CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

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Social interaction is the primordial means through which the business of the
social world is transacted, the identities of its participants are affirmed or
denied, and its cultures are transmitted, renewed, and modified. Through
processes of social interaction, shared meaning, mutual understanding, and
the coordination of human conduct are achieved. In recent work within
anthropology, scholars interested in how societies reproduce social order
(15), critics of traditional perspectives in psychological anthropology and
learning theory (28, 113, 138, 175), and linguistic anthropologists attempting
to rethink basic issues in reference, pragmatics, and context (24, 35, 37, 38,
71, 75, 77, 115, 128, 166, 167) have all converged in their recognition of
face-to-face interaction as a strategic site for the analysis of human action.
Here we report on a relatively new and distinct line of inquiry called conversa-
tion analysis.

Conversation analysis (hereafter abbreviated as CA) developed as a field of
study in the 1960s through intense collaboration among the late Harvey
Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson. Arising within sociology, CA
emerged from the "cognitive revolution" that swept across the social sciences
in the 1960s (7, 174) and placed a new emphasis on participants' orientation
to indigenous social and cultural constructs. It seeks to describe the underly-
ing social organization—conceived as an institutionalized substratum of in-
teractional rules, procedures, and conventions—through which orderly and
intelligible social interaction is made possible. Analysis of this substratum

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requires an integrated analysis of action, mutual knowledge, and social context. To some extent, therefore, CA anticipated the growing contemporary interest in social interaction as a dynamic interface between individual and social cognition on the one hand, and culture and social reproduction on the other (28, 113, 138, 175).

CA is a generic approach to the analysis of social interaction that was first developed in the study of ordinary conversation but which has since been applied to a wide spectrum of other forms of talk-in-interaction ranging from courtroom (2, 3) and news interview conduct (26, 67, 88) to political speeches (1a, 87a). As noted by Goffman (1974:36), two different approaches can be taken to the definition of conversation. One can define it as casual talk in everyday settings; alternatively, the term can be "used in a loose way as an equivalent of talk or spoken encounter" (46:14, cf 153:1075–76). Using the latter notion of conversation as a point of departure, the line of research described here has investigated the structural organization of casual conversation (often described in the CA literature as ordinary or mundane conversation) and has identified features that systematically distinguish it from other forms of talk-in-interaction (e.g. interviews or debates).

In what follows, we briefly describe the origins of this work and outline a number of dimensions of current investigation. The present summary deals with aspects of CA of particular relevance to anthropologists. More inclusive overviews of the field and its origins may be found in a range of additional sources (3:34–81; 84:233–92; 115:284–370; 180). Major collections of work in the field include references 4, 21, 165, and 181. Clear examples of the working through of particular empirical issues in CA terms can be found in references 105, 159, and 164.

BACKGROUND

CA developed within a sociological context in which the dominant sociological approach to the analysis of action was the product of a classical interdisciplinary synthesis achieved by Parsons and his associates in the Department of Social Relations at Harvard (132, 133). Central to the Parsonian perspective was a tripartite analytic conception of cultural, personality, and social systems in which cultural values, once internalized as personality dispositions, were conceived as the causal drivers of social behavior. Within this perspective, mutual understanding and shared communicative meaning were treated as the unproblematic outcome of a preexisting common knowledge of language and cultural symbols. Similarly, the coordination of action was analyzed as the product of compliance with shared norms of conduct. This approach was essentially preoccupied with analyzing the social motivation of action in terms of a set of socially conditioned dispositions that would

tend to establish social cooperation. In this context, detailed empirical analysis of social action and interaction was set aside in favor of developing a conceptual approach to action that could prepare the way for macro social systems analysis. In the process, the analysis of language and meaning was consigned to linguistics.

Within the latter discipline, however, the divorce between language and meaning proposed by Bloomfield (13) was, in 1957, declared absolute by Chomsky (22). Moreover, Saussure's (149) definition of the scope of linguistics excluded from analysis the interactive matrix that constitutes the natural home for language. Both sociology and linguistics thus defined the scope of their subject matter in such a way that the relevance of talk-in-interaction fell between disciplinary boundaries. Additionally, within both linguistics and social theory, the actual behavior that occurs within interaction was viewed as disorderly, and indeed inherently defective—mere noise that gets in the way of the ideal structures that it is the real job of the analyst to investigate. Thus, Chomsky (23) argued successfully that actual talk was such a degenerate sample of ideal linguistic competence that linguists should ignore it entirely and work instead with idealized sentences constructed by the analyst. This maneuver was replicated by speech-act theorists who, while repudiating the isolation of studies of language from studies of action (170), based their analyses in the study of isolated sentences stripped of their social context. In parallel, the Austinian category of perlocution was effectively dropped from the speech-act perspective; with it the interface between illocution and perlocution, and in turn the bridge between action and interaction, fell away. By the mid-1960s, therefore, the intersection among language, context, meaning, and action was severed by several disciplinary boundaries. Moreover, dominant paradigms within several social science disciplines were antithetic to the analytic connections appropriate for an analysis of social interaction.

