

Theoretical perspectives I

Structures and evidence in naturally occurring talk: introduction to the methodology of Conversation Analysis

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Aims

- to introduce CA methodology and use of interactional 'evidence'
- to provide some ways of thinking about relationships between phonetic detail and phonetic variation in an interactional context

What are the problems?

- often assumed that talk is unordered, random, susceptible to individual variation
- 'meaning' routinely based on analyst's intuitions
- communicative functions invoked in an *ad hoc* fashion
- there is selective treatment of phonetic material

Conversation Analysis

- CA is interested in the sense-making procedures of ordinary people in everyday life – is committed to the analysis of real-life interaction
- in CA speech data is viewed as an integral part of the sequential context it occurs in: 'context shaped' and 'context renewing'
- CA cares about the sequential organisation of talk and recognises that speech data is emergent in real time and analysis must be sensitive to this
- CA provides us with analytic tools which pay close attention to what interactants really do and which require us to ground our functional accounts in participants' behaviour

Some CA findings

1. interaction is structurally organised
2. no order of detail in conversational interaction can be dismissed a priori as disorderly, accidental, or interactionally irrelevant

Interactionally organised

(1) Lau1

Phi: she's having three weeks and staying here one week I

Phi: [think (is it)]

Les: [y e s]

Les: [y e s

Phi: [eh-heh-he[h

Les: [he-huh he-huh

Interactionally organised

(2) Off1

Les: the other thing (.) was (.) uhm .t.h we've had an invoice
from Scott's .hh (.) now if they deliver it (0.5) to you
uh (0.7) we- (.) we wanted to pay the carriage
well they haven't invoiced us for any carriage

Phi: .hw hh (.) wel[l

Les: [so-
(0.2)

Phi: [they

Les: [if they come to you and invoice you for carriage say
th[at it's we that're paying okay

Phi: [eyeah

Interactionally organised

(3) Off2

Emm: [yah

Lot: [yeah I know where i[t- [y a]h [u h] huh]

Emm: [ny[a h] [.hh].hhh]h alright honey
well .hh good- I'm so glad you had a wonderful time .h

Lot: well listen (.) e-uh do you want me to come down and get you
to[morrow or]a n y t h]ing

Emm: [n o]dear]

Context-shaped, context renewing

you're a good rower honey

you're real sweet hon

Context-shaped, context renewing

(4) Cont1

E: you're a good rower honey

J: these are very easy to row (.) very light

(5) Cont2

1 Nan: [you know]

2 Emm: [want to come] down have [a bite of] lunch w]ith me

3 Nan: [it's just ()]

4 Emm: I got some beer and stuff

5 (0.3)

6 Nan: well you're real sweet hon uhm

7 (.)

8 Emm: [or do y] ou have] something [else ()

9 Nan: [l e t-] I] hu [n no I have to uh call Roul's

10 mother h I told her I'd call her this morning I [got a letter]

11 Emm: [(uh huh)]

12 Nan: from her and



Some findings: phonetics and talk-in-interaction

1. the phonetic detail of talk is thoroughly saturated by and shaped by ongoing interactional activities.
2. phonetic detail simultaneously provides interactional, grammatical and lexical information.
3. some systematic differences in phonetic detail are relatively localized in the speech signal others stretch over several syllables.

Some findings: phonetics and talk-in-interaction

do you sing Noche de Paz

you in the bathroom

(6) IntAct1

A: you- you know you said a lot of hurtful
things too well god damn it
(1.8)

A: I'm sick of getting trounced on
(0.7)

B: you in the bathroom
(0.4)

A: huh

B: you in the bathroom

A: no I'[m just cooking] (.) din[ner]

B: [in the kitchen] [oh]



Some findings: phonetics and talk-in-interaction

- turn taking organisation, sequence organisation, design of action
- initiation, articulation, phonation
- 'prosodic'/non-segmental and non-prosodic/segmental features

Basic concepts in CA

- Social action
- Turns at talk and turn taking
- Turn-design
- Sequence Organisation

Basic concepts in CA: Social action

At the heart of CA is the search for social practices for meaning and understanding.

How do people make sense of each other's actions through the use of language?

