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# Conversation Analysis: An Approach to the Study of Social Action as Sense Making Practices

Anita Pomerantz and B.J. Fehr

Conversation analysis (CA) originated in the mid 1960s within sociology, in the work of Harvey Sacks and his colleagues, as an approach to the study of the social organization of everyday conduct. During the ensuing thirty years, CA has produced a substantial body of rigorous and informative analyses of human action and interaction. In this chapter we will: (1) provide an initial characterization of CA and its relation to other forms of discourse analysis (DA); (2) briefly discuss CA's early history; (3) describe CA's assumptive base and analytic commitments; and (4) most importantly, provide a set of tools for conducting analyses. Experience has taught that an understanding of CA is particularly enhanced by actually attempting analytic work.

## **An Initial Formulation of Conversation Analysis and its Relation to Other Forms of Discourse Analysis**

At the outset, it is important to point out that the name of this research tradition, conversation analysis, is something of a misnomer and can lead to some confusion as to the phenomena under investigation and their analytic conception.<sup>1</sup> One source of confusion arises from the term 'conversation'. Some researchers discriminate between the informal talk of everyday life (for example, chats with a friend) and talk occurring within formal institutions (for example, the presentation of evidence in a court of law). These researchers argue that interaction in formal organizations seems to be governed by different orders of constraint than informal conversation. Since they view 'conversation' as referring to informal talk in everyday social settings and 'institutional talk' to formal talk in institutional contexts, they expect conversation analysts to study only the former domain. Conversation analysts, however, are concerned with conduct or action in both contexts, and an *a priori* distinction between the two is regarded as analytically unnecessary.

Secondly, the name 'conversation analysis', or even 'talk-in-interaction',<sup>2</sup> may wrongly suggest that only the verbal aspects of interaction ('talk') are

of interest. Conversation analysts from the outset have been interested in both the verbal and the paralinguistic features of talk (that is, sound quality, pauses, gaps, restarts, etc.). In fact, the actions constituted in and through speaking can be difficult or impossible to identify without attention to both. Moreover, a number of researchers have expanded the scope of CA to include the visually available features of conduct, such as appropriate orientation, hand-arm gestures, posture, etc. (C. Goodwin, 1981; 1986; M. Goodwin, 1980; 1990; Heath, 1986; Schegloff, 1984).

The organization of talk or conversation (whether 'informal' or 'formal') was never the central, defining focus in CA. Rather it is the organization of the meaningful conduct of people in society, that is, how people in society produce their activities and make sense of the world about them. The core analytic objective is to illuminate how actions, events, objects, etc., are produced and understood rather than how language and talk are organized as analytically separable phenomena. This point was made by Harvey Sacks in one of his early lectures:

So the question was, could there be some way that sociology could hope to deal with the details of actual events, formally and informatively? . . . I started to work with tape-recorded conversations . . . *It was not from any large interest in language or from some theoretical formulation of what should be studied* that I started with tape-recorded conversations, but simply because I could get my hands on it. (1984: 26, emphasis added)

We propose neither that the study of talk is unimportant nor that studies which focus exclusively on talk are inadequate in any way. We merely claim that the analytic approach of CA is not limited to an explication of talk alone but is amenable to analyses of how conduct, practice, or praxis, in whatever form, is accomplished. Studies within this tradition which do focus on talk view talk, nonetheless, as social action.

Since roughly the 1940s, many disciplines have moved toward a more socially based, interactive and pragmatic understanding of human action and interaction. This does not signify adoption of a radically new approach to the study of human conduct. Rather it reflects the steady ascendancy of a minority position which has been voiced within a broad array of disciplines since at least the Middle Ages (Vico, 1975) or, as some would argue, from the pre-Socratics forward (Coulter, 1991). Given the discursive turn across disciplines, CA has family resemblances to a number of other approaches. One commonality is a shift away from the search for causes of human conduct and toward the explication of how conduct is produced and recognized as intelligible and sensible.

Within linguistic philosophy, for example, Austin (1962) proposed that language not only is a means of representation but also is used to perform social actions, such as making a promise. Sociolinguistics arose within linguistics and sociology to highlight the variations found in different social contexts of speaking (for example, formal vs informal) and among various cultural and ethnic groups (Labov, 1972a; 1972b; Bernstein, 1975). In anthropology, Hymes (1962) developed an approach which he called 'the



ethnography of speaking' in order to examine talk-in-interaction as an activity system in its own right, usefully subject to ethnographic description as is any other part of cultural life. Discourse analysis emerged in linguistics in an attempt to characterize talk and texts longer than the sentence or clause, which had been the upper limit of linguistic analysis prior to this innovation (Coulthard and Montgomery, 1981; Stubbs, 1983). Greater attention was given to the pragmatic aspects of language use in semiotics, which had formerly emphasized syntactics and semantics (Levinson, 1983). Under the influence of critical theory and feminism, scholars became interested in the power of words to beguile and entangle people in webs of understanding which limit their potential development beyond traditionally defined boundaries. These scholars argue that power is an unequally distributed resource and that language serves to legitimate and maintain established hierarchies without the awareness of those disadvantaged by the system (Fowler et al., 1979).

Each of these initiatives has spawned productive streams of research which, over time, have become intertwined in complicated ways, each borrowing concepts and methods from the others as the need and interest arose. It has become increasingly difficult to crisply characterize their distinctiveness because they have converged on a number of issues.<sup>3</sup> All of these projects (including CA) arose partially in response to the emerging conception of language and speaking as involving more than a representation of the world. They all agree that language can be used to enact social actions. All have come to record and analyse instances of talk-in-interaction and to display a concern for the role of context in sense production. All have argued in various ways for attempting to capture the perspective of the participants in interactive sequences.

CA, however, may be differentiated from these various perspectives by its particular approach to certain analytic issues. First, it rejects the use of investigator-stipulated theoretical and conceptual definitions of research questions. Instead, conversation analysts attempt to explicate the relevances of the parties to an interaction. Conventionally, for example, a researcher with an interest in the relations between men and women might decide to code, as part of the analysis, those who are female or male. Such codings treat gender as an omnirelevant matter for analysis, but they may or may not be so for the parties to the interaction. Gender may be relevant for some interactions and not for others. A similar set of concerns would obtain for the *a priori* analytic importation of the concept of 'power', that is, presuming that power and/or status relations are a central component of all social relations prior to an analysis of their relevance for the parties to an interaction. Persons who occupy different positions in some status or power hierarchy do not necessarily make that difference the basis for all and every interaction between them.

Secondly, conversation analysis gives particular attention to the details of the temporal organization of, and the various interactional contingencies that arise in, the unfolding development of action and interaction. In

important ways, the sense or intelligibility of an action is provided for by its location in an ongoing series of actions. For example, consider the following utterance extracted from a naturally occurring conversation:<sup>4</sup>

Heather: I did too=I took two of everything.

What Heather 'did', what 'everything' she took two of, and the interactional significance of this utterance, are not given in what she said. However, if we return the utterance to its natural interactional home in an ongoing series of actions, its sense and significance become apparent:

Don: .hh I got my uh (1.2) I did get my tax forms today

Heather: Yea

Don: Yea I walked into the post office an' mail my thing and I took one of everything hhh

Heather: I did too=I took two of everything.

Don: For me?

Heather: Yea

Don: That's my baby.