The central sociological move towards the construction of these connections was initiated within sociology by Harold Garfinkel (42), whose dissertation (41), chaired by Parsons himself, contained a sustained critique of the Parsonian treatment of action. Basing his analysis on the phenomenological writings of Alfred Schutz (168, 169), Garfinkel argued that the Parsonian framework had paid insufficient attention to the nature and properties of ordinary experience and, in particular, the category systems (or "constructs"), commonsense knowledge, and practical reasoning that social actors employ in actual courses of action. Such knowledge and reasoning enable actors to recognize and act on their real world circumstances, grasp the intentions and motivations of others, and achieve mutual understandings. The phenomenological tradition, from Husserl onwards, had asserted the open, approximate, and revisable nature of commonsense constructs which Schutz—in surprising convergence with the later Wittgenstein (178) and anticipation of the work of

Rosch (139) and others—depicts in terms of typifications (168). This tradition also asserted the dynamic character of commonsense knowledge and its usage: Understandings of the nature of the physical and the social world (including particular "here and now" contexts of action) are continuously updated through imperceptible ("pre-predicative"), but perpetually renewed "syntheses of identification." Intersubjective understandings, Schutz argued, are not exempt from this process. They are "without guarantees." Although they are informed by the presumption of "the general thesis of the reciprocity of perspectives" (168:11–13)—a notion that antedates and is larger in scope than Grice's (69) cooperative principle—intersubjective understandings are actively achieved as the outcome of concrete interactive processes.

In researching these proposals, Garfinkel devised a range of procedures with which he was able to show not only that mutual understandings are highly contingent and revisable but also that participants invoke a vast array of background understandings to make sense of a course of activity. Additionally, his researches demonstrated—in contrast to the Parsonian view that communicative and social order is based on a preestablished culture that determines what words and rules "mean"—that all aspects of a cognitively shared social world are sustained through a multiplex array of shared methods of reasoning. Through these methods, individuals particularize their sense of language, of rules and norms, of common culture, and of shared knowledge to local circumstances. Finally, Garfinkel abandoned what may be termed the "bucket" theory of context, in which the situation of action is treated as anterior to—as "enfolding" and determining—the action that takes place within it. Rather, he argued, just as a social setting determines the sense of a current action so, in turn, that action will redetermine (by sustaining, modifying, updating, or transforming) the sense of the current context.

This analysis, although sometimes formidably abstract in both character and expression, was echoed in a second tradition that was more concretely focused on the study of social interaction. This tradition, labeled "context analysis" by Kendon (108, 109), emerged in a line of inquiry extending from Bateson (5), Birdwhistell (12), and Scheflen (150), through to such contemporary scholars as Kendon (110), McDermott (30, 122), Erickson & Shultz (39), Gumperz (70, 71, 73) and Hymes (90, 91). It seeks to provide a theoretical and empirical analysis of how human interaction is produced and organized. This tradition found substantial expression in the work of Erving Goffman (43–46). While graduate students under Goffman in the early 1960s, both Sacks and Schegloff were in direct and simultaneous contact with Garfinkel as well (152). Though they refracted these two influences somewhat differently, the discipline of conversation analysis essentially emerged as a fusion of the interactive and phenomenological/ethnomethodological

traditions. Within this fusion, interactional materials would be used to investigate the procedural bases of reasoning and action through which actors recognize, constitute, and reproduce the social and phenomenal worlds they inhabit.

CONVERSATION ANALYSIS: CONTEXT, SEQUENCE, AND UNDERSTANDING

From its inception, CA developed as an approach to the analysis of the practices of reasoning and inference that inform the production and recognition of intelligible courses of action. Central to the achievement of this objective has been the development of a theory of context that links processes of interpretation to action within a reflexive, time-bound process. Consider first the problem of action. In contrast to procedures involving the analysis of isolated (and frequently invented) sentences, CA has insisted since its inception that in the real world of interaction sentences are never treated as isolated, self-contained artifacts. Instead, sentences (the abstract entities that are the objects of linguistic enquiry) and utterances (the stream of speech actually produced by a speaker in conversation) are understood as forms of action situated within specific contexts and designed with specific attention to these contexts (159). For participants, and hence for conversation analysts, the point of departure for the analysis of any utterance is the talk, or other action, that it emerges from.

The concept of interactional sequence was the analytic innovation that opened the way for cumulative empirical advance. This concept is premised on the recognition that each "current" conversational action embodies a "here and now" definition of the situation to which subsequent talk will be oriented. An elementary specification of this notion of sequence was developed by Sacks and Schegloff (140, 153, 154, 164) with the concept of the *adjacency pair*, whose central characteristic is the rule that a current action (a "first pair part" such as a greeting or a question) requires the production of a reciprocal action (or "second pair part") at the first possible opportunity after the completion of the first. This sequence is normatively organized, rather than, for example, associative, in character. The scope of this organization is shown not only by the multitude of cases in which a next action appropriate to the first in fact occurs, but also by those in which it does not. In such cases—for example, when a greeting is not returned—the appropriate next action is treated as "noticeably absent" (153) and the absence can become the object of remedial efforts and justifiable negative inferences. It is through the latter—functioning through Gricean implicature (69) as "secondary elaborations of belief" (40, 86, 87, 134)—that speakers can influence, or even constrain the conduct of their coparticipants. Therefore the adjacency-pair

framework described by conversational analysts is not a description of statistical regularities in the patterning of action, or a specification of an internalized rule that drives behavior. Instead it describes a procedure through which participants constrain one another, and hold one another accountable, to produce coherent and intelligible courses of action. (84:Ch. 5).

