Study of Face-to-Face Interaction

- Main Points:
  - Phenomena that we tend to think of as psychological (*within* the individual) turn out to be accomplishments of the pragmatics of language (*between* people)
  - the collaborative work of talk
  - perception, learning, emotionality, ...
  - together with the production of a shared (and challenged) view of the world

Implications for Analysis

- We need to analyze talk in context
- Avoid viewing speech as an "expression" of speaker's beliefs
- Avoid viewing language as a system of "representations"

Study of Face-to-Face Interaction

- a dynamic interface
- between individual and social cognition
- the "interaction order"
- how to unlock its interior organization?

Speech Acts

- The first study of the "pragmatics" of language
- John Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (1962)
  - locutionary act - act of speaking
  - illocutionary act - what's done in speaking
  - perlocutionary effect - effect on the listener

"Performative" utterances

- are not true or false
- don't just 'say' something, they 'do' something
- perform some kind of action
  - asking a question, eliciting an answer...
  - making a promise...

- John Searle, *Speech Acts* (1969)
- detailed analysis of promising
- But speech act analysis pays little attention to context

Communication and Mutual Understanding

- how are they possible?
- pre-existing common knowledge? Shared norms?
- Or is understanding dynamic, constantly updated?
- actively achieved, contingent, revisable
- shared methods of communicating

Conversation Analysis (CA)

- an influential approach to the study of discourse
- the pragmatics of everyday conversations
- their interactive, practical construction

A new view of utterances

- as a form of action situated in specific contexts
- designed with attention to these contexts
- action is shaped by context
- context is renewed by action
  - recognized, constituted, and reproduced

Origins in Ethnomethodology

- Study (logos) of the Methods of Everyday People (ethno)
- Harold Garfinkel
- Harvey Sacks
- Emmanuel Schegloff

What is a conversation?

- an impromptu, spontaneous, everyday exchange of talk
- between two or more people
- the conversation is managed interactionally and locally
- in a cooperative manner
- one utterance at a time
- the participants take **turns**
- and make **moves**

Conversation defined:

- "Conversation is a process in which people interact on a moment-by-moment, turn-by-turn basis. During a sequence of turns participants exchange talk with each other, but, more important, they exchange social or communicative actions. These actions are the 'moves' of conversation considered as a collection of games. Indeed, conversational actions are some of the most important moves of the broader 'game of everyday life.'" (Nofsinger, R. E. (1991). *Everyday conversation*. Newbury Park: Sage, p. 10)

The Method of CA

- To describe conversation by building on the way it appears to be taken up by the participants
- Working only with what is seen and heard
- Without appealing to *hidden* factors
- "The methodology employed in CA requires evidence not only that some aspect of conversation can be viewed in the way suggested, but that it actually is so conceived by the participants producing it." (Levinson, p. 319)
- Each utterance displays an interpretation of the previous utterance

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"The methodology employed in CA requires evidence not only that some aspect of conversation *can* be viewed in the way suggested, but that it actually is so conceived by the participants producing it. That is, what conversation analysts are trying to model are the procedures and expectations actually employed by participants in producing and understanding conversation.... We may start with the problem of demonstrating that some conversational organization is actually oriented to (i.e. implicitly recognized) by participants, rather than being an artifact of analysis. One key source of verification here is what happens when some 'hitch' occurs -- i.e. when the hypothesized organization does not operate in the predicted way -- since then participants (like the analyst) should address themselves to the problem thus produced. Specifically, we may expect them either to try to repair the hitch, or alternatively, to draw strong inferences of a quite specific kind from the absence of the expected behavior, and to act accordingly" (Levinson, p. 319)

Example:

- 1 S: So I was wondering would you be in your office after class this week?
  2   (2.0)
  3 S: Probably not
  4 T: Hmm no

- The two-second pause after the student's question -- a 'lapse' in the conversation -- is interpreted as a negative answer to the question.

- Although a silence has no features on its own, conversational significance is attributed to it on the basis of the expectations that arise from its location in the surrounding talk.

Analytical Resource:

- "A fundamental methodological point can be made with respect to [this example], and indeed most examples of conversation. Conversation, as opposed to monologue, offers the analyst an invaluable analytical resource: as each turn is responded to by a second, we find displayed in that second an analysis of the first by its recipient. Such an analysis is thus provided by participants not only for each other but for analysts too" (Levinson, S. C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 321)

Interactional Sequences

- the current utterance offers
- an understanding of past conversational actions
- in the here & now
- and projects (but doesn't control) subsequent actions
- it is necessary to consider the sequence of conversational actions

Recipient Design

- Talk is "designed" or "constructed" to fit with what has been said, and anticipation of what will be said
- This is the "recipient design" of utterances

Kinds of Sequence:

- Adjacency Pairs
- Presequences
- Insertion Sequences
- Taking Turns
- Preference

Adjacency Pairs

- Conversational actions often occur in pairs
- "an exchange of greetings"
- two parts: a first pair-part, and a second pair-part
- question-answer; greeting-greeting; invite-accept/reject; offer-accept/refuse; congratulate-thank...
- call for the production of a reciprocal response
- having produced the first part, the speaker must stop speaking

Presequences

- a pair that does work preliminary to a second pair

- e.g., to avoid possible conflict

- 1 A: Do you have the spanner?   ) presequence
  2 B: Yes.   )
  3 C: Can I have it please?   ) R-A pair
  4 B: [...]   )

Insertion Sequences

- A pair that does work *during* an initiated pair

- 1 P: Martin, would you like to dance?)
  2 M: Is the floor slippery?   )
  3 P: No, it's fine.   )
  4 M: Then I'd be happy to.   )

Turn-Taking

- How do people take turns?
- We don't wait for the speaker to stop talking
- there is a system to allocate turns, simple but powerful
- it is used to display identity:
  - speaker - recipient, but also doctor - patient, etc.