Like Don, Heather got tax forms on the day of this conversation, and further, that she got two copies of each form was significant because the 'extra' copy was intended for Don.<sup>5,6</sup>

Thirdly, the perspective taken by CA leads to a different understanding of the concept of rules than that held by other research traditions. Rather than a theoretically given form of explanation for human conduct, CA treats rules as situationally invoked standards that are a part of the activity they seek to explain. For example, Wieder (1974) analysed the ways in which residents of a correctional half-way house invoked rules (for example, 'Above all else, do not snitch.') to account for their disinclination to report on certain activities of their co-inhabitants. The invocation of the rule becomes part of the activity, in this case, refusing to snitch.

## Historical Background

Conversation analysis arose primarily through the impetus and insights of Harvey Sacks in close collaboration with colleagues (initially fellow graduate students), Emanuel Schegloff and David Sudnow, among others. All three were students of Erving Goffman at Berkeley who was championing the ordinary, mundane activities of everyday life as legitimate inquiry for sociology. Also, Sacks had met Harold Garfinkel, the founder of ethnomethodology, during the latter's sabbatical at Harvard in 1959. Sacks continued to meet with Garfinkel at UCLA and to read his published and unpublished manuscripts. Sacks found some resonance between his questions about what provided for certain social forms, for example, law, and Garfinkel's (1967) foundational explorations of the basis of social order in the details of everyday conduct. He began to probe the possibility of an

empirically based, naturalistic, descriptive study of human conduct. In the next few years, Sacks attracted students of his own who importantly contributed to the enterprise: Gail Jefferson, Anita Pomerantz, and Jim Schenkein, among others.<sup>7</sup>

In 1963, Sacks became a fellow at the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center. There, audio recordings and transcriptions of telephone calls to the clinic hotline were routinely made. The recordings provided a resource for beginning to examine the details of interactional conduct. Two noticings based on these materials formed the basis of the initial work in conversation analysis. One dealt with the terms callers used to refer to and describe themselves and others. The other had to do with the sequential placement of utterances by the parties to the calls.

Callers to the Suicide Prevention Center hotline mentioned, referred to, and described themselves and others during the course of their calls. Given that there are many correct ways to categorize oneself and others (for example, wife, socialist, tall, Latino, opera buff, she, nut case), Sacks wondered if there was an orderliness or organization to the use of categorizations. Consider the following transcript excerpt (from Sacks, 1972: 64):

A: You don't have anyone to turn to?

C: No.

A: No relatives, friends?

C: No.

In asking about people to turn to, the Suicide Prevention Center's staff person inquired about 'relatives' and 'friends'. Sacks wanted to begin to explicate our everyday understandings of the human social world by considering such uses. 'Relatives' and 'friends' are the categories of persons that one should be able to expect assistance from in a time of trouble. It would seem nonsensical in such a situation to inquire: 'No Toms, Sylvias?', 'No men, women?', 'No socialists, republicans?' Sacks showed that in the ways we use categorizations, we display our understanding of the rights and obligations of persons to whom certain categories apply. This does not mean that any particular person will actually have individuals in such categories available. Even if there are individuals in such categories, these persons may or may not be willing, able, etc. to be the ones turned to. That itself could provide for a person having troubles, warrantably and intelligibly so.

A second observation Sacks made was that the sense or intelligibility of utterances was tied to their particular sequential location in a stretch of talk. Recall that the intelligibility of Heather's utterance 'I did too=I took two of everything.' was provided for by its position in a particular, ongoing series of utterances.

As time went on, the interest in and investigation of sequential organization took precedence over categorization in the work of conversation analysts (see, for example, Sacks et al., 1974). As Sacks (1975: n. 1) notes, this should not be seen as a rejection of the importance of categorization in

human interaction. In fact, a number of subsequent analysts again have turned attention to the connection between categorization and sequential analysis (Jayyusi, 1984; Watson, 1976; 1983).

### **Assumptions and their Methodological Implications**

Conversation analysis, like ethnomethodology,<sup>8</sup> treats the conduct of everyday life as sensible, as meaningful, and as produced to be such. This assumption implies a distinction between conduct treated as 'behavior' (as noise making and bodily movement) and conduct treated as 'action' (as intelligible activity). If a person raises his or her arm, the everyday understanding typically is centered on the fact not that an arm that was down is now up but rather that someone is calling for a turn, hailing a cab, stretching, or perhaps greeting an acquaintance. If a person speaks, it is not noise but rather meaningful utterances directed at some other or range of others.

It is further assumed that meaningful conduct is produced and understood based on shared procedures or methods. People's conduct is not wholly idiosyncratic. If it were, coordinating activities with others, especially previously unknown others, would be impossible. However, it is a routine feature of our everyday lives that we can interact and coordinate our conduct with others. CA's goal is to explicate the shared methods interactants use to produce and recognize their own and other people's conduct.

The sense or meaning conduct has thoroughly depends upon the context of its production in at least two ways. One sense of context involves the temporal organization of actions and interaction. Conduct is produced and understood as responsive to the immediate, local contingencies of interaction. What an interactant contributes is shaped by what was just said or done and is understood in relation to the prior. Over the course of an interaction, the context continually changes: each contribution provides a new context for the next.

There is another sense in which conduct depends upon context: to understand conduct we need to know the type of occasion, who is interacting with whom, where and when. For example, our understanding of conduct as lecturing and note-taking is derived from the fact that the participants are instructor and students and a lesson is taking place in a classroom. Rather than treating the identities of the participants, the place, the occasion, etc., as givens, conversation analysts and ethnomethodologists recognize that there are multiple ways to identify parties, the occasion, etc. and that the identifications must be shown to be relevant to the participants. A person may speak as a member of a seminar and then, in some next utterance, as a woman – and be taken as so doing by others. The forward progress of a seminar may halt momentarily while the assembled parties discuss the health of a friend. Furthermore conversation analysts and ethnomethodologists maintain not only that the identifications of who,

what, where, etc., are part of producing and understanding conduct but that the conduct helps to constitute the identities of the participants, the type of occasion, etc., as they are. That is, the context is in part brought into being by the actions people produce. By speaking 'informally', one not only is responsive to an 'informal' setting but also helps to constitute the setting as 'informal'.

These assumptions carry with them corollary methodological implications relating to the types of interaction studied, the role of the analyst in the interaction, and the recording and transcription of interaction.

In CA, any sort of interaction may be studied, for example chats among acquaintances, consultations with physicians, job interviews, broadcast news commentaries, political speeches, etc. In each case, the interest is in explicating the methods or procedures people employ to make sense and be understood by others.

In observing conduct, a researcher may or may not be a participant/observer in the scene and/or may or may not use a recording device. However a researcher observes conduct, it is important to consider whether and how the researcher's and/or the recording device's presence may be related to the observed conduct. For example, if the participants know they are being recorded during their dinner conversation, they may alter some of their conduct (for example, they may choose to avoid a sensitive topic) but not other conduct (such as making a report coherent).

Conversation analysts strongly prefer to work from recordings of conduct. First, certain features of the details of actions in interaction are not recoverable in any other way. Second, a recording makes it possible to play and replay the interaction, which is important both for transcribing and for developing an analysis. Third, a recording makes it possible to check a particular analysis against the materials, in all their detail, that were used to produce the analysis. Finally, a recording makes it possible to return to an interaction with new analytic interests.

