

Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction

EDITED BY

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**LANGUAGE, THOUGHT, AND CULTURE: *Advances in the
Study of Cognition***

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None of these studies of conversation would have been undertaken without the work of Harvey Sacks, who introduced each of us to the study of conversation. Although substantial differences in topic and style are evident with just a glimpse through the pages of this volume, the individual studies gathered here share inestimable indebtedness to his teaching. Through his lectures and writings he has had the most profound impact on all our work as well as on the work of many others.

Harvey Sacks died in an automobile accident late in 1975. Acknowledging his special contribution to our independent studies is certainly appropriate here. But of course, it hardly expresses the depth of his influence on us all. And more important, it makes no mention of what a marvelous man he was.

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Explanation of Transcript Notation

Although contributions have come from many sources, our transcript format is largely the work of Gail Jefferson; over the years, she has developed a system of notation and transcript design intending to produce a reader's transcript—one that will look to the eye how it sounds to the ear. It makes sense to group the symbols by the phenomena they track through the conversation, and to date, we pay particularly close attention to the following:

1. Simultaneous utterances

Utterances starting up simultaneously are linked together with double left-hand brackets:

[[TOM: I used to smoke a lot when I was young
[[BOB: I used to smoke Camels

2. Overlapping utterances

When overlapping utterances do not start up simultaneously, the point at which an ongoing utterance is joined by another is marked with a single left-hand bracket, linking an ongoing with an interrupting utterance at the point where overlap begins:

[TOM: I used to smoke a lot
[BOB: He thinks he's real tough

The point where overlapping utterances stop overlapping is marked with a single right-hand bracket:

TOM: I used to smoke a lot more than this
BOB: I see

3. Contiguous utterances

When there is no interval between adjacent utterances, the second being latched immediately to the first (without overlapping it), the utterances are linked together with equal signs:

= TOM: I used to smoke a lot=
BOB: =He thinks he's real tough

The equal signs are also used to link different parts of a single speaker's utterance when those parts comprise a continuous flow of speech that have been separated to different lines by transcript design, accommodating an intervening interruption:

TOM: I used to smoke a lot more than this=
BOB: [You used to smoke
TOM: =but I never inhaled the smoke

Sometimes more than one speaker latches directly on to a just completed utterance, and when this happens, it is marked with a combination of equal signs and double left-hand brackets:

TOM: I used to smoke a lot=
BOB: =[[He thinks he's tough
ANN: =[[So did I

When overlapping utterances end simultaneously and are latched onto by a subsequent utterance, this is marked by a single right-handed bracket and equal signs:

]= TOM: I used to smoke a lot
BOB: I see
ANN: =So did I

4. Intervals within and between utterances

When intervals in the stream of talk occur, they are timed in

tenths of a second and inserted within parentheses, either within an utterance:

(0.0) LIL: When I was (0.6) oh nine or ten

or between utterances:

HAL: Step right up
(1.3)

HAL: I said step right up
(0.8)

JOE: Are you talking to me

A short untimed pause within an utterance is indicated by a dash:

– DEE: Umm – my mother will be right in

Untimed intervals heard between utterances are described within double parentheses and inserted where they occur:

((pause)) REX: Are you ready to order
((pause))

PAM: Yes thank you we are

5. Characteristics of speech delivery

In our transcripts, punctuation is not used to mark conventional grammatical units, but rather, attempts to capture characteristics of speech delivery. For example, a colon indicates an extension of the sound or syllable it follows:

co:lon RON: What ha:p-pened to you

and more colons prolong the stretch:

co::lons MAE: I ju::ss can't come

TIM: I'm so::: sorry re:::ally I am

The other punctuation marks are used as follows:

- A period indicates a stopping fall in tone, not necessarily the end of a sentence.
- , A comma indicates a continuing intonation, not necessarily between clauses of sentences.

- ? A question mark indicates a rising inflection, not necessarily a question.
- ! An exclamation point indicates an animated tone, not necessarily an exclamation.
- A single dash indicates a halting, abrupt cutoff, or, when multiple dashes hyphenate the syllables of a word or connect strings of words, the stream of talk so marked has a stammering quality.

