

## Introduction

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The chapters collected in these four volumes represent some of the most significant papers to have been published in Conversation Analysis since its beginnings in the early 1960's. The field has been described as perhaps the only completely new sociological research methodology developed in the U.S. in the latter half of the twentieth century, and it has become the predominant methodology for studying social interaction within sociology and beyond. The publication of these articles in Sage's *Benchmarks in Social Research Methods* series reflects the impact which Conversation Analysis (hereafter CA) has had not only on sociology, but on other disciplines, especially linguistics, sociolinguistics and, increasingly, psychology. Founded in a sociological conceptualization that stresses the basically social nature of language use in human interaction, CA has expanded to become truly an inter-disciplinary field that is practiced worldwide.

With this in mind, we have put these volumes together for a multi-disciplinary audience and we hope that, in whatever discipline you may happen to work, you will find them not only a useful resource, but also a (continued) source of inspiration. Our aim is to provide a reasonably comprehensive reference source, for research and teaching, of the key articles published in CA over the past 30 or more years. But we also aim to show exemplars of CA's methods and findings, in the context of the cutting-edge of CA research, to serve as models of how to conduct CA research, what it can offer in the way of findings, and how its method and findings can be applied to areas in which you may be working.

### The background and program of CA

Conversation analysis is a field of study concerned with the norms, practices and competences underlying the organization of social interaction. Notwithstanding its name, it is concerned with all forms of spoken interaction including not only everyday conversations between friends and acquaintances, but also interactions in medical, educational, mass media and socio-legal contexts, 'monologic' interactions such as lecturing or speech-making, and technologically complex interactions such as web-based multiparty communication. Regardless

of the interaction being studied, CA starts from the perspective that (contra both Chomsky and Parsons) the details of conduct in interaction are highly organized and orderly and, indeed, that the specificities of meaning and understanding in interaction would be impossible without this orderliness.

The central sociological insight of CA is that it is through conversation that we conduct the ordinary, and perhaps extraordinary, affairs of our lives. When people talk with one another, they are not merely communicating thoughts, information or knowledge. Our relationships with one another, and our sense of who we are to one another, is generated, manifest, maintained and managed in and through our conversations, whether face-to-face or on the telephone. People construct, establish, reproduce, and negotiate their identities, roles, and relationships in conversational interaction. In our interactions with others, we don't just talk; conversation is not, to adapt Wittgenstein's phrase, "language idling". We are *doing* things, such as inviting someone over, asking them to do a favour or a service, blaming or criticising them, greeting them or trying to get on first name terms with them, disagreeing or arguing with them, advising or warning them, apologising for something one did or said, complaining about one's treatment, telling about troubles, sympathizing, offering to help and the like. These and other such activities are the primary forms of social action. They are as real, concrete, consequential and as fundamental as any other form of conduct. So when we study conversation, we are investigating the actions and activities through which social life is conducted. It is therefore primarily an approach to social action (Schegloff 1996a). Methodologically, CA seeks to uncover the practices, patterns, and generally the methods through which participants perform and interpret social action.

CA emerged from two intellectual streams in sociology. The first is Durkheimian and derives most proximately from the work of Erving Goffman (1955, 1983). Goffman argued that social interaction constitutes a distinct institutional order comprised of normative rights and obligations that regulate interaction, and that function in broad independence from the social, psychological and motivational characteristics of persons. The second is Harold Garfinkel's ethnomethodology. This stresses the contingent and socially constructed nature both of action and the understanding of action, and the role of shared methods in the production, recognition and shared understanding of joint activities. CA emerged from a fusion of these two

perspectives: the Goffmanian interaction order structures the production, recognition and analysis of action as it unfolds in real time through the use of shared methods or practices. This process (and its analysis) are possible because participants reflexively display their analyses of one another's conduct in each successive contribution to interaction.

The proximate origins of CA lie in the work that Harvey Sacks (1935–1975) undertook at the Centre for the Scientific Study of Suicide, in Los Angeles, 1963-1964. Drawn by his interests both in the ethnomethodological concern with members' methods of practical reasoning (arising from his association with Harold Garfinkel), and in the study of interaction (stimulated by his having been taught as a graduate student at Berkeley by Erving Goffman), Sacks began to analyze telephone calls made to the Suicide Prevention Centre (SPC). Without any diminished sensitivity to the plight of persons calling the SPC, Sacks investigated how callers' accounts of their troubles were produced in the course of their conversations over the telephone with SPC counselors. This led him to explore the more generic 'machineries' of conversational turn-taking, along with the sequential patterns or structures associated with the management of activities in conversation (Lerner 2004). Through the collection of a broader corpus of interactions, including group therapy sessions and mundane telephone conversations, and in collaboration with Gail Jefferson (b.1938) and Emanuel Schegloff (b.1937), Sacks began to lay out a quite comprehensive picture of the conversational organization of turn-taking; overlapping talk; repair; topic initiation and closing; greetings, questions, invitations, requests and so forth, and their associated sequences (adjacency pairs); agreement and disagreement; story telling; and of the integration of speech with non-vocal activities (see especially Sacks 1992: for a comprehensive review of CA's topics and methodology, see Schegloff 1992, ten Have 1999).