Adjacency pair organization is thus an elementary framework through which conversational participants will inevitably display some analysis of one another's actions. Within this framework of reciprocal conduct, action and interpretation are inextricably intertwined. Each participant must analyze the developing course of others' actions in order to produce appropriate reciprocal action. The necessity of embodying analysis of past interactional events in a course of current action provides the basis for others to judge both one's understanding of what has transpired and the appropriateness of one's response. Without this basis, the participants could not hold one another accountable for meaningful participation in a collaboratively sustained social world.

Although the strict adjacency-pair framework only organizes a relatively narrow range of conversational actions, the analytical reasoning underlying its formulation proved adaptable to a much wider and more loosely specified range of conversational actions. By relaxing the highly structured provisions of the adjacency pair concept to incorporate the more generic notion of "next positioning" in which a current action may project, but not strictly require, one among a range of possible next actions, a much broader range of actions can be found to function in similar ways. For example, the production of an acknowledgment token (such as "mm hm") projects (but does not require) the continuation of another speaker's talk. Simultaneously it usually displays an analysis of the other speaker's prior talk as being incomplete so far (101, 158). The development of this broader focus on "next positioned" aspects of sequence has opened the way to the analysis of a much larger range of conversational sequences and activities ranging from the study of relatively small-scale (though ubiquitous) objects such as particles (83, 97, 158) and laughter (32, 95, 103, 107), through topic organization (18–20, 98, 102, 121), to large-scale sequences of activity involving such matters as troubles telling (96, 99, 103, 106) and advice giving (89). In this way, CA has been applied to a substantial range of conversational activities during the last decade.

In sum, this analytic approach—in which each conversational action is treated as both displaying an understanding of prior and projecting subsequent conversational actions—has enabled simultaneous analysis (*a*) of the organization of action and (*b*) of understanding in interaction. The application of this approach has permitted students of interaction to determine empirically the functions of many types of conversational objects and to unlock the

interior organization of a wide variety of conversational sequences. It has also opened the way to an empirical specification of the dynamic view of context that was theoretically sketched above. Within this view, every action is simultaneously *context shaped* (in that the framework of action from which it emerges provides primary organization for its production and interpretation) and *context renewing* (in that it now helps constitute the frame of relevance that will shape subsequent action) (84).

Conceptualizing action as simultaneously context shaped and context renewing has a number of consequences. First, it suggests the inadequacy of any view that treats context as a static field surrounding the sentence, speech event, or other action. Time and transformation are essential constituents of context. Second, insofar as the sense and relevance of an action emerge from and then contribute to the interpretive field created by the events that precede that action, analysis must move beyond the isolated sentence to encompass the sequences within which individual actions occur and where they are linked to each other.

The approach to conversational data described above has been informed by a number of broad methodological precepts. First, because language "is a vehicle for living real lives with real interests in a real world" (148:381), interaction is studied using data drawn from "real life" situations of action. Role plays, experiments, or invented materials tend to restrict the range and authenticity of the activities elicited through their use. These data are collected by audio, and where the parties are physically co-present, video recording rather than through methods in which the details of behavior will be lost (e.g. note-taking or on-the-spot coding of behavior). This is a time-consuming method of data collection, but it permits permanent records of the social world to be examined and reexamined in the light of different research questions. Moreover, data so recorded can be employed in systematic comparisons whose scope grows with expansion of the corpora.

Second, CA has focused primarily on ordinary conversational interaction. This emphasis is informed by the following considerations. Conversation constitutes the primordial site of language use in the natural world and is the central medium for human socialization (130, 167). Thus ordinary conversation is the point of departure for more specialized communicative contexts (e.g. the legal process, the educational system, the medical encounter), which may be analyzed as embodying systematic variations from conversational procedures. In addition, CA's focus on conversation between acquaintances, friends, and siblings offers an opportunity to determine what is distinctive about interactions involving asymmetries as status, gender, and ethnicity.

One of the best known, but most misunderstood, contributions of CA to the specification of sequential organization can be found in its analysis of turn-taking (148). This work offered a radically new perspective on social organi-

zation that integrated the details of language structure into the analysis of social process. The formal specification of this system made precise predictions about the placement and organization of a range of phenomena, such as overlap and repair. These have typically been treated as paradigms of the disorder believed to be endemic in ordinary talk. Note, for example, not only Chomsky's arguments about the "degenerate" nature of actual talk (23) but also Duncan's (33:320) claim that overlap indicates the breakdown of a turn-taking system. On the contrary, Sacks and his colleagues considered overlap one of the systematic products of the system, and its organization has been the topic of extensive study within CA (54, 56, 59, 92, 100, 104).[1]

The system for turn-taking described by Sacks and his colleagues (148) includes three basic components: 1. a specification of generic turn-constructional units that provide places for possible turn-transition (for example, a sentence that has come to a point of recognizable completion); 2. speaker-selection techniques, which include both self-selection by a subsequent speaker and specification of a next speaker by the current speaker; and 3. a rule set that orders options for action at points of possible turn-transition. Within this analysis speakers are intrinsically motivated to manipulate the internal structure of turn-constructional units—for example, to organize their talk so as to delay arrival at a place where they risk losing the turn (148).

Hearers, faced with the task of coordinating their behavior with speakers', are motivated to make inferences about future action and emerging meaning by analyzing the unfolding structure of the talk in progress (57, 92, 114).