One last note on recordings. In cases where the interactants are co-present, it is preferable to have a videotaped recording so that at least some of the conduct visually available to the interacting parties also is available for review by the analyst. In cases where the parties are not co-present (such as telephone calls), audiotaped recordings generally have been employed. A great deal of early CA work dealt with recordings of telephone calls, not because of any special interest in phone calls but because audio recordings could be easily and inexpensively produced.

Conversation analysts generally transcribe their tapes using transcript conventions developed and elaborated by Gail Jefferson.<sup>9</sup> These conventions cannot reproduce what is on the audiotape or videotape but are meant to remind the reader of the details of the conduct that can be heard or seen on tape. The best way to develop analyses is to use both a tape and a transcript. It is harder to isolate and study phenomena when working only with a tape, and much information is lost when working only with a transcript. Also, without hearing/seeing the tape from which a

transcript was derived, one cannot know how much confidence to have in a transcript.

### **Tools for Analysis: Questions to Ask and Areas to Consider**

In this section, we offer tools to help you develop your conversation analytic skills. The tools consist of questions to ask and areas to think about as you attempt to analyse conduct rendered on your tapes and transcripts. In the next section we offer two demonstrations of how the tools may be used when you work with tapes and transcripts.

An analysis should illuminate the understandings that are relevant for the participants and the practices that provide for those understandings. Analysing a practice involves describing both the knowledge that the participants use, and when and how they use it. What analysts find interesting or noticeable depends upon, and plays off of, their own tacit knowledge, expectations, and interests. Drawing upon one's knowledge of language use and interaction is a necessary resource in developing analyses.

Conversation analysts use different approaches in developing analyses; there is no one right way. This presents a challenge in teaching others to do analyses since there are many paths to the final destination. We offer five questions to ask, or areas to consider, to help you get started in your analyses. Consider the tools offered here as representing one of many ways into analysis.

*1 Select a Sequence* When watching or listening to a tape, choose a place on which to start focusing. Initially you might notice the way something is said or what someone is doing. Identify the *sequence* in which whatever interests you occurs. In order to identify a sequence, look for identifiable boundaries. For the start of the sequence, locate the turn in which one of the participants initiated an action and/or topic that was taken up and responded to by co-participants. For the end of the sequence, follow through the interaction until you locate the place in which the participants were no longer specifically responding to the prior action and/or topic.<sup>10</sup> When looking at (or for) sequence openings and closings, treat them as products of negotiation. While one party may offer a possible start or finish, the start or finish usually is not fully accomplished without the ratification of the co-participant.

A sequence will contain a variety of phenomena that can be investigated. It is like a very rich mine with different ores: you can mine for some ores now and return later to mine for other ores. It is quite common to identify new areas of interest as you work on materials. You may be tempted to choose sequences that are funny or novel or topically interesting. In our experience, however, the quality of one's findings is unrelated to the apparent interest of the sequence.

2 *Characterize the Actions in the Sequence* A basic analytic concept for conversation analysts is an *action*. Actions are central to the way that participants, themselves, produce and understand conduct; they are a fundamental part of the meaningfulness of conduct. When we say, 'Want to go to lunch?', we intend, and are understood as intending, for the recipient to understand that we are inviting him or her to lunch. Moreover, we expect an action in response, that is, an acceptance or a declination of the invitation. One identifies actions by answering the question, 'What is this participant doing in this turn?' A few examples of actions include: greeting, announcing news, acknowledging news, complaining, disagreeing, correcting, telling a joke, and telling a story.

For each turn in the sequence under study, characterize the action or actions that the interactant performed. Sometimes you will see several actions being performed within a turn: that is fine. There is not one right characterization; rather there may be several that appropriately capture a sense of the conduct. Furthermore, these characterizations are provisional; they are first attempts to capture something of the action. Analysts may change their characterizations as they proceed when better characterizations come to mind.

When you characterize the action or actions performed in each turn, you will end up with characterizations of the actions that comprise the sequence. Now consider the relationship between the actions. Actions are not islands unto themselves: most are offered with an expectation of a response (such as requesting information) and/or as a response to a prior action (such as supplying the requested information).

3 *Consider How the Speakers' Packaging of Actions, Including their Selections of Reference Terms, Provides for Certain Understandings of the Actions Performed and the Matters Talked About. Consider the Options for the Recipient that are Set Up by that Packaging* By *packaging* we mean the ways in which speakers form up and deliver actions.<sup>11</sup> With respect to any given action, there are multiple ways to package it. On actual occasions of interaction, speakers package the actions that they perform in particular ways. Conversation analysts often say that speakers *select* the packages, formulations, or formats that they use. The problem with this metaphor is that it suggests that interactants consciously consider the multiple ways to perform their actions and then choose among the options. Actually, however, much of the time interactants perform their actions without deliberating on the manner in which they do it, without considering the alternatives. In a given context, a speaker may not consider the options that an analyst proposes are alternatives. Analysts use the metaphor 'the speaker *selects* . . .' as a shorthand way of reminding themselves to consider alternative items in a class, not necessarily as an accurate description of the actors' decision making processes.

For a given action, consider how the speaker formed it up and delivered it. Consider the understandings that are tied to the packaging that the

speaker used in relation to alternatives that might have been used but were not on this occasion. Also, consider the options that the packaging the speaker used provided for the recipient. Alternative ways of packaging an action may set up different options for the recipients.

As an example, consider the many ways you can invite someone for lunch. The way you invite a person helps to establish what kind of invitation it is and what the options are for the recipient. If you issue an invitation with the inquiry 'Have you had lunch yet?', you allow the recipient to give information which would imply rejection (for example, 'Yes I have') without actually having to reject an invitation. The use of this type of package has been well researched by a variety of conversation analysts, including Drew (1984) and Schegloff (1980; 1988).

Part of packaging an action involves selecting ways to refer to persons, objects, places, activities, etc. For example, when a speaker says 'Let's grab a bite', he or she may be referencing not only having lunch but also time constraints on one or both parties. The interactants may understand that in 'grabbing a bite', some but not other food places will be considered. Since the terms the speaker uses in part provide for the recipient's understanding, the terms selected may provide for the greater or lesser desirability of an offer, request, or invitation. A recipient with time constraints may agree to 'grab a bite' yet hesitate to 'go out to lunch'.

To summarize, the following questions may be useful in trying to identify the packaging of a given action and to understand its consequentiality. What understandings do the interactants display (and you have) of the action? Do you see the interactants treating the matter talked about as important, parenthetical, urgent, trivial, ordinary, wrong, problematic, etc.? What aspects of the way in which the action was formed up and delivered may help provide for those understandings? What inferences, if any, might the recipients have made based on the packaging? What options does the package provide for the recipient? In other words, what are the interactional consequences of using this packaging over an alternative? Finally, what are the circumstances that may be relevant for selecting this packaging over another for the action?

