Conversation Analysis (CA)

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Introduction

Conversation analysis (CA) is an approach to the study of language and social interaction. Despite its name, the scope of CA is not limited to conversation as a genre of discourse (small talk, gossip) but encompasses any human activity that involves an exchange of turns at talk and other meaningful conduct. CA comes with a rigorous methodology that rests on two pillars. The first is the use of audio and video recordings of naturally occurring interaction. While the analysis is also normally supported by transcripts and other forms of annotation, audio and video recordings remain the primary data to repeatedly return to. The second pillar of CA's methodology is a commitment to the close examination of social interaction in its sequential, forward-feeding development. Interaction unfolds as a chain of initiating and responding actions. This chain is a source of internal evidence for the meaning of social behavior as it exposes the understandings that participants themselves give of what one another is doing.

CA's sequential frame of analysis also shapes the basic questions that guide CA research: what is a participant doing by speaking or moving in a certain way at a given moment? What evidence is there for this in the conduct that precedes, co-occurs with, and follows that stretch of behavior? As an example, consider the following fragment of conversation among three college students in England. Bob is telling Jack and Chip about the amateur play he will soon be starring in at school. As a testimony to the popularity of the play, Bob notes that even Megan, a mutual acquaintance from Singapore, has heard of it (lines 9–13). Our focus is on Jack's repetition of Bob's *even she'd heard of it* (line 14).

What is Jack doing by repeating what Bob has just said? In CA, the first place to look for an answer is how Bob subsequently deals with the repetition (what is also referred to as the "next-turn proof procedure"). By responding *well no I mean she's from Singapore* (line 15), Bob explains and justifies himself for saying *even she'd heard of it*. This suggests an understanding of Jack's repetition as questioning the acceptability of what Bob has said (implying that it can be heard as demeaning or disrespectful of Megan). This analysis is further supported by the fact that Chip follows up with a challenge to Bob's justification (lines 17–22), in response to which Bob continues to defend himself (lines 21–25).