The options available at points of possible transition dynamically organize the ongoing production of both talk and social action. For example, a speaker comes to a point of possible completion and stops speaking, but no coparticipant self-selects as next speaker. Seeing this, the initial speaker terminates the resulting silence with an extension of the original turn. Two features of this process merit special attention. First, because turns and the units being constructed within them can be extended past an initial point of possible completion, participants in conversation treat sentences as mutable rather than static objects that can be shaped by the interaction within which they are embedded. Second, both the turn and the objects being shaped within it are transformable, time-bound phenomena; the same event can be categorized in different ways at different moments. For example, a silence after a point of possible completion that initially appears to be a between-turns gap is transformed into a within-turn pause when the original speaker adds new material to the emerging turn (51).

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[1]Similarly, the phenomenon termed *repair* has been found to be orderly on many levels of detail, extending from the organization of multi-party, multi-turn sequences, on the one hand, to phonetic alternation within individual morphemes on the other (93, 105, 156). Repair also provides the generic "self-righting" mechanism necessary for the production of language, action, and understanding in the social world (163).

Finally, Sacks and his colleagues restricted their turn-taking system to mundane vernacular conversation. As is noted below, other speech-exchange systems are organized differently and involve systematic reductions of the opportunities for action permitted within the turn-taking system for conversation. This caveat is especially important for comparative work; some early proposals about cultural variability in turn-taking systems were found, on closer inspection, to be based on interaction that occurred in other speech-exchange systems, such as meetings.

The analytic and methodological orientations discussed so far were essential parts of conversation analysis by the time of Sacks's death in 1975. In what follows, we describe some aspects of the subsequent development of conversation-analytic research and findings, focusing particularly on topics of interest to anthropologists: 1. dimensions of context that are accomplished (a) within a turn at talk and (b) in sequences of talk; 2. preference and politeness; 3. conversation-analytic approaches to narrative and story-telling; and finally 4. the relevance of conversation analysis to anthropology.

THE CONSTITUTION OF CONTEXT AND THE DYNAMICS OF SPEECH EXCHANGE

In this section and the next, we discuss in detail CA's preoccupation with the notion of context.

Participation

The term "participant" is used here to refer to anyone engaged in an interaction. In describing participants it is useful to distinguish three different levels of organization. First, the activity of conversation provides a set of positions for the participants, the most salient being speaker and hearer. A party whose turn is in progress at a particular point in time will be called a speaker. In that pauses may occur within a turn, someone may be a speaker even though he or she is not saying anything at the moment. Second, distinct from the positions provided by the activity are the actions of individual participants displaying incumbency or nonincumbency in these positions. Though events on this level of organization are performed by single individuals, they are nonetheless social and include a projection about the other as well as display about the self. Consider the case of one party, **A,** addressing an utterance to another, **B,** who is, however, attending a different speaker, **C.** In order to adequately describe **A**'s action, one has to include the projection of **B** as an addressee; that description is unaffected by whether **B** displays hearership to **A.** The actions of **B** relevant to the position of hearer can be described separately. Further, a display of hearership on **B**'s part includes a projection of the party he is attending to as speaker. The term "hearer" can thus refer to three quite different objects. First, it might designate the complementary position to

"speaker" provided by the activity of conversation. Second, it might refer to the addressee of an act by a speaker. Third, it might designate a party performing acts of their own relevant to the position of hearer. If these distinctions are not kept in mind, confusion results, since, for example, a party may be an addressee without acting as a hearer. Moreover, a speaker can focus on a subset of those present (for example, through use of restricted gaze or an address term) while still designing aspects of his talk for those who are not explicitly addressed. The notion of recipient, encompassing but not restricted to explicit addressees, is thus also necessary. A third level of organization is provided by events that can only be described in terms of the actions of more than one individual—for example, the address of the speaker toward the hearer and the orientation (or lack of it) of the hearer toward the speaker are defined on this level of organization. What Goffman speaks of as "ratification" fits here. The identity assumed by one party is ratified, not by her own actions, but by the actions of another who assumes a complementary identity toward her. Further distinctions are of course immediately necessary, but these are beyond the scope of this paper; indeed, exploration of such issues is the topic of contemporary research in both CA and anthropological linguistics (45, 46, 51, 52, 56, 75, 116).

Here we focus on interactive practices that organize events *within* individual actions. Within this domain, two types of phenomena have been examined: 1. how participants orient themselves in ways relevant to the activities they are engaged in, and 2. how situated analysis of an emerging course of action shapes the further development of that action. In practice action and participation status are reflexively connected, and analysis of both types of phenomena can be pursued through investigation of *participation frameworks*.

Mutual orientation between speaker and hearer is the most basic social alignment implicated in spoken interaction. In order to build most types of conversational action a speaker needs a hearer (51). Within most traditional perspectives, analysis focuses exclusively on the speaker. The hearer is treated as a figment of the speaker's imagination (25). From the CA perspective, however, hearers are coparticipants who can decline as well as accept the status offered them. This raises the question of how participants assess each other's participation status. For example, how can a speaker determine whether or not a proposed recipient is in fact acting as a hearer, and how is this relevant to the action in progress?