*4 Consider How the Timing and Taking of Turns Provide for Certain Understandings of the Actions and the Matters Talked About* For each turn in the sequence, describe how the speaker obtained the turn, the timing of the initiation of the turn, the termination of the turn, and whether the speaker selected a next speaker. *Obtaining the turn*: did the speaker select him or herself to speak or was he or she selected by the previous speaker? How does this fit with the actions being performed? *Timing the start of the turn*: relative to the prior turn, where did the current speaker start to speak? Did he or she wait for a possible completion, or start prior to a possible completion point, or did a gap emerge? Do you think the timing of the turn is connected to the participants' understandings? *Terminating the turn*: did the current speaker continue to speak until he or she was definitely finished?



possibly finished? not finished? Did any recipients start up while he or she had the floor? *Selecting next speaker*: to whom did the current speaker address his or her talk? What were the intended recipients doing during the current speaker's turn? How did the current speaker show the intended recipients that he or she was addressing them?

5 *Consider How the Ways the Actions were Accomplished Implicate Certain Identities, Roles and/or Relationships for the Interactants* What rights, obligations, and expectations between the parties may be gleaned from the discourse? Are the ways that these interactants talked and acted appropriate across a wide range of relationships, roles, statuses, etc. or do they implicate particular relationships, roles, statuses? Do the ways that the speakers referred to persons, objects, places, activities, etc. implicate particular identities and/or relationships between them? Do the ways they packaged their actions implicate particular identities, roles, and/or relationships? Do the ways that the interactants took their turns (or declined to) implicate particular identities, roles, and/or relationships?

## Two Demonstrations of the Tools

In order to show how you might use these tools, we offer two demonstrations. In the first demonstration, the points are followed in the order in which they are described above: choose a sequence, characterize the actions, examine the packaging of the actions, explore the timing and taking of turns, and consider the implications of the packaging and turn-taking for identities, roles and relationships. While analysts do not necessarily keep these areas distinct as they work, we address each in turn to clarify the domains. In the second demonstration, we show the inter-relationship between the points and develop a more unified analysis.

The materials we use in our demonstrations consist of a portion of a telephone conversation between two young adults, Don and Heather (these are pseudonyms). For the two demonstrations, we selected two contiguous sequences. While readers do not have access to the audiotape, the transcript allows us to demonstrate how the tools might be used. The portion of the transcript that contains both sequences is replicated below:

[BJF/Bisco: ]

- 1 Heather: He shoulda bought a water bed.
- 2 Don: Na::
- 3 Heather: Much more comfort[able
- 4 Don: [..hh I got my uh (1.2) I did get my  
tax forms today
- 5 Heather: Yea
- 6 Don: Yea I walked into the post office an' mail my thing and I  
took one of everything hhh
- 7 Heather: I did too=I took two of everything.

- 8 Don: For me?  
 9 Heather: Yea  
 10 Don: That's my baby  
 11 (1.0)  
 12 Don: How was school today  
 13 Heather: Okay  
 14 (3.6)  
 15 Don: Hhhh Just okay?  
 16 Heather: Ayup  
 17 Don: Why what happened?  
 18 Heather: Nothin. It was kinda boring. We left for lunch though  
 19 Don: Who did  
 20 Heather: Me and Maria an' Sean an' ( ) an' Max Clancey  
 21 Don: Sean who?  
 22 Heather: Sean ah (1.0) Peters. Maria's – You know Abruzzi  
 23 Don: Yeah  
 24 Heather: Maria's new boyfriend.  
 25 (2.4)  
 26 Don: And who?  
 27 Heather: A:h his best friend Max  
 28 (2.0)  
 29 Heather: We just went to Dunkin's I had to have a croissant  
 30 Don: Yea well you better tell Max that uh:  
 31 Heather: Max has a girlfriend  
 32 Don: Yea  
 33 Heather: Plus he (has disgusting earrings)  
 34 (4.0)  
 35 Don: Hhhh Me and Vic did a lotta talking tonight

### *First Demonstration of the Tools*

*1 Select a Sequence* In listening to the tape and reading the transcript, our attention initially was drawn to Heather's reply in line 7: 'I did too=I took two of everything.' It attracted our attention because of the possible implication that Heather had been considerate while Don had not been. We wondered if we could make a case for her talk as a put-down, test, and/or lesson.

To identify the sequence of which Heather's talk in line 7 was a part, we need to identify boundaries: a beginning and an end. In lines 1, 2, and 3, Heather and Don were continuing a discussion about Don's father's purchase of a bed. In line 4, Don made a report about one of his activities during the day. Heather acknowledged Don's report, thereby ratifying his bid to share this news report. Hence we identify the start of the sequence occurring in line 4.

The actions/topics that follow Don's report (line 4) can be seen to be part of the same sequence in as much as they directly respond to prior actions.

Don's elaborating on his report, Heather's offering a related report, and Don's responding to her report with an expression of appreciation (line 10) are all actions which respond to prior actions. Following Don's expression of appreciation, there was a 1 second gap which was broken by Don's inquiry about how school was that day. We claim that the sequence ends on lines 10 or 11. The last turn of talk clearly within the sequence is line 10. The 1 second gap that emerged on line 11 was a place where the interactants could have continued with talk that responded to the prior but elected not to. When Don took a turn to speak in line 12, he started a new topic. The 1 second gap in line 11 was transitional: within it the participants discontinued responding to the prior talk.<sup>12</sup>

*2 Characterize the Actions in the Sequence* The transcript of the interaction is on the left; the characterization of the actions are on the right.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 4 D: I got my uh (1.2) I <u>did</u> get my tax forms today                                       | D announces the successful outcome of an activity.                                  |
| 5 H: Yea   | H acknowledges.   |
| 6 D: Yea I walked into the post office an' mail my thing and I <u>took</u> one of everything hhh | D elaborates on the circumstances and outcome.                                      |
| 7 H: I did too=I took two of everything.   | H reports the same activity but with variation.                                     |
| 8 D: For me?   | D checks H's motives, offering as a possibility that she was serving D's interests. |
| 9 H: Yea   | H confirms D's possibility.   |
| 10 D: That's my baby   | D displays appreciation.  |

In the sequence above, there are many things that may be examined. We chose to explore three actions: Don's reporting that he successfully picked up his tax forms, Heather's reporting that she picked up two copies of each form, and Don's displaying appreciation. We will analyse these actions – how they are accomplished and their implications – by using the questions that we discussed in the tools section.

*3 Consider How the Speakers' Packaging of Actions, Including their Selections of Reference Terms, Provides for Certain Understandings of the Actions Performed and the Matters Talked About* Apparently both Don and Heather had picked up the tax forms that day, so each had a report, or news, that he or she could tell. Yet whether, when, and how each one would share the report was influenced, to some extent, by interactional contingencies. First we will examine how the packaging of Don's report provides for our understanding of his news; then we will analyse how the packaging of Heather's report provides for our understanding of her news.

We understand the news that Don reported in line 4 to be newsworthy but not of great importance. It was the kind of news that people share when they talk to each other frequently and report on how their day was, what they did that day, etc.<sup>13</sup> How do we get this sense of the news from its packaging? In the way that a speaker delivers a report or news, he or she implicitly proposes its importance (Sacks, 1992). The timing of the report is a way to provide for an understanding of its importance. Reporting news as the first topic proposes its importance; contacting someone at a time that he or she usually is unavailable for contact proposes even more importance (Sacks, 1992). In this telephone call, Heather and Don had been talking for 2 minutes 20 seconds about events of the day before Don reported that he picked up his tax forms. Consistent with reporting just a daily activity (that is, not big news), Don did not use any introduction that would mark the report's importance. He did not preface the telling with something like 'Guess what?' or 'Do you know what I did today?' Rather he announced or reported the outcome of the activity.