Emphasis is indicated by varieties of italics, the larger the italics, the greater is the relative local stress:

italics ANN: It happens to be *mine*
italics BEN: It's not either yours it's *mine*
ITALICS ANN: ***I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE SO HARD ON THIS***

Audible aspirations (hhh) and inhalations (.hhh) are inserted in the speech where they occur:

hhh PAM: An thi(hh)s is for you hhh
 .hhh DON: .hhhh O(hh)h tha(h)nk you rea(hh)lly

Double parentheses are used to enclose a description of some phenomenon the transcriptionist does not want to wrestle with. These can be vocalizations that are not, for example, spelled gracefully or recognizably:

(()) TOM: I used to ((cough)) smoke a lot
 BOB: ((snuffle)) He thinks he's tough
 ANN: ((snorts))

or other details of the conversational scene:

JAN: This is just delicious
 ((telephone rings))
 KIM: I'll get it

or various characterizations of the talk:

RON: ((in falsetto)) I can do it now
 MAX: ((whispered)) He'll never do it

6. Transcriptionist doubt

Other than the timings of intervals and inserted aspirations and inhalations, items enclosed within single parentheses are in doubt, as in:

() TED: I ('spose I'm not)
 (BEN): We all (t-)

where *spose I'm not*, the identity of the second speaker, and *t-* represent different varieties of transcriptionist doubt.

Sometimes, multiple possibilities are indicated:

TED: I (spoke to Mark)
 ('spose I'm not)
 BEN: We all try to figure a (tough angle) for it
 (stuffing girl)

When single parentheses are empty, no hearing could be achieved for the string of talk or item in question:

TODD: My () catching
 () : In the highest ()

where the middle of Todd's utterance, the speaker of the subsequent utterance, and the end of the subsequent utterance could not be recovered.

7. Other transcript symbols

The left-hand margin of the transcript is sometimes used to point to a feature of interest to the analyst at the time the fragment is introduced in the text. Very often the reader is drawn to lines in the transcript where the phenomenon of interest occurs by large dots (bullets) in the left-hand margin; for example, if the analyst had been involved in a discussion of "continuations" and introduced the following fragment,

- DON: I like that blue one very much
- SAM: And I'll bet your wife would like it
- DON: If I had the money I'd get one for her
- SAM: And one for your mother too I'll bet

the bullets in the left-hand margin would call attention to Sam's utterances as instances of "continuations."

↑
←
↓
→

Other features of the analyst's attention are indicated by a variety of arrows in the left-hand margin, and the analyst will inform the reader of what the arrows specifically call into attention.

. . .

Horizontal ellipses indicate that an utterance is being reported only in part, with additional speech either coming before, in the middle, or after the reported fragment, depending on the location of the ellipses.

Vertical ellipses indicate intervening turns at talking have been taken out of the fragment:

BOB: Well I always say give it your all

.
.
.

BOB: And I always say give it everything

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Sketch of an Analytic Mentality for the Study of Conversational Interaction

JIM SCHENKEIN

The studies of conversation in this volume were written more or less independently over the last 5 years in Southern California, in New York and Boston, in British Columbia, and in Manchester, England. I say "more or less" independently because, while each of these separate studies was undertaken without particular regard to the other papers in this collection, they share a number of central methodological commitments and substantive orientations. Although each study examines different features of conversational interaction, and each will be of interest for its own distinctive findings and conceptual models, together they reflect a vigorous research paradigm for the study of natural conversation. Our work, needless to say, is shaped by our commitments, orientations, habits, and more. I would like to offer here a sketch of the analytic mentality governing the collection as a whole.¹

In the first place, each of these studies is rooted in the close scrutiny of naturally occurring interactions that have been recorded and trans-

cribed. The materials under study were not elicited, remembered, or invented to provide illustration for some analytic design, to exercise some research apparatus, or to examine some prefigured hypotheses. All the materials in this volume are drawn from actual interactions occurring in their natural environments—and that, oddly enough, is kind of a novelty.

