had said it.

Adjacency pairs and preference

Levinson (2000) mentioned another local management organization in conversation, namely adjacency pairs – the kind of paired utterances of which question-answer, greeting-answer, greeting-greeting, offer-acceptance, apology-minimization, etc., are prototypical. These are deeply inter-related with the turn-taking system as techniques for selecting a next speaker (especially where the content of the first utterance of the pair clearly isolates a relevant next speaker).

Conversation analysis does not just say that one turn follows another, but that some kinds

of turns are typically followed by others. A greeting leads to a greeting, a question is followed by an answer, and an invitation is followed by acceptance or rejection. The interesting aspects start when we see what people do with these patterns. If a greeting is followed by a greeting, the failure to return a greeting will lead to inference, and may be the repetition of the greeting. A question produces a slot for an answer, so that almost anything said in that slot might be taken as an answer. These patterns where a turn of one type is predictably followed by a turn of another specific type, one after the other, are called **adjacency pairs**.

Schloff and Sacks (1973) In Levinson (2000) offer a characterization along the following lines:

Adjacency pairs are sequences of two utterances that are:

- Adjacent
- Produced by different speakers
- Ordered as a **first part** and a **second part**
- Typed, so that a particular first part requires a particular second (or range of second parts) – e.g. offers require acceptance or rejection, greetings require greetings, and so on.

And there is a rule governing the use of adjacency pairs, namely:

- Having produced a first part of some pair, current speaker must stop speaking, and next speaker must produce at that point a second part to the same pair.

Clearly, conversation consists of a series of exchanges between participants. An exchange in a conversation contains at least two moves, initiation –response: an initiation from one speaker and a response from another. The following table shows some examples of adjacency pairs (Taylor and Taylor, 1990).

INITIATION	RESPONSES
Greeting	Greeting
Question	Answer (counter-question)
Request	Compliance/noncompliance
Accusation	Denial/admission (justification; counter-accusational)
Invitation	Acceptance/refusal
Assertion	Agreement/disagreement (acknowledgement; counter-assertion; etc.)
Summons	Answer

For adjacency pairs where there are two possible responses (acceptance/rejection, agreement/disagreement), one kind of next turn is treated differently from the other. For instance, after an invitation, an acceptance will typically come quickly, even overlapping, and will possibly be emphatic.

B: Why don't you come up and see me some // times

A: I would like to

B: I would like you to

(Heritage, 1984)

A rejection, on the other hand, may be marked by delay, particles such as *well*, and explanations or justifications before the response are given. But the main point, according to Levinson (2000) is that there is a need to replace the strict criterion of adjacency with the notion of **conditional relevance**, namely the criterion for adjacency pairs that, given a first part of a pair, a second part is immediately relevant and expectable. What the notion of conditional relevance makes clear is that what binds the parts of adjacency pairs together is not a formation of rule of the sort that would specify that a question must receive an answer if it is to count as a well-formed discourse, but the setting up of specific expectations which have to be attended to.

B: Uh if you'd like to come over and visit a little while this morning I'll give you a cup of coffee.

A: hehh Well

That's awfully sweet of you,

I don't think I can make it this morning

hh uhm I'm running an ad in the paper and- and uh I have to stay near the phone.

(Pomerantz, 1984)

Here A gives laughter, a particle, a favorable comment, a hedged (I don't think), refusal, and then an account, an explanation and justification of the behavior. The quick, unmarked, simple response is called **preferred**, and the delayed, marked, sometimes complicated response is called **dispreferred**, not because anyone necessarily wants it to happen (it could be that neither the inviter nor the invitee really wants to go), but simply to indicate this asymmetry, this difference between the ways the two responses are treated.

Levinson (2000) laments that the importance of the notion of an adjacency pair is revived by the concept of **preference organization**. The central insight here is that not all the

potential second parts to a first part of an adjacency pair are of equal standing: there is at least one **preferred** and one **dispreferred** category response. It must be pointed out that the notion of preference here introduced is not psychological one, in the sense that it does not refer to speakers' or hearers' individual preferences. Rather it is a structural notion that corresponds closely to the linguistic concept of markedness. In essence, preferred seconds are unmarked – they occur as structurally simpler turns; in contrast dispreferred seconds are marked by various kinds of structural complexity. Thus dispreferred seconds are typically delivered: (a) after some significant delay; (b) with some preface marking their dispreferred status, often the particle *well*; (c) with some account of why the preferred second cannot be performed.

One common form of adjacency pair is an assessment—an evaluative statement followed by another assessment. There is a preference for agreement in the next turn after an assessment; if one is going to agree, one does it simply. Quickly, and often in upgraded

A: Isn't he cut

B: O::h::s a::DORable

(Pomerantz, 1984)

The exception to this general rule is when the first speaker is saying something unfavorable about themselves; it is not the preferred second turn to agree:

A: I was just wondering if I'd ruined yer weekend (by uh

B: (no. no. hmm h. I just loved to have -

(Pomerantz, 1984)

Here B has to disagree (whatever he or she might really feel about the weekend), and does it in the way preferred turns are done, quickly (ever overlapping), simply and emphatically. The imagined alternative, where B admits his or her weekend was ruined by A, would typically involve some delay, particles, hedging or accounts.