One way Don increased somewhat the importance of the activity was by referencing its history. Don started to report his activity using the term 'got' (in 'I got my uh') but stopped before completing it. After a gap of slightly over 1 second, he restarted his report with 'I did get my tax forms today.' Had he completed the first version ('I got my tax forms today'), he would have reported simply the outcome of an activity. With the repaired version, 'I did get . . .', Don acknowledged a history of attempts or previously unrealized intentions to get the forms. The emphasized 'did' provides for the current referent to be seen in relation to referents that contrast with it. With the formulation 'I did get . . .', Don referenced a history possibly known in common by Don and Heather. The activity referenced was not simply picking up his tax forms but rather his finally picking them up.

With the formulations that he incorporated, Don implied that he picked up the tax forms just as he should have, that he did a good job of it. We already discussed how, by including the emphasized 'did' in 'I did get my tax forms today', Don invoked a history of previous unsuccessful attempts or unrealized intentions that contrasted with this successful outcome. In elaborating the circumstances and manner in which he picked up his tax forms (line 6), Don further portrayed his activity as a success.<sup>14</sup> Rather than referring to what he took as 'one of each', he referred to it as 'one of everything'. In using the extreme case formulation 'everything' (Pomerantz, 1986) he seemed to claim a thoroughness in picking up the forms: he has any form he could possibly need. In his description of his activity, he portrayed his having done it just as it should have been done.

Heather's subsequent report of her picking up tax forms proposed that she considered Don's needs whereas Don considered only his own needs. How does the packaging of Heather's report provide for this understanding?

Once Don reported that he picked up his tax forms (line 4), Heather was no longer in the position of making her report as an initial announcement

or a new topic. Rather she was in the position of seconding his report, that is, of casting her activity as similar or dissimilar to Don's activity.

Just after Don reported having picked up his tax forms, Heather had the opportunity to give her report. In fact, the slot immediately following his report is a 'natural' place in which to offer her report. However, at this point in the interaction, Heather merely acknowledged Don's report, inviting him to elaborate (line 5).<sup>15</sup> In his elaboration ('. . . and I took one of everything'), Don described the circumstances and manner in which he picked up his tax forms. While he may have intended to portray a successful outcome and a job well done, Heather could have heard the elaboration as firmly establishing that he picked up forms for himself only.

In line 7, Heather started her turn by reporting that she had accomplished the same activity as the one Don just reported having done ('I did too'). She continued the turn with an elaboration that contrasted with Don's prior elaboration ('I took two of everything'). To display a contrast, Heather reused Don's formulation ('I took one of everything'), though she incorporated one alteration ('I took two of everything'). Reusing the formulation provided the frame within which to highlight the contrast or difference. With the replication plus alteration format, she exhibited a difference between their actions. When interactants exhibit a difference, they invite co-interactants to make something of that difference.

In the way in which she reported her activity, she implied that her picking up two copies of each tax form was appropriate behavior. Individuals have ways of portraying actions as 'mistakes', 'blunders', 'errors', 'incompetencies', etc. Heather incorporated no such markers, for example, no explanation or laughter to indicate that her action was deficient or troublesome. In packaging her report to exhibit the difference between their performances while at the same time implying that her performance was the appropriate one, Heather handed Don a puzzle. If Don had assumed that success involved picking up one copy of each form, he would need an explanation as to why she picked up two of each. Heather did not offer a reason; she relied on Don to supply it. By not supplying it, she gave him the opportunity to recognize her thoughtfulness. And in recognizing her thoughtfulness, he provided for his contrastive behavior to be seen as not particularly thoughtful.

*4 Consider How the Timing and Taking of Turns Provide for Certain Understandings of the Actions and the Matters Talked About* Rather than analysing the timing and taking of all of the turns in the sequence, this discussion is limited to just two points within it: how the timing and taking of turns at the beginning and the end of the sequence provide for certain understandings.

We have claimed that the sequence started with Don's turn, 'hh I got my uh (1.2) I did get my tax forms today' (line 4). We would like to show how Don's timing and taking of the turn provided for the understanding

that the prior topic was finished and that Don was not receptive to any further arguments for water beds.

Prior to the sequence about picking up tax forms, Don and Heather had been talking about Don and his father's moving to a condominium. As part of that discussion, Don itemized the new furniture that his father bought, including a king size bed. After reporting that his father bought the bed, Don listed the other items that he bought and planned to buy. Several turns later, Heather returned to the topic of beds with her own recommendation (line 1):

- 1 Heather: He shoulda bought a water bed.
- 2 Don: Na::
- 3 Heather: Much more comfort[able
- 4 Don: [hh I got my uh (1.2) I did get my tax  
forms today

Don's immediate response was to reject Heather's recommendation (line 2). He did so with an elongated negative token. In producing the negative token as the entire turn, he indicated his rejection of Heather's recommendation without engaging in argument or discussion about it. In response to his rejection, Heather offered a reason supporting her recommendation. This could serve as a bid to have an exchange of reasons in support of their respective positions.

As Heather approached the end of this turn, Don took an in-breath and, with no gap between the end of her turn and the beginning of his, reported that he picked up the tax forms that day. In response to a recommendation with which he apparently had no desire to further engage, Don started speaking with latched timing, reporting different news of the day. He timed his report in a way that was non-interruptive yet provided no room for Heather's continuing to support her water bed recommendation. His starting a new topic at just that point was a way of displaying that he was unconvinced by her argument and had no interest in further discussion of the point.

In sum, the practice Don used involved showing respect for a fellow-interactant's right to speak while attempting to close down his or her line of argument. This practice requires both precision timing of one's turn (Jefferson, 1973) and the initiation of a topic appropriate to the local and immediate circumstance. By starting one's turn with virtually no overlap, an interactant can display respect for a fellow-interactant's right to speak. By leaving no gap, the interactant can attempt to eliminate the fellow-interactant's continuing on with his or her argument. By initiating a new topic, the interactant implies that the previous matter is finished.

At the close of the sequence, Don expressed appreciation of Heather's thoughtfulness. We understand that Don's expression of appreciation was an adequate and sufficient expression of appreciation of Heather's thoughtfulness. How did Don's and Heather's timing and taking of turns help provide for this understanding? In particular, we want to claim that the 1

second of silence that occurred in line 11 helped provide for this understanding.

- 7 Heather: I did too=I took two of everything.  
 8 Don: For me?  
 9 Heather: Yea  
 10 Don: That's my baby  
 11 (1.0)  
 12 Don: How was school today

In saying 'That's my baby', Don showed that he recognized and appreciated Heather's thoughtfulness in picking up additional forms for him. Upon his uttering the appreciation, the sequence was not definitely closed. Either Don or Heather could have continued or extended it, though in different ways. Don could have added more to his expression of appreciation or modified it in some way. By not adding to or modifying what he said, by not continuing or resuming his turn at talk, Don treated his expression of appreciation as adequate and complete. Heather could have responded to Don's expression of appreciation in a number of coherent ways. She could have acknowledged his appreciation, disputed it, expressed appreciation back, etc. In responding with no talk, Heather implied that Don's expression of appreciation needed no reply. By not responding with talk, she treated Don's expression of appreciation as completing the matter on the floor, as showing that he understood and appreciated Heather's picking up extra forms for him.