All this shows that the conduct that follows a given stretch of behavior (here, Jack's repetition) can be a rich source of insight into its meaning. CA puts this at the center stage of analysis along with conduct that precedes the behavior and conduct that

```
 1 Bob      yeah you heard [of it didn't you?
 2 Jack                    [I've heard of it yeah,
 3 Bob      [yeah_
 4 Jack     [well I've- well I've seen it in my school;
 5          (0.7)
 6 Chip     oh rig[ht.
 7 Jack           [so:_
 8          (0.9)
 9 Bob      and you know uhm:: you know Megan.
10          (0.4)
11 Jack     yeah;
12          (0.5)
13 Bob      ↑even she'd heard of it↑;
14 Jack     heh heh .hh even she:'d heard of it(hh). ((flashes eyebrows))
15 Bob      well no I mean she's from ↑Singapo(hh)re;
16          (0.7)
17 Chip     pfff [a:nd? ((laughs))
18 Jack          [((laughs))
19 Chip     pretty sure they've you know,
20          (0.4)
21 Bob      no no like_
22 Chip     they have [cul]ture there.
23 Bob                [just-]
24          (0.3)
25 Bob      I'm not being u::hm I'm not being funny.
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Figure 1a   Fragment 1 RCE15b_81113.

co-occurs with it. Focusing on the latter, as Jack replicates the words that Bob has just said (*even she's heard of it*), his added emphasis on *even* (marked by underlining in the transcript) serves to point up the problematic presupposition that Megan would be somehow less able to learn about the play. Note also the eyebrow flash that accompanies the repetition, conveying amazement, and the laughter that surrounds it. All these elements of the design of Jack's behavior contribute to characterizing what he is doing as questioning the acceptability of what Bob has said.

   The CA approach to language and social interaction can be employed for a variety of purposes in a range of disciplines and fields of inquiry. In linguistics, CA has been successfully applied to the study of linguistic form and function, helping to situate the use and emergence of grammatical structure in context, and providing for an empirically and sequentially grounded analysis of pragmatic phenomena (see Pragmatics) such as speech acts, indirectness, reference, deixis (see Deixis and Indexicals), discourse markers, and particles. CA has also proved to be a powerful tool in the study of language acquisition (see Language Acquisition) and development (see Language Socialization), as well as in the study of the interface between language and the body (see Body, in Interaction). In anthropology, and especially linguistic anthropology, CA has promoted the integration of ethnography with the repeated analysis of particular instances of cultural life. The influence of CA has also contributed to complementing the study of cultural variation in ritual (see Ritual and Forms of Communication) and political events with the study of ordinary conversation, which can reveal a greater deal of cross-cultural commonalities than found in more formalized genres of interaction (Sidnell 2009). Most recently, the combination of CA with long-term observation,

participation, and documentation in non-Western/industrialized communities has opened up a new avenue of comparative research into universal phenomena like turn-taking (Stivers et al. 2009), the repair of troubles in hearing and understanding (Dingemanse et al. 2015), the recruitment of other people's assistance and collaboration (Floyd, Rossi, and Enfield 2020). The goal of this research is to uncover both cross-cultural similarities grounded in the common infrastructure of human interaction as well as differences brought about by the local resources of particular cultural and linguistic settings (see also Moerman 1977; Ochs 1984, among others).

CA has established itself as an influential method for research in linguistics, anthropology, and their intersection. However, the roots of CA are to be found neither in linguistics nor in anthropology, but in sociology. CA's origins help to explain the provenance of some of its core tenets, including the centrality of ordinary interaction and the analytic commitment to participants' orientation to social norms and meaning. So it will be worth giving a brief overview of CA's sociological foundations.

Sociological foundations

The preoccupation of sociology with the empirical study of social interaction can be traced back at least to Max Weber, who defined sociology as "a science that concerns itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences" (Weber [1922] 1978). This programmatic perspective, however, had to wait about half a century to be turned into actual research practice. Along the way, Alfred Schutz elaborated on Weber's notion that social action must be subjectively meaningful, arguing for its examination from the actor's point of view (Schutz [1932] 1967). He was also among the first to argue that intersubjectivity (see Intersubjectivity) – the understanding of action and meaning across people – relies on a foundation of commonsense knowledge, which social actors and scientists alike tend to take for granted. A few decades later, this insight was brought to the fore by Harold Garfinkel (see Garfinkel, Harold), whose work aimed at exposing the common logic – the shared methods of reasoning – that people use to make sense of one another's actions (Garfinkel 1967) (see also Ethnomethodology). Garfinkel's exploration of the normative backdrop of ordinary