Although the ethnographic literature contains a number of interesting reports on groups in which gaze avoidance is used to display proper attentiveness (39, 112, 177), C. Goodwin (50, 51) finds that in some societies, including that of middle-class America, speakers who find their addressee looking away restart their speech. Routinely such restarts attract the gaze of

nonattending hearers. The restart thus has two effects. First, it abandons the disattended talk, and second, it solicits the orientation of a recipient to a newly initiated complete turn. In other circumstances speakers add new segments to an emerging utterance in order to coordinate the production of the talk in progress with relevant actions of the hearer. In a sense, therefore, hearers are active participants in the process of building a turn at talk, and their action, or nonaction, can lead to substantial modifications in the sentence the speaker is in the process of producing. Such a perspective integrates the body into the analysis of talk and action. Moreover, investigation of how body movement and speech are coordinated during conversation, how objects and events in the external environment are made the focus of joint attention, how participants in a multi-activity setting such as a work environment establish and lapse from a conversational orientation, and how attention or its absence is interactively organized, provides a foundation for the analysis not only of conversation but also of interaction in institutional settings (78, 79, 80, 81).

The organization of a speaker's action not only provides positions for recipients within it; it also specifies attributes that should be possessed by a proper incumbent of that position—i.e. the action embodies a categorization of its recipient (and reciprocally of speaker as well) (51). Some of these categorizations take the form of *discourse identities*. For example, an inquiry proposes the speaker's belief that the addressee possesses information the asker lacks. When embedded within larger action patterns such discourse identities can simultaneously invoke larger social identities (55). Thus an inquiry about household matters may exhibit and make relevant to the action of the moment a domestic relationship between speaker and addressee. The way such discourse identities intersect with a range of social arrangements involving entitlement to knowledge can lead to participation framework dynamics of considerable complexity.

This kind of phenomenon illustrates one of the most general constraints providing organization for talk-in-interaction: recipient design (31, 93, 143, 147, 148, 154, 155). For example, a speaker's use of a particular reference term will commonly take into consideration an assessment of the knowledge of their addressee. When a speaker's attention to designing talk that takes into account the particularities of its intended listener intersects with an addressee's ability to decline or accept the position of listener, dynamic action sequences of some complexity emerge within the boundaries of a single utterance. Thus, as Goodwin (50) showed, a speaker's search for a hearer over the course of an utterance can involve not only the creation of new, syntactically well-formed additions to the utterance but also successive reconstructions of the action being performed by the utterance in question.

The phenomena noted above demonstrate some of the ways in which both action and context must be analyzed as dynamic processes capable of substantial modification as they emerge through time. What an action, utterance, or sentence eventually comes to be is best examined as the outcome of processes that are significantly interactional, rather than as the product of the psychological intent of an isolated speaker. Research within CA has investigated 1. how parties to talk-in-interaction analyze an emerging course of action, continuously using the parts of it that have become visible to project what it might become; 2. how such analysis is embodied in participation displays of various types; 3. the ways these participation displays are taken into account by others; and 4. the consequences of all this for the further development of the action (58). For example, recipients can demonstrate their understanding of speakers' actions by participating in them with facial displays, head movements, intonation, and even substantial comments of their own that overlap the continuing development of speakers' utterances. Speakers can then modify their emerging talk to take into account these listener displays (61). For example, the mere onset of a recipient's agreement can lead a speaker to intensify the position being agreed to (61). On the other hand, by failing to provide one of the participation displays made relevant by a speaker's action, hearers can decline to collaborate in a speaker's position, which can in turn lead the speaker to add new material to her utterance, thus providing further grounds for the assessment, etc. Similarly, the placement of overlap can demonstrate precision tracking of the emerging course of an utterance (92), and indeed participants have the ability to calibrate mutual laughter on a syllable-by-syllable basis (95, 103, 107). Investigation of such phenomena leads into analysis of a range of other issues, including (a) the interactive organization of affect, (b) the ways differences in each participant's perspective are taken into account in the detailed organization of their action, and (c) learning through participation in socially organized activities (57, 105). Finally the ability to collaborate in shaping action within single utterances is matched by a host of reflexive procedures for organizing sequences of utterances.

In sum, CA has made two major kinds of contribution to the analysis of participation frameworks. The first—already an important field of research for anthropological linguists (36, 44, 46, 71, 75, 77, 116, 131, 172)—focuses on how basic participant roles, such as speaker, hearer, overhearer, target, etc., are categorized, constituted, deployed, and transformed. Here the contribution of CA has been its insistence that the recipients of actions be treated as active participants, so that the frameworks being analyzed are truly interactive, and not merely a speaker's projection of a field of participants. The second contribution, exemplified by the types of analysis described in the preceding paragraph, focuses on the multifaceted ways participation in an

ongoing course of action demonstrates in fine detail an understanding (or misunderstanding) of what others are engaged in, while helping to shape the future course of those same events. This latter focus provides an opportunity to investigate how a range of cultural phenomena, including affect and learning, are produced by cognitively rich actors through densely organized interactive processes. It is especially relevant to anthropology, with its interest in how a culture provides for the interpretation, evaluation, and understanding of events, since it is through these processes that a common view of the world is interactively produced, challenged, and reproduced.

Context, Relevance and the Analysis of Talk in Institutions

CA insists that the categories used to describe participants, action, and context must be derived from orientations exhibited by the participants themselves. No aspect of CA's approach to context has been more controversial or more frequently misunderstood. However, it is here that the theoretical position of CA comes closest to traditional work in linguistic anthropology.