Managing the flow of conversation

Since participants typically share these expectations about how one turn is followed by another, they can use the turn-taking system to signal possible problems, project what is coming, and review what has been said. The system of turn allocation is summarized below (Sacks et al., 1974 in Eggins and Slade, 2001).

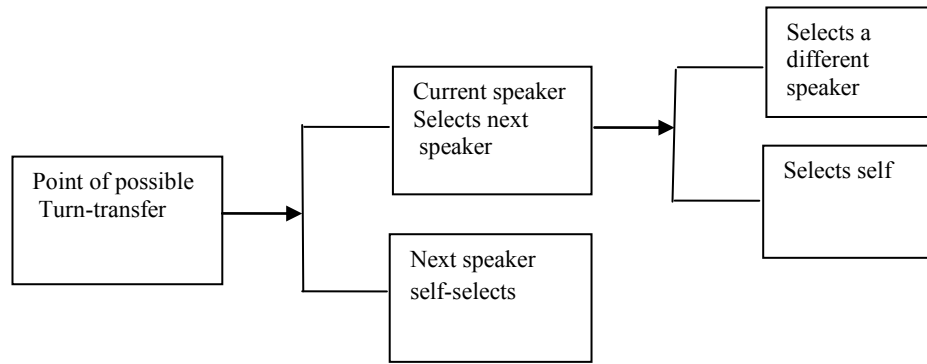


Figure 1. Turn-taking system

Sacks et al. In Eggins and Slade (ibid.) point out that this system operates at the end of every turn or what they call “locally”, rather than on an overall or “global” basis. In other words, turn allocation cannot be agreed in advance at the beginning of the conversation, but must be continually renegotiated at each turn constructional unit boundary. This system has one aim: to ensure that when the current speaker finishes her turn at talk, some other speaker will start talking.

These actions are potentially problematic, and participants make them carefully, with openings for the other to respond. For instance, talk is susceptible to many problems of noise, not just literal sounds blocking what is said, face to face or on the phone, but all the problems of pronunciation and processing that characterize rapid speech. So it is not surprising that talkers have developed ways of checking and correcting possible misunderstandings. In this example, the caller to an emergency help line has not given enough information for the dispatcher to know where to send help:

CT: Mid-City police and Fire
 C: Yes. Um: I'm at fifty three twenty seven Nelson
 CT: Fifty three twenty seven Nelson what
 C: North
 CT: Yeah:
 C: An:d uh there's been uh (continues)

(Zimmerman, 1992: 451)

This example illustrates the most common pattern of what is called **repair**: the person who uttered the trouble source turn (C's first turn) is promoted by the other person (CT), in the next turn, to repair it. The prompt could be a repetition of what was just said, or a question about it, or a silence where a response might be ex-

pected. In this case, CT repeats the whole utterance, to show what he or she did receive correctly, and then appends what, showing that an additional piece of information is needed. C then provides just the bit that needed repairing, and CT wondering whether the problem was the number, or the street name or general audibility). C then provides just the bit that needed repairing, and CT acknowledges the repair. Since this highly efficient routine is so well established for sorting out misspeaking, mishearing, misunderstanding, and inaudibility, one can use it to project doubt or disapproval, for instance just by repeating back what someone has just said.

Another view that seems incorrect is that, while turn-taking is indeed an option-based system, the options are organized not around surface-structural units, but rather around functional units—speech acts, moves, or perhaps ideational units (Levinson, 2000). Such a view has an initial plausibility: as a participant one should wait until one sees what interactional contribution the other party is making, and then perform one's own. However, such view makes the wrong predictions—for example, since greetings, expressions like *How are you?* Is generally precisely predictable, they ought to get regularly overlapped, but this is not the case. Similarly, where a speaker fails to make himself audible or comprehensible to a recipient, a request for **repair** ought to occur immediately after the 'repairable', whereas in fact the initiation of repair generally awaits the next TRP (Transition Relevance Phrase). Despite its plausibility, this view too seems to be wrong: turn-taking is firmly anchored around the surface-structural definition of turn-units, over which rules of the sort in operate to organize a systematic distribution of turns to participants.

Many common sequences have developed

pre-sequences that enable other participants to tell that what follows will be a story (did you hear what happened to...), a request (do you have five quid?) or an announcement (I have good news today!). These pre-sequences can become so ritualized that the actual sequence is hardly needed (if someone asks if you have five quid, you must just say you can't lend them anything, without waiting for an actual request for a loan). Here the turns lead up to an announcement of news:

D: I-I-I had something terrible t'tell you. So uh

R: How terrible is it.

D: Uh, th- as worse it could be.

R: W-y' mean Edna?

D: Uh yah.

R: What she do, die?