Actions ... answering, agreeing, disagreeing, requesting, assessing, complaining, announcing, noticing

Social action

(7) Nonlay1

Ed: why do you write juvenile books
(0.5)

Ed: [is that be- (0.?) [hav]ing [children]

Sh: [because I love child[ren] [I really do] .hh I enjoy children
.hh I started writing (.) juvenile books for entirely practical reasons .hh
(.)

Sh: [u u-

Ed: [making money

Sh: making [money

Ed: [yes ((+ laughter))

Sh: that- that practical reason hhh
(.)

Sh: I've been writing juvenile books for a long



Basic concepts in CA: Social action

(8) Actions?

Rose: why don't you come up and see me some[times

Bea: [I would

like to

Rose: I would like you to

(9) Actions?

A: uh if you'd care to come and visit a little while this morning I'll give you a cup of coffee

B: 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

Turns at talk and turn taking: TCUs, TRPs

Turn Constructional Units (TCUs) constitute recognisable actions in context

A speaker beginning to talk has the right and the obligation to produce one TCU which may realise one or more actions

(Possible) Transition Relevance Places (TRPs)

As a speaker approaches the possible completion of a first TCU in a turn, transition to another speaker becomes relevant

Turns at talk and turn taking:TCUs, TRPs

(10) TCU-TRP

Rose: why don't you come up and see me some[times

Bea: [I would

like to

Rose: I would like you to

Turn Design

Turn design refers to the particular way in which a turn is constructed by selection from among alternative ways of doing/saying something. A speaker selects :

- what action a turn will be designed to perform
- the details of the resources through which that action is to be accomplished

Turn Design

(11) TurnDes1

Mar: we'll have to do tha[t more] o[ften]

Edn: [.hhhhh] [well w]hy don't we uh- m why
don't I take you and mom up there to Coco's someday for
lunch

(12) TurnDes2

Edg: oh hh lord and we were wondering if there's anything
we can do to help

Mic: [well that's]

Edg: [I mean] can we do any shopping for her or something like that
(0.7)

Mic: well that's most kind Edgerton .hhh at the moment no
because we've still got two boys at home

Edg: of course



(13) TurnDes3

1 Emma: w what are you doing

2 (0.9)

3 Nancy: what am I do[ing

4 Emma: [cleaning

5 Nancy: hh.hh I'm ironing would you believe that

6 Emma: oh bless it[s heart]

7 Nancy: [in fac]t I ir I started ironing and I d-

8 Nancy: I (.) somehow or another ironing just kind of

9 leave me co[lid]

10 Emma: [ye]ah

11 (.)

12 Nancy: [you know]

13 Emma: [want to come] down have a bite of lunch with me

14 I got some beer and stuff



Sequence organisation

Turns at talk are connected to and follow one another in sequences

When we think of the 'context' in which talk occurs, the most proximate context is a turn's *sequential position*.

Every turn at talk is built on, and displays, an analysis and understanding of the other speakers prior turn.

Speakers have this sequential organisation as a resource to inspect others talk/action to see what sense it made of their own prior talk and may, if they find that sense making problematic initiate repair work.

Sequence organisation: Adjacency pairs

Basic unexpanded form is:

- composed of two turns
- produced by different speakers
- adjacently placed (one after the other)
- relatively ordered as a first part ('first pair part' — FPP) and a second part ('second pair part' — SPP)
- typed, so that a FPP requires a particular SPP, a range of SPPs

Sequence organisation: Adjacency pairs

Questions/answers

Requests and grantings/rejections

Invitations and acceptances/declinings

greetings/reciprocal greetings

Sequence organisation: Adjacency pairs

(14) AdjP1

Emm: were you busy last night FPP

(.)

Lot: yeah SPP

(15) AdjP2

Kar: you can all come up here FPP

(0.3)

Vic: no that's alright we'll stay down here SPP

Sequence organisation: displays of understanding

(16) Nextturn1

Nancy: well you're real sweet hon uhm
(.)