The fundamental issue from which this stance derives is the problem of *relevance:* showing that the categories proposed for analysis are oriented to by the participants themselves, in and through the production of their actions. To pose this issue Sacks (141, 142) addressed Goodenough's classic problem of identity selection (49). He noted that persons can be correctly categorized in multiple ways: For example, a person can be a male, a cousin, a chicano, a student, a scholarship candidate, and an incumbent of many more social categories simultaneously. Granted this, can it be shown that any particular category incumbency is relevant to the current interaction between parties, and if so, how?

Parallel issues are raised by questions of social-structural context. Given that interaction takes place within a hospital between two persons who are doctor and patient, how are these identities and the social context that encompasses them made operative and consequential in their conduct (84:280–290; 162)?

Within CA several important papers have dealt with this problem in settings where social interaction is formally distinct from conversational interaction. Sacks et al's 1974 study (148) indicated that turn-taking procedures might differ among various forms of interaction and as studies of courtrooms (1, 3), classrooms (123), and news interviews (67) have shown, this has turned out to be the case. Such studies bear upon problems of context and categorization because the use of distinctive and normatively sanctioned turn-taking procedures indicates the participants' pervasive orientation to particular social contexts and their own identities within them by comparison with ordinary conversation. For example, in many specialized contexts action types are restricted to questions and answers, and this restriction is associated with the

specialization of many utterance forms—specialization intended to exhibit a professionally neutral stance on the part of such questioners as lawyers and news interviewers (2, 26, 85, 87a, 88).

In less formal forms of task-oriented interaction—for example, interaction occurring in medical, psychiatric, social-service, and other environments—no single feature (such as a distinctive turn-taking system) enables us to demonstrate that the parties are oriented to a particular institutional context. In these environments, research has followed the lead of Gumperz (71) and Sacks (140), examining how turns and sequences are designed to exhibit institutional identity and institutional context. Studies have focused, for example, on the opening and closing of encounters; on how information is requested, delivered, and received; and on the choice of descriptive terms and reference forms as systematic procedures through which the "institutionality" of such encounters is achieved (2, 9, 14, 80, 82, 118, 137, 176).

PREFERENCE AND POLITENESS: THE DESIGN OF TURNS AND SEQUENCES

Both pragmatics and conversation analysis have been concerned with preference and politeness, but, as Schegloff (152) has recently observed, their respective approaches to this field of investigation have been strikingly different. Within pragmatics, analysis was initiated from the perspective of speech act theory and emerged through considerations of the properties of indirect speech acts considered as classes of actions (170). These issues were then crystallized by Brown & Levinson (16, 17) into a formidable set of hypotheses that, in turn, have been investigated mainly by soliciting respondents' intuitions about alternative speech forms. Within conversation analysis, by contrast, with its focus on the specifics of naturally occurring conduct, there developed an alternative emphasis on what Schegloff termed the "strategic/sequential" (152) dimension of actions. This approach focuses on the ways alternative forms of an action shape the possibilities for different types of response, and on how these various forms can be manipulated to achieve specific outcomes. This theme has been pursued with respect to (a) responsive actions, (b) presequence actions, and (c) sequence-initial actions.

An initial finding is that different kinds of responsive actions (e.g. agreements vs disagreements) are performed in markedly different ways (136, 145). While agreements are usually performed promptly and in intensified form, disagreements are delayed and mitigated in a variety of ways. Related studies discerned this pattern in such other classes of action as acceptances and rejections of invitations, offers, and proposals (29); responses to self-deprecations (136); and correction in ordinary conversation (163). The pattern could be observed in an unexpectedly large array of social contexts, including responses to requests from very young children (179) and teachers' correc-

tions of students' classroom errors (124). Across the entire set of observa-
tions, *disaffiliative* actions were prefaced, delayed, and/or mitigated in ways
their affiliative counterparts were not. For example, disagreements are nor-
mally prefaced by silence, an object such as "well," and even tokens of
agreement (e.g. "yes, but"). There is then a standard pattern in which
affiliative actions (agreements, acceptance, etc) are normally produced im-
mediately, while disaffiliative actions are normally delayed and mitigated.
These features were strongly institutionalized in American and British English
in that departures from the appropriate pattern for each class of actions were
themselves normatively accountable matters and the objects of inferential
reasoning. For example, while a prompt acceptance of an invitation is treated
as unremarkable, a rejection of an invitation done with the same promptness is
normally treated as indicative of rudeness or hostility. The patterning of this
set of features has come to be termed a *preference organization,* which
analysis has shown to have the following underlying rationale. The standard
preface and delay features associated with up-coming (i.e. yet to be produced)
disaffiliative actions prefigured the actions to come and thus provided oppor-
tunities for the about-to-be-rejected parties to modify their ongoing actions to
make them more acceptable. Thus, as Pomerantz (136) pointed out, the
institutionalized prefacing and delaying of disaffiliative actions is systemati-
cally associated with opportunities to minimize their occurrence, while the
promptness with which affiliative actions are performed maximizes their
occurrence. As an institutionalized pattern, this preference organization has a
systematic bias for affiliative actions.