Turn Construction

- a turn can be a word, phrase, clause, or sentence
- It is not a syntactic or semantic unit, but pragmatic
- the moment when a transisition is possible:
  - "transition relevance place" (TRP)

Turn Allocation

- Techniques that assign the rights and responsibilities in a conversation
- At TRP, current speaker can select next speaker (see next slide)
- If not, anyone can jump in
- If not, current speaker can continue
- If so, these rules apply again

Stories

- often long stretches of talk
- how does the speaker add units to their turn?
- how does the recipient know when their right to speak resumes?
- there are specific interactional problems to story-telling
- stories are modes of action situated within interaction
- and the recipients are active participants
- e.g. interviews

Preference

- An institutionalized pattern of the conversational system
- Given a choice, one action will be more conventional
- The "dispreferred" response calls for further work
  - Request -> accept [refuse]
    - a prompt refusal is treated as rude or hostile
  - Offer -> accept [refuse]
  - Question -> expected answer [unexpected answer]
  - Blame -> denial [admission]

Alignment

- A conversation must be kept "on track"
- Alignment is displayed in all utterances, but explicitly in:
  - assessments ("That's good")
  - newsmarks ("Oh wow!")
  - continuers ("Uh huh")
  - collaborative completions (finishing the speaker's utterance)
  - formulations (giving the gist of what's been said)

Repairs

- Work to fix a conversational breakdown and restore alignment
- to maintain order
- misunderstandings, disagreements, rejections, and other difficulties

Preventatives

- Work to prevent misalignment
- Disclaimers ("I don't really know about this...")

- I.B.M. has patented a computerized voice that is said to be almost indistinguishable from human ones. This voice is programmed to include "ums," "ers" and sighs, to cough for attention, even to "shhh" when interrupted. According to Andy Aaron, of I.B.M.'s Thomas J. Watson research group speech team: "These sounds can be incredibly subtle, even unnoticeable, but have a profound psychological effect. It can be extremely reassuring to have a more attentive-sounding voice."

Conclusions

- Phenomena that we tend to think of as psychological (*within* the individual) turn out to be accomplishments of the pragmatics of language (*between* people)
- Results of the collaborative work of talk
- i.e., *Talk makes things happen!*
- E.g., learning, conflict & resolution, perception, play, psychotherapy

Common Mistakes of Analysis:

- to analyze talk out of context
  - most "discourse analysis," grounded theory
- to view speech as an "expression" of speaker's beliefs
  - most analyses of interviews
- to view language as a system of "representations"
  - analysis of "content," "themes," "concepts"
  - much social constructionism

E.g. Laing & Leila

- Laing notes a contradiction in Leila's identity
- Leila as daughter, as Christian
- Her father is a Christian preacher
- How can one be a "faithful" daughter?
- He encourages her to challenge her father
- What are the consequences...?

Transcription Conventions

- (.) A pause which is noticeable but too short to measure.
- (.5) A pause timed in tenths of a second.
- = There is no discernible pause between the end of a speaker's utterance and the start of the next utterance.
- : One or more colons indicate an extension of the preceding vowel sound.
- Under Underlying indicates words that were uttered with added emphasis.
- CAPITAL Words in capitals are louder than the surrounding talk.
- (.hhh) Exhale of breath.
- (hhh)Inhale of breath.
- ( ) Material in parentheses are inaudible or there is doubt of accuracy.
- (( )) Double parentheses indicate clarifying information, e.g., ((laughter)).
- ? Indicates a rising inflection.
- . Indicates a stopping fall in tone.
- **Talk between** is quieter than surrounding talk.
- }Talk between{ is quicker than surrounding talk.
- [The brackets between turns indicate overlapped talk and are placed by the words overlapped.

- (.)   Just noticeable pause
- (.3), (2.6)   Examples of timed pauses
- ↑word,↓word   Onset of noticeable pitch rise or fall (can be difficult to use reliably)
- A: word [word
- B: [word   Square brackets aligned across adjacent lines denote the start of overlapping talk. Some transcribers also use "]" brackets to show where the overlap stops
- .hh, hh   in-breath (note the preceding fullstop) and out-breath respectively.
- wo(h)rd   (h) is a try at showing that the word has "laughter" bubbling within it
- wor-   A dash shows a sharp cut-off
- wo:rd   Colons show that the speaker has stretched the preceding sound.
- (words)   A guess at what might have been said if unclear
- ( )   Unclear talk. Some transcribers like to represent each syllable of unclear talk with a dash
- A: word=
- B: =word   The equals sign shows that there is no discernible pause between two speakers' turns or, if put between two sounds within a single speaker's turn, shows that they run together
- word, WORD   Underlined sounds are louder, capitals louder still
- °word°   material between "degree signs" is quiet
- >word word< <word word>   Inwards arrows show faster speech, outward slower
- →   Analyst's signal of a significant line
- ((sobbing))   Transcriber's attempt to represent something hard, or impossible, to write phonetically

- One place for more information: Charles Antaki's web site:

- http://www-staff.lboro.ac.uk/~ssca1/sitemenu.htm