social events, along with Erving Goffman's unprecedented eye for the concrete particulars of everyday life (Goffman 1959), paved the way for the empirical study of social interaction and its underlying structures. But the development of this as a field of systematic inquiry really began only with the work of Harvey Sacks (see Sacks, Harvey), Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson (Sacks 1992; Schegloff 1968; Jefferson 1972; Schegloff and Sacks 1973; Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974). Through both the individual and collaborative efforts of its three founders, CA was gradually established as a distinctive approach within sociology, while at the same time fostering dialogue with other intellectual developments in the fields of philosophy, psychology, linguistics, and anthropology. Contrary to dominant theories of linguistic and social structure in the 1950s and 1960s, CA maintained that it is possible to find orderliness at all levels of everyday conversation. To do this, CA insisted on the close and repeated analysis of audio and video recordings, and developed a system for the

detailed transcription of talk and other conduct as they unfold in time. As participants produce and attend to one another's talk, they care about the actions getting done through it, and the intelligibility of these actions is an achievement rather than a condition to be taken for granted. The search for orderliness and structure begins from the thick particulars of single instances of an interactional phenomenon, and accountability to each individual instance is maintained throughout any subsequent search for generalizations across a collection of instances (see Collection-based Analysis). Finally, while distributional regularities are essential to identifying an interactional pattern, demonstrating the normative nature of the pattern requires an account of possible departures from it and of participants' orientation to deviant behavior.

Data

One of the hallmarks of CA relative to other observational and qualitative research methods is its reliance on audio and video recordings of social interaction (see Methods in Linguistic Anthropology: Audio/Visuals). Recordings allow for observation to be repeated by the investigator and by others, and for qualitative analysis to be reproduced or confuted. CA's approach involves certain principles for data collection, including what can or should be recorded and how. In most cases, recordings should capture activities or moments of social life that would have taken place anyway, that is, regardless of being recorded. While ethical and other research procedures may involve making arrangements with participants prior to the recording, what is important is that the activity be naturally occurring, that is, not scripted or elicited by the investigator (e.g. through an interview or experiment).

A great deal of CA research is based on data from maximally informal interaction between people who know each other well – family, friends, neighbors. Data from informal settings have been the basis for most fundamental research into the generic structures and principles of interaction that transcend individuals, social roles, and types of activities. At the same time, CA research has been equally concerned with interaction in institutional settings such as classrooms, courtrooms, hospitals, stores, business meetings, news interviews, and other arenas (Drew and Heritage 1992; Heritage and Clayman 2010). Working with these data often involves both an interest in how interactional principles are adapted to a particular setting and an interest in documenting and possibly improving institutional practices.

In most CA data collection, sampling is opportunistic, as the investigator approaches individuals and groups that they have easier access to on the basis of proximity, acquaintance, etc. However, some CA research on interaction in institutional (and especially medical) settings requires collecting data from a sufficiently stratified cross-section of a population – in terms of gender, race, socioeconomic status, etc. – in order to study potential variation in interactional patterns across social categories (e.g. Stivers and Majid 2007). This kind of research normally necessitates combining CA with quantitative methods. Also, the growing field of comparative CA has led to the construction of structured corpora designed to document the same types of activities across languages and cultures, including driving lessons (Deppermann 2018), service

encounters in food stores (Harjunpää, Mondada, and Svinhufvud 2018), family meals (Zinken and Ogiermann 2011), and more recently a wider set of everyday activities (Sorjonen et al. 2018).

Regardless of sampling and corpus structure, however, the cornerstone of comparative CA – and more generally of any CA study involving collections of cases from different contexts – is the achievement of "natural control" (see e.g. Dingemanse and Floyd 2014), that is, a proper identification and definition of the interactional environment in which a phenomenon occurs. This kind of "control" is not obtained by constraining the actions of participants by means of experimental design, but by identifying a conversational structure, a sequentially delimited exchange of actions that is recurrent and stable across topics, individuals, and settings. As an example, consider again the central part of the fragment above:

```
 9 Bob      and you know uhm:: you know Megan.
10          (0.4)
11 Jack     yeah;
12          (0.5)
13 Bob      ↑even she'd heard of it↑;
14 Jack     heh heh .hh even she:'d heard of it(hh). ((flashes eyebrows))
15 Bob      well no I mean she's from ↑Singapo(hh)re;
16          (0.7)
17 Chip     pfff [a:nd? ((laughs))
18 Jack          [((laughs))
19 Chip     pretty sure they've you know,
20          (0.4)
21 Bob      no no like_
22 Chip     they have [cul]ture there.
```

Figure 1b   Fragment 1 RCE15b_81113.

The highlighted sequence has an identifiable three-part structure: in the first turn, Speaker A says something; in the second turn, Speaker B repeats all or part of what Speaker A has said; in the third turn, Speaker A responds to the repetition by addressing a problem it has raised. This type of sequence turns out to be recurrent in interaction across different languages and cultures (Dingemanse and Enfield 2015; Rossi, forthcoming) and it illustrates how conversational structure can be used to define the context of occurrence of a given phenomenon, which in turns helps to situate the categories of talk and other conduct that operate in it. "Sequential control" makes it possible to reliably identify instances of the same phenomenon, be it for a language-/culture-specific study or for a comparative one. But to better understand the principles that underlie the detection of conversational structures, we need to learn more about certain fundamental domains of organization in interaction.

Fundamental domains of organization in interaction

The empirical findings of early conversation analytic research have led to the identification of certain fundamental domains of organization (turn-taking, turn-construction, sequence, repair, and others), which can be shown to be relevant in virtually any context

and at any time two or more people find themselves interacting with one another. These fundamental domains may also be viewed as grids or structures running through the fabric of interaction, shaping, constraining, and enabling the orderly exchange of action and sharing of meaning between participants. The extensive study of these structures over the years has resulted in a set of analytic concepts that form the basic toolkit of CA.

A first domain of organization that is relevant in virtually every instance of interaction through language is *turn-taking*. People take turns at speaking and, normally, one person talks at a time. Although overlaps between two or more people speaking occur, they are brief and tend to be resolved quickly. The alternation of people's contributions to a conversation is regulated by a system that allocates opportunities to speak on the basis of certain rules. One of the components of this system is *turn-construction*, which refers to the incremental formation of turns out of sentences, clauses, phrases, or single words, packaged as self-contained units with the help of prosody. A key feature of turn-constructional units (TCUs) is their projectable structure, which allows recipients to anticipate the end of a current speaker's contribution and time the start of their own contribution relative to it. A TCU's completion establishes a transition-relevance place (TRP) where a change in speakership becomes an expectable possibility (which may or may not be realized).

While the turn-taking system explains *when* contributions to an interaction can or should be made, it is also crucial to understand *what* these contributions contain. Turns can be seen as the "'host space' in which language deposits are accommodated" (Schegloff 1996, 54). The morphosyntactic and semantic make-up of these "deposits" gives them a certain meaning. But above and beyond meaning, the language contained in turns serves to deliver *action*. Another basic domain of social organization is therefore the formation and ascription of action (Levinson 2013).

As we saw in the analysis of Fragment 1 above, one way in which conversation analysis stands out from other approaches to social action is the central role it gives to responsive conduct, which is used as a key into the nature of the preceding action. The relation between initiating and responding actions is also at the core of *sequence organization*, which concerns how actions cohere to form larger structures. One such recurrent structure is the *adjacency pair* – a sequence of two actions, the first of which creates a normative obligation for the second to be produced (e.g. greeting–greeting, question–answer).

Most first pair parts of adjacency pairs, such as questions, assessments, and requests, make relevant at least two alternative responses, one of which aligns with the action of the first pair part (answer, fulfilment, agreement) and another which doesn't (non-answer, rejection, disagreement). These alternatives have been shown to be asymmetrical, one being preferred over the other. *Preference* is another fundamental domain of organization which involves principles that regiment the realization of alternative actions and their design. The non-equivalence between two alternative ways of acting (e.g. accepting or rejecting a request) is not individually but collectively defined. Individuals can choose between the alternatives, but their choice will be subject to expectations and norms of interpretation maintained by the collective social order.

While preference operates mostly at the level of adjacency pairs and their pair parts, interaction is often organized also at a higher level at which multiple adjacency pairs and other sequences of action follow and build on one another to constitute an episode of interaction. *Overall structural organization* refers to the ordering and transition between different phases of an interaction, from its opening, through its internal development, to its closing.

Finally, social interaction necessitates a system for dealing with problems in speaking, hearing and understanding, which involves both procedures for signaling problems and others for solving them. *Repair* (see Repair: Error and Correction) in interaction is not only a domain of organization of its own but can also serve as a diagnostic for the operational state of other domains of organization (e.g. the appropriateness of a certain action or action design).

In sum, these domains of organization in interaction are an integral part of the analytic and conceptual apparatus of CA. They are central to any CA work on particular interactional patterns, activities, or settings, and constitute the methodological toolkit for breaking down a stretch of interaction in its fundamental structures and features. The components of these domains of organization (e.g. turn-constructional unit, transition-relevant place, first pair-part, dispreferred response) are tools or keys with which we can unravel the fabric of an interaction. We should not forget, however, that these domains of organization and their components were not self-evident in the first place – they had to be discovered. That the inductive method through which they were discovered continues to be used in contemporary CA to explore new dimensions and arenas of language and social interaction as well as to delve further into these basic domains themselves, some of which are far from being fully understood.

An example of CA analysis

In this last section, I give a practical example of how CA can be employed in the analysis of language and social interaction, focusing on the use of the imperative form (e.g. "pass the salt") for making requests among speakers of Italian. This analytic exercise presupposes the transcription of talk and other conduct in the interactions of interest. CA transcripts include temporal aspects like gaps and overlaps, phonetic aspects like the particular lengthening or loudness of certain words, and relevant aspects of visible behavior. In addition to transcription, the exercise also presupposes having built a collection of instances of the phenomenon of interest, which is guided by certain principles (see Collection-based Analysis). Finally, the exercise touches only on a limited subset of the analytic and conceptual tools of CA, a more comprehensive presentation of which is to be found elsewhere (Sidnell and Stivers 2013).

The exercise addresses a common question in the study of language and social interaction: given a certain type of social action, such as making a request, what are the criteria for selecting a particular linguistic form for accomplishing it? In what follows, I examine three cases of requests for passing or moving an object among speakers of Italian, made in imperative form (e.g. "pass the salt").[1]

The first step in the CA analysis of any phenomenon is a close examination of each *single case* that pays attention to the details of talk and other conduct surrounding the focal sequence. In our case, this includes aspects of the interaction that aren't necessarily related to the request. Imperative requests occur in a variety of contexts including food preparations, mealtimes, card games, and other moments of joint work. Each of these contexts involves different goals, modes of participation, and spatial arrangements; and within these, each request is made at a certain moment, between certain individuals, dealing with particular contingencies at a certain juncture of the interaction. Before making generalizations on the use of a request form, it is important to understand each request sequence in its own right, situated in a rich social context and enmeshed in a flux of other events.

Building on this first step, the second is to identify a pattern in the use of the request form, based on observable regularities in the events leading up to the moment of requesting. Let's consider a first example. Olga and Tina, two elderly women, have just sat down at the dining table with other family members. After pouring water in her own glass, Olga offers to pour some also for Tina (line 1).