The sense that participants make of the absence of talk depends on the immediate and local circumstances in which it is done. In this case, Heather and Don's silence followed Don's expression of appreciation. Don's expression of appreciation was an action that allowed for further comment but set up no expectation or relevance of a next action. In this environment, their lack of an immediate response implied that the prior matter or business was finished.

5 *Consider How the Ways the Actions were Accomplished Implicate Certain Identities, Roles and/or Relationships for the Interactants* Through what he said and the way in which he said it, Don implied that he was a certain kind of person: one who liked to play a certain kind of character from the movies. Don acted as if he were a 'tough guy' or macho character when he showed appreciation of Heather's picking up extra forms for him. With the expression 'That's my baby' (line 10), Don displayed pride in Heather and/or in the relationship. Don's delivery was not with the same voice as he had used in the sequence up until then. His voice dropped into a gutteral register and seemed scripted as if he were Humphrey Bogart in a 1930s gangster movie.<sup>16</sup> He presented himself not as a tough guy but as someone who likes to occasionally play the role, or sound like, the tough guy.

In his conduct, Don implied that Heather was a certain kind of person, a considerate person, particularly in attending to his needs. This can be

illustrated in two of his turns. In his initial response to hearing that Heather picked up two copies of each tax form, Don attempted to find out why she picked up two instead of one of each. There are various ways he could have inquired about her reason or motive. One way could have been to ask for the reason or motive, 'Why two?' However, the way Don asked was to offer a possible reason or motive within a question, that is, to guess. Conceivably, there were many possible reasons why Heather would have taken two copies of each form. (She might have picked up the duplicate copies in case she made mistakes or to have one set to keep for her own records.) In incorporating a particular reason or motive within the question, Don cast that motive as familiar and expected (Pomerantz, 1988). In other words, in specifically asking if Heather picked up the additional forms for him, Don implied that her thinking of him was in character. The second bit of Don's conduct that implied that Heather was thoughtful and considerate was his expression of appreciation. In saying 'That's my baby', Don registered no surprise at the deed; rather the expression implied that what she did was consistent with her previous conduct.

Related to the prior points, Don's conduct can be seen as a bid for defining their relationship as follows: it is a relationship in which it is right, appropriate, and desirable for Heather to be attentive to Don's needs and for Don to appreciate her attentiveness. We just proposed that in guessing 'For me?', Don showed his familiarity with Heather's thinking about his needs. Yet a person's familiarity with someone's motives or conduct does not say how that person regards the motives or conduct. For example, it would be possible for Don both to expect Heather to be attentive to his needs and to be annoyed each time it occurred. The attitude Don displayed was approval and appreciation of Heather's thinking about his needs. Don treated Heather's report as an occasion to express pride in her and in the relationship. When Heather confirmed his guess about her motives, Don honored those motives, displaying appreciation for the caring deed. One can easily imagine how Don's honoring or dishonoring Heather's motives, particularly when her motives involved a concern for him, would be part of their negotiations in establishing their relationship.

### *Second Demonstration of the Tools*

Our first demonstration of analytic work was organized in terms of, and in the same order as, the suggested list of 'tools' or questions. In this second demonstration, the discussion is organized around three topics derived from the characterizations of actions in the sequence. In each, we address the same issues as in the first demonstration though we feel in a more integrated way. This may serve to make our point that these questions are intended as suggestions rather than as a blueprint for analysis.

*1 Select a Sequence* For the second demonstration, we selected the sequence that immediately followed the sequence we just analysed.



2 *Characterize the Actions*

- 12 D: How was school today  
D asks for an assessment of school that day.
- 13 H: Okay  
H replies with moderately or weakly positive assessment, passing opportunity to elaborate.
- 14 (3.6)  
3.6 second gap in which time D may be waiting for elaboration and H may be declining to offer any.
- 15 D: Hhhh Just okay?  
D queries H's assessment, treating it as less than a positive report.
- 16 H: Ayup  
H confirms with no elaboration.
- 17 D: Why what happened?  
D requests report which would explain the less than positive report.
- 18 H: Nothin. It was kinda boring. We left for lunch though  
H claims no such event occurred. She gives characterization of school day consistent with the less than positive report. She reports an activity which is contrastive with the prior report of no interesting activities.
- 19 D: Who did  
D queries the identity of the participants.
- 20 H: Me and Maria an' Sean an' ( ) an' Max Clancey  
H names the participants.
- 21 D: Sean who?  
D queries further identification of the participant, Sean.
- 22 H: Sean ah (1.0) Peters. Maria's- You know Abruzzi  
H supplies Sean's surname. She begins to identify Sean relative to Maria, cuts off, and supplies Maria's surname.
- 23 D: Yeah  
D acknowledges (claiming to know which Maria).
- 24 H: Maria's new boyfriend.  
H completes identification of Sean in relation to Maria.
- 25 (2.4)  
2.4 second gap in which D may have been waiting for further elaboration on the participants and H not offering to elaborate.
- 26 D: And who?  
D inquires about the fourth participant.

- |    |    |  |   |
|----|----|--|---|
| 27 | H: | A:h his best friend Max                            | H identifies him in relation to Sean.   |
| 28 |    | (2.0)  | 2 second gap in which D may have been waiting for a further report on Max and H declining to give more. |
| 29 | H: | We just went to Dunkin's I had to have a croissant | H reports where they went for lunch and what she ate.   |
| 30 | D: | Yea well you better tell Max that uh:              | In a tough-guy tone, D advises H to tell something to Max, though what she should tell is left unsaid.  |
| 31 | H: | <u>Max</u> has a girlfriend                        | H states that Max already is in a relationship.   |
| 32 | D: | Yea  | D acknowledges.   |
| 33 | H: | Plus he (has disgusting earrings)                  | H adds an unfavorable description of Max.   |

The three topics we selected to focus on are: Don's attempts to get Heather to tell about her school day's experiences; Heather's casting the lunch excursion as not very exciting, as barely reportable; and Don's display of possessiveness and/or jealousy.

*Don's Attempts to Elicit Information about Heather's School Day* In several ways, Don prompted Heather to share her day's experiences. The first attempt involved asking Heather for an assessment or a report of her experiences at school that day (line 12: 'How was school today'). This type of question allows the recipient to report on experiences or to indicate that he or she has no experiences to report. The recipient can offer an assessment to indicate whether or not he or she intends to report any experiences. As Sacks (1975) demonstrated, moderately positive assessments (for example, 'fine') are offered and understood to indicate that the recipients have nothing to report, while markedly positive or negative assessments are offered and understood as indicating the recipient has experiences to report.

Whereas Don's initial attempt to elicit information about Heather's school day was made with no previous talk on the topic, his subsequent attempts were designed to elicit more of a report from Heather than her initial 'Okay'. The first of these attempts involved not responding verbally for about 3½ seconds. During this period, Don declined to acknowledge or comment upon Heather's assessment. In not taking a turn at speaking, Don treated Heather's 'Okay' as incomplete, as needing some follow-up or elaboration. This emergent gap can be seen as a negotiational period, one in which Don implied that Heather's response was incomplete or inadequate and, as will be discussed shortly, Heather implied that it was adequate and complete. The interactants' timing and taking of turns do not

operate independent of their actions, meanings, and sense-making. Whether and when interactants take their turns are part of both performing and understanding actions. Don's not taking a speaking turn served as an action, a claim that Heather's response was inadequate.