Research also showed that while dispreferred actions often incorporated
accounts that offered some explanation for the action, preferred actions did
not. When dispreferred actions are not accompanied by accounts, accounts
are commonly solicited by a variety of means. Moreover, when accounts are
not given, their absence is often the object of warranted inferences. Accounts
tend to be of the "no fault" kind—i.e. they avoid any challenge to the rights
and sincerity of the parties to the exchange. For example accounts that
indicate a "contingent inability" (rather than an unwillingness) to accept an
invitation, comply with a request or accept an offer, have this "no fault"
quality. The data suggest that these accounts are institutionally "preferred"
(87).

This "sequential" analysis of the features of preferred and dispreferred
actions is also relevant to the consideration of *presequences.* "Are you doing
anything tonight?" is a presequence, one of a class of utterances characteristi-
cally used to preface requests, jokes and stories (143), news announcements
(173), and invitations (31). Presequences can be put to a variety of uses. On
the one hand, they enable parties to abort a projected interaction sequence in
which conflict, disagreement, or rejection might emerge. On the other hand,
if the projected sequence is not aborted in this way an affiliative outcome

becomes highly likely. They may also be used to induce preferred sequence types. For example, a presequence that anticipates a request may elicit an offer from the hearer (157); a pre-announcement indicative of bad news may induce the recipient to guess the news rather than have the prospective teller deliver it (161). There are clear intersections between the organization of account giving (discussed above) and presequence structure. Most presequence actions communicate "no fault" (inability) contingencies. As Levinson (115) has persuasively argued, many indirect speech acts can be understood as the product of contracted sequence packages (comprising presequence + target sequence) in which the presequence enquiry has become a conventionalized form of the target action (e.g. "Do you have a match?"). In this and many cases the conventionalized presequence inquiry orients to no-fault contingencies if the request must be rejected (i.e. addressee does not have a match). It is the no-fault presequence inquiry that has become conventionalized as the way of doing the request. In this respect CA findings on presequences complement traditional pragmatic analysis of indirect speech acts.

Finally, in looking at sequence-initial actions, the CA approach has, from Sacks's earliest writings (146: Lecture 1), been preoccupied with how variations in the design of a current turn can make different orders of activity relevant as next turns. Here the concern is with how particular turns can be designed either to invoke or ignore the local and situated relevances of the encounter. This work deals with such matters as the use of particular preface components (135, 145), lexical selection (93, 154), and the choice of the activity with which the turn is overtly occupied. Researchers investigate how turns are built to pursue particular activities within specific environments— for example, to solicit a name without overtly doing so (146); to evoke, and resist the evocation, of a context that would be ripe for an invitation (31); to manage an exit from a "troubles telling" sequence (102); to initiate a psychiatric interview (9); to manage gossip so as to disparage the character of an absent third party (8, 60, 62, 65); to design an utterance so as to deal with incipient disagreement (160); or, alternatively, to pursue and escalate argument and conflict (64–66, 97, 119, 120). Taken as a whole, the CA work on preference and presequences has demonstrated empirically a range of ways the design of turns and the management of sequences are tied to larger social and interactive processes. Conflict avoidance, for example, is a generic outcome of nearly all the practices noted in this section.

STORIES

Stories are an area of research where the phenomena studied by CA intersect with traditional work in anthropological linguistics and related fields. Rather

than treating stories as self-contained cultural artifacts, conversation analysts have stressed the way stories are structured with respect to the contingencies of the interactions in which they are embedded.

In an early article, Sacks (143) took a novel approach to story telling by treating the production of a story as a task vulnerable to a variety of generic interactional exigencies. He started with the observation that most (though by no means all) stories are long stretches of talk. In turn-taking terms, stories can be thought of as built from many turn-constructional units. However, within conversation a speaker is characteristically entitled to only a single-turn constructional unit; when that unit comes to a recognizable completion point, others have the right to begin talk of their own. The systematic production of a multi-unit turn thus poses specific interactional problems. First, how can speakers add units to their turn with some assurance that it will not be interrupted? Second, once recipients have granted speakers the right to an extended turn at talk, how do they determine when their own right to speak resumes? Sacks's proposal, then, is that story telling is associated with specific interactional problems linked to the suspension and reinitiation of "ordinary" conversational turn-taking procedures.

Sacks observed that a systematic solution to these problems is found in a two-move sequence that occurs just before the multi-unit story. First, speakers produce a *story preface,* a turn that is only a single unit long but that offers to tell a longer story (e.g. "The funniest thing happened to me last night"). Recipients then reply to the preface, either by requesting to hear the offered story ("What happened?") or by indicating that they don't want to hear it. This sequence permits the participants to propose and ratify a suspension of the ordinary turn-taking procedures for the duration of the story. The specifics of the story preface tell recipients both what type of response will be appropriate at the story's completion (e.g. laughter) and when it will become so (e.g. at the first point where a recognizably funny event has been detailed). This analysis, which stresses the embeddedness of story telling within a generic set of turn-taking contingencies, is a significant addition to the view that story prefaces are merely informationally motivated abstracts of the story to come and that story structure can be disengaged from interactive contingencies.