Emma: or do you have something else ()

Sequence organisation: displays of understanding

(21) Nextturn1

Mother: is everybody (0.2) [washed for dinner

Gary: [yah

Mother: daddy and I have t- both go in different directions
and I want to talk to you about where I'm going tonight

Russ: mm hmm

Gary: is it about us

Mother: uh huh

Russ: I know where you're going

Mother: where

Russ: to the uh (eighth grade)

Mother: yeah right

Mother: **do you know who's going to that meeting**

Russ: **who**

Mother: **I don't know**

Russ: **oh probably Mrs McOwen and dad said probably Mrs Cadry and
some of the teachers (0.4) and the coun[sellors**

Mother: [Mrs Cadry went to the-
I'll talk to you about it again

Sequence organisation: displays of understanding

(24) Nextturn1

Emma: well honey (0.2) I'll probably see you one of there da[ys

Lottie: [oh
god yeah [(I wish that)] I (0.2) I just [(can't) get] do[wn

Emma: [uh hah] [oh] [oh
I know I'm not [asking you to come down]

Lottie: [j e s u s I m e a n] I just (0.2) I
didn't have five minutes yesterday



'Evidence' in CA

1. Relationship to the prior turn: how does the phenomenon under consideration relate to earlier talk?
2. Co-occurring evidence with the turn: are there other aspects of the turn which support the proposed analysis?
3. Subsequent treatment of the device: is there evidence from what happens later for the proposed analysis?
4. Discriminability of the practice: what other terms does it co-occur with, and what terms does it contrast with?

Phonetics and talk-in-interaction

- conduct the phonetic enquiry parametrically employing impressionistic and acoustic techniques
- do not make a priori assumptions about the importance or otherwise of phonetic features
- conduct the phonetic analysis alongside an interactional-sequential analysis.

News receipts: 'oh'

'Oh' + more talk (assessment)

(25) NB II.2: 1

Emma: .hh how you doing

Nancy: .t hhh pretty good I got a raise h .hh[h

Emma: [goo[d

Nancy: [yeah

two dollars a week

(.)

Emma: oh [wow]

Nancy: [uh] uh hu[h huh]

Emma: [what are you going to] do with it all

Nancy: golly I really I just don't know how I'm going to spend all that money



News receipts: 'oh'

'Oh' + more talk ('really')

(26) NB IV.7: 6

Emma: I've quit smoking you know and everything hh
(0.7)

Barbara: well when did you stop that

Emma: the day you left .h
(0.6)

Barbara: left where

Emma: from here in September

Barbara: how many cigarettes you had
(0.5)

Emma: none

Barbara: oh really

Emma: no

(.)

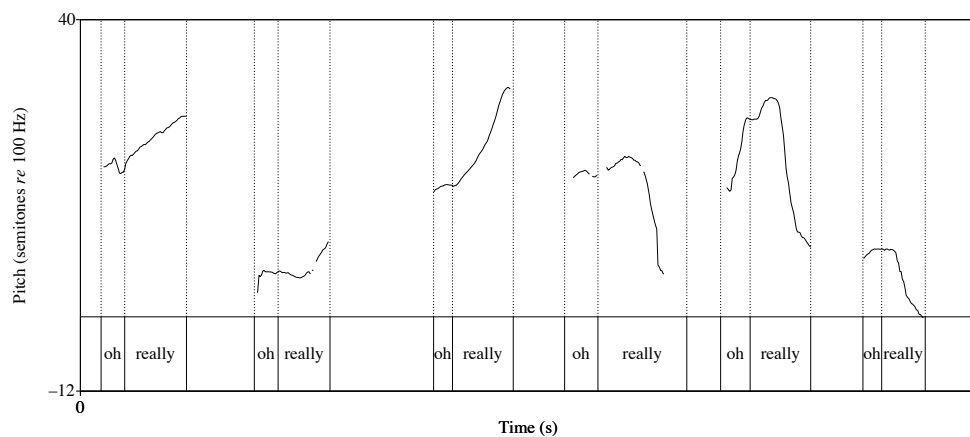
Barbara: very good

Emma: very good .hhh will you I'll k- uh I'll call you tomorrow at nine



News receipts: 'oh'

Oh + really



News receipts: 'oh'

Oh + 'assessment'