Line 15 contains Don's next attempt to elicit more of a report. In this turn, he queried Heather's assessment. One way of querying or challenging what someone has just said is to repeat it with a questioning intonation, such as 'Okay?' Another way is to incorporate a commentary, an indication of the basis for the query or challenge. Don included such a commentary. By including 'Just' in his query 'Just okay?', he cast Heather's 'Okay' as less than a positive report. In querying whether her response was really only 'Just okay', Don drew upon and invoked a contrast between 'Just okay' and an assessment which would indicate nothing problematic. The formulation or reference 'Just okay' was part and parcel of the activity that Don accomplished in the turn. By checking on the meaning of Heather's 'Okay' by questioning whether it was equivalent to 'Just okay', Don created the occasion to elicit more of a report from Heather. He attempted to elicit a further report by 'checking his understanding' of her assessment. He performed the understanding check by reformulating her reply 'Okay' as possibly meaning 'Just okay'.

The last attempt that Don used to elicit more of a report was to prompt Heather to explain the basis of the now confirmed less-than-positive assessment (line 17). He prompted her by coupling a request for an explanation ('Why') with an inquiry about the event responsible for her less-than-positive assessment ('what happened?').

The four attempts that Don used can be seen as strategies, strategies that are interactionally and sequentially not equivalent. The first strategy ('How was school today?') was used as a potential topic opener; it allowed Heather to satisfy the request for an assessment by giving an assessment or report. While satisfying the request, she also had the opportunity to indicate whether she had any newsworthy experiences to share. Don's second strategy, not taking a turn at talk after Heather's reply of 'Okay', was a way of implicitly claiming that Heather's response was problematic. Don's third strategy was a way of more explicitly claiming that Heather's response was problematic. Don queried the meaning of Heather's reply, checking whether she intended it to be less than positive. Finally, Don's fourth strategy was to ask Heather to tell about the experience that was responsible for the less-than-positive assessment. When viewing the four strategies as a series, one notices that they moved from a strategy that allowed Heather the choice of determining whether she had newsworthy experiences to report to a strategy that presupposed a negative experience and directly asked Heather to report it.

*Heather's Casting the Lunch Excursion as Not Very Exciting, as Barely Reportable* The timing and manner in which Heather reported on her lunch excursion (line 18) framed it as not very important or interesting. We

consider four bits of her conduct that provided for this sense of the excursion.

The first piece of conduct occurred in the slot following Don's question, 'How was school today?' Don's question provided an opening for Heather to report on events or experiences during the school day. One consideration in selecting materials to report is whether any are newsworthy, interesting and/or important. *In telling an event, an interactant implicitly proposes that it is worth telling.* Heather responded with 'Okay', an assessment used to indicate 'nothing newsworthy to report'.

The second bit of Heather's conduct that provided for the sense of the lunch excursion as not interesting or important was in her declining to elaborate during the next 3.6 seconds. While Heather warrantably could infer that Don saw her answer as problematic in some way, she attempted no remedy. In waiting for Don to offer more talk, she passed up opportunities to further elaborate on her experiences of the day. In remaining silent, she implicitly claimed to have had no experiences worth telling.

The next bit of conduct that provided for that sense of the lunch excursion was Heather's confirmation of Don's query about the meaning of her 'Okay' (line 16). It is possible that Heather interpreted Don's 'Just okay?' somewhat differently than he may have intended it. If Heather's 'Okay' was a way of indicating that nothing newsworthy happened, she might have heard the 'Just okay' as invoking the distinction between having nothing to report ('Just okay') versus having positive experiences to report (for example, 'good'). In confirming 'Just okay', Heather may have been confirming that she indeed had nothing to report. This interpretation of Heather's sense of Don's 'Just okay' finds support in her next response.

The last bit of Heather's conduct that cast the lunch excursion as a barely reportable event occurred in response to Don's 'Why what happened?' In line 18, Heather's initial response was to claim that no newsworthy event occurred. She continued on with a characterization of the school day that was consistent with both the less-than-positive assessment and the claim that no newsworthy experiences occurred. Having several times in several turns implied or affirmed that nothing interesting happened, Heather then found an event to report. In adding 'though' to her report of the event, she marked the event as contrastive with her previous position that nothing interesting happened. Offered as it was only after affirming that nothing interesting happened, her report seemed to have been offered to satisfy Don's pursuit rather than to share an interesting event. Thus, in her conduct, Heather framed the lunch excursion to be heard as only marginally interesting and the only item worth mentioning in an otherwise boring day.

*Don's Display of Possessiveness or Jealousy: Don's Macho Role-Playing*  
There is some conduct which persons see as instancing jealousy; they have confidence in reading/knowing the motives of the actor. Other conduct poses more ambiguity for the reading of motives. In this sequence, some of

Don's conduct was consistent with his being jealous or possessive but not definitively so. Other of his conduct appeared to instance his acting or role-playing the jealous boyfriend. We will discuss both the conduct associated with ambiguous jealousy and that in which Don role-plays jealousy.

One way of being jealous and/or displaying jealousy is to monitor and check on possible competitors. If Don were jealous or displayed jealousy with respect to Heather, he might monitor Heather's reactions to persons who might replace him as her boyfriend. To learn whether there were potential competitors, Don might have a strong interest in eliciting reports from Heather about her daily experiences, paying close attention to the identities of persons who participated and observing how she talks about them.

We have already discussed Don's successive attempts to elicit a report from Heather on her experiences during the school day. Leaving that aside, we will now discuss how Don's responses to Heather's lunch excursion report were ambiguous with respect to displaying jealous motives. Upon hearing Heather's report of the lunch excursion ('We left for lunch though'), Don actively elicited information on the identities of the participants ('Who did'). There are at least two interpretations of his motives for asking. The first sees Don's inquiry as consistent with jealous motives. A report of a lunch sojourn can include details on where it took place, the kind and quality of the food and service, the cost of each lunch item, the participants, etc. Don's asking about the identity of the participants rather than other aspects of the lunch event was consistent with his screening Heather's activities for potential competitors. The second view involves attributing 'innocent' motives to Don. When Heather reported on the lunch sojourn, she referenced the participants with a 'we': 'We left for lunch though'. By using a pronoun, she implied that Don would have some sense of the participants. In such a circumstance, it was reasonable for Don to inquire after their identities.

Don's next inquiry was to ask for further identification of Sean ('Sean who?'). We view his motives for asking as ambiguous here as well. On the one hand, it might be seen to instance jealousy in that he was inquiring about the first male mentioned. Alternatively, Heather identified Sean by first name only, indicating that she expected Don to recognize Sean without further elaboration (Sacks and Schegloff, 1979). If Don failed to recognize him, it was quite appropriate that he ask for additional descriptors.

Don's next inquiry was about the fourth participant ('And who?'). Again Don's motives for this inquiry are ambiguous. On the one hand, it could be seen to be based on the jealous motive of screening possible competitors; on the other hand, it could be seen to be motivated by simply an interest in hearing more about the event.