This approach to the analysis of stories suggests that their design will vary significantly with the circumstances in which they are produced. For example, a story telling initiated by the teller will be designed differently from one elicited by a recipient. In the latter case, some of the major functions of the story preface are rendered redundant—one reason why story prefaces in the two circumstances will exhibit different designs. Similar differences affect story closings. During vernacular interaction, listeners respond to stories in ways that display what they have made of them. [Such a response, for example might be a second story (140) built using the event and character

structure of the first.] In field interviews, such responses are often absent. Thus what Labov (111) describes as a summary coda may not be a generic feature of story telling; rather, it may emerge interactively as a way of informing an interviewer who has failed to produce an appropriate response that the story is indeed over.

In other work Sacks (144) provides detailed and intricate analysis of a range of cultural phenomena within the boundaries of stories, noting how stories differ from jokes as ways of packaging experience, how the information within a story may be differentially accessible to various recipients, and how stories and jokes may display the social organization of knowledge. Jefferson (94) extends Sacks's analysis by investigating how stories articulate with the talk they emerge from and return to. C. Goodwin (52) investigates the multi-party participation framework invoked by the telling of a story, focusing on the interactive organization of the story's subcomponents, how the telling differentiates recipients from each other, and the consequences this has for the types of analysis and participation that constitute the telling as a social activity. Indeed recipients can actively reshape both the interpretation and the course of an emerging story (53, 117). M. Goodwin (63) examines how the participation framework provided by a story functions as a form of social organization; shifting to a story in the midst of an argument can be used to restructure participant alignments and action options. Stories can also be used to help shape larger social processes (for example, an elaborate gossip dispute), which in turn shape the internal structures of the stories (62). Thus the teller may animate characters and align herself with them in a way that elicits from listeners responses that will further the dispute and for which they will be held socially responsible. Respondents, for their part, may engage in complex co-narration with figures cited in the story, answering the charges against them. Such work provides a new perspective on gossip, one that focuses on how gossip is accomplished through talk, rather than on its hypothesized social functions.

In all of this work, stories are analyzed not as self-contained descriptions but as modes of action situated within interaction. Such analysis is relevant to contemporary work within linguistic anthropology, which is investigating how narrative is organized by, and helps shape, the circumstances of its production (34, 77, 131).

CONCLUSION

What Goffman termed the interaction order (47) is arguably our most pervasive and intricate form of social organization, one in which almost every imaginable human institution is founded. Interaction should occupy a central position in any holistic view of social life. CA goes beyond previous

approaches to this topic by integrating the details of language structure and the social constitution of meaning and action within an analytic framework capable of yielding cumulative and interlocking research findings. Indeed, CA transcends the traditional disciplinary boundaries of social anthropology by providing a perspective within which language, culture, and social organization can be analyzed not as separate subfields but as integrated elements of coherent courses of action. The analytic apparatus developed by CA, with its ability to investigate rigorously and empirically the disparate social and cognitive phenomena constituted through interaction, is especially important to anthropologists in view of the convergence of contemporary social, linguistic, and psychological theory on human interaction (15, 38, 71, 75, 77, 113, 115, 128).

Theoretically, the analytical perspectives developed by CA provide new resources for approaching many of the classic concerns of cultural anthropology. Consider, for example, the great debate between cognitive anthropologists and cultural materialists on the status of emic analysis. In its insistence on demonstrating how proposed categories and participant orientations are articulated in action, CA directly addresses the issue of describing events from "the native's" point of view. However, this approach to emic analysis is not based on reports to the anthropologist about categories and appropriate behavior, but instead relies upon the actions of participants themselves in the courses of their social lives. It thus amply fulfills Goodenough's (48) call for new analytic frameworks that will increase the rigor of ethnographic description and make the data upon which theoretical claims are based available for independent scrutiny and challenge, while overcoming completely Harris's (76) attempt to dismiss emic analysis as nothing but subjective reports.

The recent appearance of two ethnographies that use CA as their primary theoretical framework (65, 127) demonstrates how such work can be incorporated into ethnographic practice. As this is done, the insistence of CA on the absolute relevance of interactive context to the analysis of both structure and action moves ethnography in new directions. For example, ethnographic data are frequently obtained through interviews in which a member of the society being studied speaks with the anthropologist. However, speech produced for an outside researcher, even though spoken by a "native," is not the same as talk addressed to fellow participants as part of the process of building the events that constitute the social life of a society. Thus the "instigating" stories analyzed in M. H. Goodwin's ethnography (65) could not have been obtained by elicitation because the events reported in the stories and the characters they contain shift as the addressee of the story changes. While interactive context poses challenges to some aspects of traditional ethnographic practice, it simultaneously aligns current work in CA with a range of

endeavors in contemporary linguistic anthropology that are drawing new attention to the importance of the audience in the organization of narrative (37, 74, 77), co-narration (131), participation (116), the situated nature of talk addressed to the anthropologist (6, 36), the importance of context in language socialization (128, 130, 166, 167) and cross-cultural communication (71), and analysis of the interactive substratum within which language, reference, cognition, and meaning are embedded (75, 113, 115). Moreover, a most important arena for cooperative research between conversation analysts and linguistic anthropologists lies in situating the findings of CA within a cross-cultural matrix (10, 11, 36, 71, 72, 126–128). Meanwhile as CA moves in new directions, investigating topics such as how talk is organized in institutions and work settings, it will draw increasingly close to the work of anthropologists in efforts to understand how different forms of context articulate with each other (129). CA and linguistic anthropology have a great deal to contribute to each other as the analysis of the social life of language and action turns increasingly to the constitution of such events within human interaction.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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