```
1 Olga       vuoi acqua
            do you want water

2           (0.4)/((Tina looks at her glass))

3 Tina       sì +ma:: ho paura che:+
            yes bu::t I fear tha:t

4 tina          +lifts glass from area of table in front of her

5                              +holds glass out toward Olga (0.3)

6 Olga       metti giù
            put down

7 tina       puts glass down in area of table next to Olga (0.3)

8 olga       pours water (3.5)

9 Tina       grazie
            thanks
```

Figure 2   Fragment 1b RCE15b_81113.

Tina accepts Olga's offer ("yes"), grabs her glass (line 4), but also hints at some trouble that might hinder the unfolding course of action ("I fear tha:t") – plausibly her shaky hand. As she proceeds to hold the glass out toward Olga, Olga requests that she put down the glass ("put down"), thereby remedying the trouble potentially caused by Tina's unsteady grip on it.

The analysis of this and other cases of imperative requests shows that requests so designed typically solicit an action that contributes to the progress of a joint project. This means that the action requested (here, putting down the glass) furthers a line of action that is already on the table (pouring water in the glass), and that has been committed to by both requester and requestee before the request is made. This is reflected both in

the sequential status of the action requested – a relevant move toward the successful completion of the project – and in aspects of the talk and other conduct that indicate a distribution of the action's benefit across requester and requestee: putting the glass on the table makes it easier for Olga to pour water in it and is at the same time in Tina's interest as the recipient of the offer (see her "thanks" in line 9).

Once a pattern has been identified, the process continues by considering *variant* cases. While the majority of imperative requests in the data at hand are made in contribution to a joint project, some of them don't fully conform to this use, one difference being that they serve an individual rather than a shared goal. Let's consider a second fragment, taken from a card game. When the fragment begins, teammates Bianca and Flavia are consulting on their next move, while Clara and Silvia are visibly inactive, waiting for their turn to come. In line 3, Silvia takes a piece of cake from a plate that has been previously brought to the table for all the players. This occasions Clara's request.

```
1 Bianca    se te ghe n'hai doi
           if you have two of them

2 Flavia    no no ghe n'ho doi no
           no I don't have two of them

3 silvia    takes piece of cake from plate (1.9)

4 Clara     dame quel migolin lì valà per piazer ((points to cake))
           give-IMP.2SG=1SG.DAT that crumble there PTC for favor
           give me that tiny piece there please valà (≈ will you)

5 silvia    passes another piece of cake to Clara (0.4)