The conversational fragments offered for study throughout this volume represent, plainly, the tiniest sample of circumstances in which conversations are found. To begin with, they are all conversations conducted in English, although materials from many regions of North America and England are included here. They are all conversations conducted by persons for whom interactional competency is not obscured by accent, impediment, or other speech distortion, although materials from conversations among adults diagnosed as "mentally retarded" are included here. And they are, for the most part, conversations of the white middle class. Within a phenomenal domain thus limited, however, these studies jointly draw on a wide range of conversational circumstances: There are conversations held over telephones and intercoms; into hidden recorders and open microphones; in living rooms and factories; out of doors and aboard ship; over a meal and under arrest; among strangers, co-workers, intimates, and others; delivering news, conducting business, offering praise, registering complaints, selling insurance, giving instructions, calling the police, telling stories, making excuses, working through therapy, exchanging small talk, and so on. Within obvious limits, it is a highly varied corpus of materials.

To be sure, our analyses are formed by involvement in this particular universe of data. We look directly at varieties of naturally occurring conversational interactions, and our analyses, therefore, are stimulated by attempts to characterize these actual conversational exchanges. In none of these studies are the conversational materials used to bolster, undermine, or perfect any morals, personalities, or politics. In none of these studies is the research conducted by manipulating the natural interactions into scores on some test instrument, codes in some rating scheme, figures in some measurement plan, votes in some judgment exercise, categories in some sorting task, or positions in some scaling device. In none of these studies are the research curiosities satisfied by fine tuning on any erstwhile theory of mankind, society, or communication. Instead, the research in each case has been motivated by taking seriously the details of the natural interactions themselves—and that too, oddly enough, is something of a novelty, particularly for sociologists.

By strict submission to the details of natural conversation, each of these studies is concertedly sensitive to what actually takes place when talk is organized into conversation. For example, since conversation is essentially an interactional activity, our studies necessarily endeavor to

材料选自
语言

材料主要来自
白人中层

这些研究
都不是实验
研究

研究设计
对话中最

offer systematic characterizations of the interaction conducted through conversation; the interactional basis of many of the things people do is taken for granted typically and rarely given rigorous sociological formulation,² but in these studies, detailed observations on the interactional unfolding of conversation provide a foundation for the analyses. Since conversation proceeds as speakers arrange their participation through delicately orchestrated sequences of utterances, our studies are necessarily preoccupied with the sequential emergence of conversation; the orderliness of conversational sequences is quite spectacular, and these studies exhibit that orderliness in unprecedented detail. Since conversation is organized through abstract resources and constraints bearing on locally idiosyncratic conversational environments, our studies are necessarily sensitive to the situated fit between abstractly organized structures and the particularities of local context; the descriptions presented here offer promising movement towards an empirically based grammar of natural conversation.

In conducting and reporting these researches on conversation, each of these separate studies makes use of transcripts prepared from audio and/or video recordings of natural interactions. It is, after all, because we can review the recordings and study the transcripts endlessly that we come to see details of conversational organization hidden by real time and ordinary sensibilities. Transcript preparation requires extraordinarily close attention to productional details of the talk under study, and the transcripts and fragments that appear throughout this volume share conventions of design intended to capture and permit access to those details.³

Despite other differences in focus or approach, each of these studies is committed to building careful descriptions of the conversational phenomena under investigation. Consider these declarations of topical interest drawn from each chapter:

Here, on the basis of research using audio recordings of naturally occurring conversations, we attempt to characterize, in its simplest systematic form the organization of turn taking for conversation, and to extract some of the interest that organization has.

—FROM SACKS, SCHEGLOFF, AND JEFFERSON

After presenting the transcript which will govern our further observations and attentions, I want to coax you into an analytic mentality that aims at describing the systematic procedures with which participants to such encounters can and do juggle their official and abstract identities with informal and personal identities in the course of their ordinary conversation.

—FROM SCHENKIN

A large proportion of compliment responses deviate from the model response of accepting compliments. A close examination of those responses reveals that while rejections are frequent, they are not performed as preferred seconds.