D: mm:hm,

(Levinson, 1983: 356)

D hints and delays, while R guesses at the scale of the news, its object and the event, until R supplies the news that is to be announced, and D just confirms it. This indirection suggests that both sides accept there is reason to treat the announcement as sensitive; if D has simply said Edna's dead in the first turn, it could have been seen as inappropriately abrupt. R must play along with the hinting strategy for it to work, signaling that he or she can project how the conversation will develop.

As pre-sequences look forward, formulation looks back. In formulation, one speaker repeats in other words what they think the previous speaker has said or meant:

A: I was just gonna say come out and come over here and talk this evening. But if you are going out (you can't very well so that)

B: (Talk you mean get drunk, don't you)

A: What?

(Lerner, 1996: 253)

B has rephrased what A has said; *talk* means get drunk. There is typically then a slot in which the formulated speaker can accept the formulation or reject it. Just as pre-sequences work because both parties are constantly monitoring the way that the conversation could go forward from this turn, formulations work because both parties are assessing the relevance of the previous turn. In both cases, the issue is not the accuracy of the prediction or the summary, as judged by the analyst, but how the other participant responds in the next turn, whether they are willing to allow this to be the meaning of the next turn, or the last turn, for present purpose.

29.4 An Example of talk in a group

The patterns discussed so far are just a few of the many that have been discussed by conversation analysts. The key feature of any analysis is that they look at how one turn is followed by another, asking 'why did this come just after that?' When another analyst disagrees about an interpretation, they don't raise issues of what the participant must have been thinking, or trying to do, or who he or she was; they look ahead to the next turn, to see how the other participant took it. This deliberately narrows window on the next means conversation analysis is often attacked by other analysts, but it also means it provides a rigorous way of analyzing and discussing talk.

We could start from the context: who are Nasreen, Mona and their friends? What is their relation to each other? Why are they talking? What is the necessary structure of stories, and why is she telling this one? But from a conversation analysis approach, we need to look first at the sequence of turns. We see then that Nasreen keeps taking turns, even when others break in. She can do this because she has signaled that she is telling a story, that whatever others say, she is done (has not given up the floor, until she signals the end of the story. The BBC clip starts with her setting the scene for a story, and ends with her giving her evaluation of her participation in it, providing an opening for others to come in. Along the way, Mona and maybe others overlap with her talk. But this overlapping is not heard as interruption; we know this because Nasreen keeps acknowledging them as part of her story, before continuing. The others offer their own views of what facts are relevant (was he white English?) and their own evaluations of events (how disgusting is that?), but Nasreen does not give her own evaluation until the end.

This example is not just talk, it is talk about talk. Nasreen does not just say *I met an airport employees who was condescending to me because the color of my skin made him take a British native for a foreigner*, she enacts how he said it, and how she responded. His simplified way of talking to her, and her colloquial response, is the point. And it is the point the others take, because Mona carries it one step further, projecting a possible completion for Nasreen's remark (mate) that would have been consistent with her demonstrating that she was British and was rejecting his interference, and Nasreen says *yeah*. After this point is made, Nasreen continues the conversation, but it is clearly not important that she give the exact words, even though it is in direct speech;

she says *trying to put abc together whatever* because it doesn't matter, for this story, just what it was she was filing with; what matters is that her filing was mistaken for confusion. It is possible to analyze the structure of this story, but the point here is that it is carefully constructed in the course of interaction.

Mediated conversation

The approach of conversation analysis starts with everyday talk, what they sometimes call mundane conversation, where the roles, the next speaker and the content of adjacency pairs is left to the participants. In many institutional contexts, these aspects are not left to the participants to work out; for instance, in many school contexts, the teacher chooses the next speaker, so there is no point in following the turn-taking mechanism, and the teacher determines whether a response counts as an answer to a question, or not. Conversation analysis applies to all these situations, but one has to look closely at the actual talk see how it is different from everyday talk. One cannot, in this approach, just assume that a doctor controls talk with a patient, or a lawyer controls talk with a witness on the stand. Participants have whatever effect they have on each other, and on overhearing participants, by drawing on conventions that they take for granted from everyday talk, and modifying them in terms of the institution.

Conversation analysis does not enable us to say if the question is or is not vague, and if the response is or is not evasive. But it does tell us about the resources we as audience bring from everyday conversation when we try to interpret what is going on. Conversation analysis is rigorously empirical approach which avoids premature theory construction.

Conclusion

People possess conversational competence, that is, they observe conversational maxims, rules, regularities, and conventions. A speaker of a sentence conveys a proposition and at the same time performs an act (e.g., warning), which has an effect on the hearer (e.g., being alarmed). A conversation consists of a series of exchanges, initiation (e.g., question) from one speaker and response (answer) from another. The strongly linked initiation–response from an adjacency pair. Conversation is interactive, as partners take turns in speaking and listening. Turn taking occurs smoothly, but simultaneous talking and interruptions occur occasionally. Conversational speech is formulated on the spot and contains ellipses, pauses, discourse mark-

ers, and disfluencies. It moves in cycles of hesitant (panning) and fluent (execution) phases. Conversation tends to be locally and globally coherent and is analyzable into a series of exchange structures, segments, and so on, each with its own discourse topic.

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