6 Clara     grazie
           thanks
```

Figure 3   Fragment 2 AlbertoniPranzo01_2555535.

Unlike the imperative request made in Fragment 2, this one does not contribute to a joint project; it is aimed at obtaining a good to be consumed by the requester alone. At the same time, we can note that Clara makes the request just as Silvia is taking a piece of cake for herself. This juncture makes it relatively easy for Silvia to extend the course of action she is already engaged in to pass another piece of cake to Clara. The tight connection between the requested action and the course of action the requestee is engaged in is linguistically reflected in the deictic forms of the request utterance ("that tiny piece there"), which presuppose an already established field of attention including the targeted referent.

In sum, the action requested here "piggybacks" on what the requestee is in the process of doing. Even though the request serves an individual goal, it maintains a relation of compatibility and continuity with a line of action that is already on the table, which is a basic ingredient of the interactional configuration identified as the main pattern (Fragment 2). This is crucial to characterizing Fragment 3 as a *variant* case.

But there are more elements that support such an analysis. Clara's imperative request is built with two mitigators: *per piazer* "please" and *valà*, a northern Italian particle that can be rendered with the English tag "will you" – an appeal to the requestee's benevolence or goodwill. The presence of these mitigators indicates the requester's effort to soften or redress her imperative request. In so doing, the requester shows a sensitivity to the fact that the expectation of compliance carried by an imperative form needs to be qualified here. In other words, the requester does social-interactional work to support the use of an imperative form. This orientation, together with the requestee's straight-forward compliance, characterizes the case as a normative, albeit variant, use of the imperative.

The final step in this exercise is to consider a *deviant* case, that is, a case that goes against the pattern demonstrated so far; a case where the use of an imperative request form violates the criteria underlying the rest of the cases. This may lead either to a revision of the analysis or else to its reinforcement. The latter is possible only when the deviant behavior is oriented to as such by participants. Our third fragment illustrates this scenario. Baldo and other people are working in the kitchen. Shortly before the fragment, Silvio has asked Baldo to take over grating Parmesan for him. When the fragment begins, Baldo returns the task to Silvio (line 1) and then moves to the center of the kitchen to make the target request.

When Baldo makes his request, everyone else in the kitchen is busy with other tasks. Nobody responds or even looks at him. Possibly contingent on this lack of uptake, Baldo interrupts the utterance ("give me the bread a knife and-," line 6), and completes it after a short pause, with a quieter voice ("and it was cut").[2] If the analysis presented for Fragments 2 and 3 is correct, then the use of an imperative form here is deviant. Giving Baldo bread and knife is not part of an ongoing or already established project with any of the participants (note that the request is addressed to a plurality of people). Also, the request is primarily self-directed. Although the bread is to be cut for everyone, this is a task that Baldo is especially in charge of ("I have to cut the bread"). Baldo makes no attempt to fit the action requested to what his recipients are doing (cf. Fragment 3). Instead, the loud-ness with which the request is delivered gives it an imperious tone. All these elements concur to characterize a request so designed as out of the ordinary, and specifically arro-gant. What makes this case especially interesting is that the design of Baldo's request is negatively sanctioned by another participant, Michele, who enters the kitchen just after Baldo completes the request utterance (line 9). After characterizing Baldo's request as "too much," Michele re-enacts it as a way to exhibit its inappropriateness, and particu-larly the inappropriateness of its design. This is indicated by the fact that his caricature picks up on the request's imperative form, preceded by a reason. After repeating it ver-batim, Michele ridicules the request with a mock version: "I have to eat – give me pasta, a fork and spoon-feed me." By mirroring the same structure (reason + request), Michele appears to draw attention to the inappositeness of an imperative form relative to the self-interested nature of the action being requested, mocking it as a childish demand.

Deviant cases such as this can strengthen the overall analysis by demonstrating the consequences of using a certain form of action in the "wrong" environment, bringing to the surface the normativity of the pattern identified.

```
1 Baldo      to' Silvio (  )
             here Silvio (  )

2 Silvio     che palle
             what a drag

3 baldo      walks to center of kitchen (0.6)

4 Silvio     mi ero abituato [all'idea di non farlo
             I had got used to the idea of not doing it
```

```
5 Baldo                    [>>ff> oh devo tagliare il pane >
                               ITJ must-1SG cut-INF the bread
                               hey I have to cut the bread

6            >>dim > datemi il pane il coltello e- > ((looks to others))
                     give-NPST-2PL=1SG.D the bread the knife and
                     give me the bread a knife and-
```

```
7            (0.9)/((others keep doing their own tasks))

8 Baldo      e tagliato fu
             and cut-PSTP be-PST-3SG
             and it was cut

9 Michele    Baldo mi sembra [un po' come] dire ((entering the kitchen))
             NAME 1SG.D seem-3SG one bit how say-INF
             Baldo it seems to me a bit — how to put it

10 Baldo                    [ coltello  ] ((claps hands once))
                              knife
11           (.)

12 Michele   troppo quello che chiedi
             too.much that REL ask-2SG
             too much what you ask

13           "devo tagliare il pane datemi il pane e il coltello"
                 must-1SG cut-INF the bread give-NPST-2PL=1SG.D the bread and the knife
             "I have to cut the bread — give me the bread and a knife"

14           "devo mangiare datemi [la pasta la forchetta=
             must-1SG eat-INF give-NPST-2PL=1SG.D the pasta the fork
             "I have to eat — give me pasta a fork"

15 Baldo                            [((giggles))

16 Michele   =e imboccatemi" cazzo
             and spoonfeed-NPST-2PL=1SG.A dick
             and spoon-feed me" — what the fuck
```

Figure 4   Fragment 3 Circolo01_1270484.

NOTES

1. It is worth noting that the corpus from which the cases are drawn consists of interactions taking place around the home, in the family, and people's proximate community of friends and neighbors. In Italian society, relations among adults in these domestic and informal settings can be said to be generally symmetrical, that is not characterized by strong inequalities of power, class, or the like,

especially compared to other societies with ingrained asymmetries (see Gumperz 1964, 142–146). This is one of the reasons why the analysis does not consider factors such as authority or deference but focuses on situational factors.

2.   The second part of the request echoes parodically a passage from the Bible (Genesis): "Then God said: 'Let there be light'; and there was light."

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