Two features of Don's conduct in line 30 can be read as less ambiguous as to motives, as more likely motivated by jealousy. The first feature is that Don maintained a focus on Max across a bid by Heather to change the focus (line 29). In response to Don's inquiry about Max, Heather identified

him, waited 2 seconds, and then reported where they went to lunch and what she ate. In the next turn, Don returned the focus to Max. We suggest that maintaining a focus on a competitor rather than picking up on Heather's report is less ambiguous with respect to jealousy motives. The second feature involves what kind of talk he did in relation to Max. In line 30, he acted or role-played the possessive, jealous boyfriend ('Yeah well you better tell Max that uh:'). In a tough-guy tone, Don advised Heather to tell something to Max, though what she should tell him was left unspecified. As evidenced by her retort ('Max has a girlfriend'), Heather had no problem figuring out the uncompleted utterance: what she took Don to leave unstated was that she should tell Max that she was Don's girlfriend. Don acted out being macho, possessive, and/or jealous. In starting out with the words 'you better', Don was doing tough-guy talk; he used an expression associated with threats. Yet the intonation in his delivery was one of acting out or playing a role.<sup>17</sup>

### Concluding Comments

In our guidelines, we included five areas to consider in developing analyses. We selected these five because we feel they are fundamental. One area we omitted is topical organization. Our decision to omit it rests upon the complexity that is involved in studying it. For a discussion of some of the complexity, see Schegloff (1990), Jefferson (1984a; 1993), Button and Casey (1984; 1985; 1988/89), and Maynard (1980) have produced analyses of some features of topical organization.

We conclude by noting that analysis is a slow process of becoming increasingly aware of features of conduct and practices of action. It can and often does start with listening to your tape and transcribing it. In listening closely enough to transcribe something of what you hear, you will have thoughts about the conduct to explore further. As you continue to listen or watch your tape and makes notes, your beginning analytic thoughts will gradually take on more shape. We know of no one, experienced conversation analysts included, who produces a finished analysis the first time around. This type of work lends itself to successive revision and refinement. Producing the demonstrations for this chapter involved this sort of slowly evolving work. The versions published here look quite different from the early passes through the materials, and they could be developed further.

Coming to the end of reading these demonstrations is approaching the beginning of gaining a deeper understanding of CA. The next step is to apply the perspective to your own materials.

### Recommended Reading

We have tried to select materials that would give you access to the widest range of analytic work in the fewest number of citations.

Sacks (1992): Sacks's lectures, delivered between 1964 and 1972, were edited by Gail Jefferson and published in 1992, with an introduction by Emanuel Schegloff. Given Sacks's untimely death in 1975, and the relatively few papers he published during his life, these lectures provide an invaluable insight into his analytic thinking. Although entitled *Lectures on Conversation*, they include discussion and analysis of a much wider range of topics on 'the social organization of mind, culture and interaction' (Schegloff, 1992).

The following provide brief descriptions of seven edited books containing important papers in CA:

- Sudnow (1970): this reader contains a collection of early CA work from the 1960s. There are two important papers by Sacks, and others by Schegloff, Sudnow, Moerman, Jefferson and Turner.
- Schenkein (1978): contains an expanded version of the famous 'turn-taking' paper by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson originally published in *Language* in 1974, and others by Schenkein, Pomerantz, Ryave, Jefferson, Goldberg, Sharrock and Turner, and Atkinson et al.
- Psathas (1979): contains papers by Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson, C. Goodwin, Heritage and Watson, Coulter, Schenkein, Psathas, Pollner and Atkinson. Those by Coulter and Pollner have more broadly ethnomethodological interest, and the paper by Psathas deals with non-conversational materials: hand sketched maps.
- Atkinson and Heritage (1978): an excellent collection of later CA work displaying emergent interest in, for example, topic organization and preference structure. Also very helpful general introduction and section introductions which aid reading of the analyses. Papers by Sacks, Schegloff, Pomerantz, Davidson, Drew, Button and Casey, Jefferson, Goodwin, Heath, Heritage and Atkinson.
- Button and Lee (1987): contains two chapters (one by Lee and the other by Sharrock and Anderson) which discuss CA and its relation to DA. Two early papers of Sacks and others by Schegloff, Jefferson, Button, Goodwin, Pomerantz, Sharrock and Anderson, and Watson.
- Helm et al. (1989): this collection was edited by four former ethnomethodology/CA graduate students from the Sociology Department at Boston University. It contains a number of interesting papers by the editors and their fellow students, as well as papers contributed by Frankel, Maynard, Pomerantz, Morrison and Schwartz.
- Psathas (1990): contains analytic papers by Jefferson, Button, Davidson, Coulter, Psathas, Frankel and Watson. Includes a reprinting of a Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks paper on the preference for self-correction. Psathas prepared a quite complete appendix describing a recent version of the transcription system which includes helpful examples.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> 'Conversation analysis' came into common usage before the confusions it could give rise to became fully evident. Changing the name of the approach at this time would seem to produce greater confusion than clarification.

<sup>2</sup> 'Talk-in-interaction' was a term that was proposed to avoid the confusion that could result from the term 'conversation analysis', namely that it concerns the study of *only* informal talk.

<sup>3</sup> See Schiffrin (1994) for a recent survey of the original impetus and recent work in many of these research traditions.

<sup>4</sup> See transcription conventions in the Appendix to this volume.

5 An analysis of this segment is worked up in more detail later in the chapter.

6 Conversation analysis has on occasion been characterized as *principally* concerned with the analysis of sequences. Although the analysis of the temporal organization of interaction provides a distinction between CA and other forms of DA, it is not its defining feature.

7 See Emanuel Schegloff's (1992) 'Introduction' to the Blackwell publication of Harvey Sacks's transcribed lectures for a more elaborated discussion of the early history of CA.

8 The commonalities and differences between CA and ethnomethodology have received detailed and innovative treatment in recent literature. See, for example, Lynch (1994), Maynard and Clayman (1991), and Whalen (1992).

9 See transcription conventions in the Appendix to this volume.

10 When participants perform new actions/topics and respond to prior actions/topics, they do so in ways such that their co-participants can see what they are doing. In as much as beginning, responding, and/or closing an action/topic are recognizable to the interactants, they also are recognizable to analysts.

11 While turn organization certainly is part of packaging, we discuss the timing and taking of turns as a separate point.

12 Further discussion of the timing and taking of turns at the boundaries, and the understandings provided by that turn organization, is contained in step 4 in this demonstration.

13 The tellability of a report may depend upon when it occurred relative to the time of the interaction. Sacks analysed how the vast majority of stories are of events that occurred 'today' and 'yesterday' (Sacks, 1992). He argued that items that are tellables on the day they occur may no longer be tellables several days or a week later.

14 In his elaboration, Don portrayed the accomplishment as having happened almost serendipitously. His formulation implies that he went to the post office to mail something, then saw the forms and took them.

15 We could not determine what actions Heather's utterance was accomplishing by only reading the transcript. We needed to rehear the audiotape to hear the intonation of the 'Yeah'. It was on the basis of hearing it as flat that we claim that she 'merely acknowledged' the news. With a livelier 'Yeah', a speaker may show surprise or even skepticism. For a richer and more subtle analysis of acknowledgment tokens, see Jefferson (1984b).

16 This characterization is derived from hearing the way Don delivered 'That's my baby'. Unfortunately, readers do not have the opportunity to evaluate our characterization.

17 Again, it is unfortunate that readers cannot hear the intonation.

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