At the present time, CA proceeds at several analytic levels. At the most basic level, CA looks for patterns in social interaction for evidence of *practices* of conduct that evidence systematic design. To be identified as a practice, particular elements of conduct must be recurrent, specifically situated, and attract responses that discriminate them from related or similar practices. A central feature of this procedure is that the analysis of the practices used to perform a social action (e.g., prefacing an answer to a question with 'oh,' or identifying a co-

interactant by name in the course of a turn) can be validated through the examination of others' responses.

Second, CA focuses on *sequences* of actions. In performing some current action, participants normally project (empirically) and require (normatively) the production of a 'next' or range of possible 'next' actions to be done by another participant. Moreover, in constructing a turn at talk, they normally address themselves to immediately preceding talk, and design their contributions in ways that exploit this basic positioning. Third, by the production of next actions, participants show an understanding of a prior action and do so at a multiplicity of levels - for example, by an 'acceptance', an actor can show an understanding that the prior turn was possibly complete, that it was addressed to them, that it was an action of a particular type (e.g., an invitation) and so on. Within this framework, the grasp of a 'next' action that a current projects, the production of that next action, and its interpretation by the previous speaker - are the products of a common set of socially shared practices. CA analyses are thus simultaneously analyses of action, context management and intersubjectivity because all three of these features are simultaneously, if tacitly, the objects of the actors' actions.

At a third level, practices cohere at various levels of *systemic organization*. For example, the turn-taking system for conversation is composed of sets of practices for turn construction and turn allocation. The question-answer pair is organized by a large number of practices that structure the timing and internal organization of responses to maximize social solidarity. Evaluations of states of affairs are structured by a range of practices through which persons manage the relative priority of their rights to evaluate them, and so on.

Based on this framework, CA has developed as an empirical discipline focused on a range of domains of interactional conduct, including turn-taking (the allocation of opportunities to speak among participants), the organization of conversational sequences, the internal structuring of turns at talk and the formation of actions, the organization of repair (dealing with difficulties in speaking, hearing and understanding talk), story telling and narrative, prosody and body behavior. These organizations form the technical bedrock on which people build their social lives, and construct their sense of sociality with one another.

Interaction of any kind is made possible through participants sharing certain communicative competencies. These consist partly of knowledge about the language, of the ways that elements of language (including lexis, grammar and syntax, intonation, prosody and so forth) are organized, combined and deployed. But they include, most crucially, knowledge also of the structures, patterns, norms and expectations concerning the social organization of (verbal) action in sequences of interaction. Such 'knowledge' is not, generally, something of which we are aware, at any conscious level. It is, however, salient to participants in interaction in their establishing a mutual understanding of what they are saying and doing in the talk. Thus the coherence of talk, and the mutual understandings which underlie it, rest on a "common set of methods or procedures" (Heritage 1984: 241); and these in turn are the constituents of our basic communicative competencies. So when we study conversation, we are attempting to discover what are the essential and quite fundamental competencies which we share and which make all coherent social action - including communication - possible between members of a culture. These competencies or sense-making practices (Pomerantz and Mandelbaum 2004) consist of the practices and devices which are the focus of CA research. That is, the aim of research in CA is to discover and explicate the practices through which participants produce and understand conduct in interaction. These practices are uncovered, in large part, through identifying patterns in talk.

In these respects CA lies at the intersection between sociology and other cognate disciplines, especially linguistics and social psychology. Certainly research in CA has paralleled developments within sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis and so forth toward a naturalistic, observation-based science of actual verbal behaviour, which uses recordings of naturally occurring interactions as the basic form of data (Heritage 1984). However CA makes a distinctively sociological contribution in the following kinds of ways.

First, in its focus on how participants understand and respond to one another in their turns at talk, CA explores the social and interactional underpinnings of intersubjectivity - the maintenance of common, shared and even 'collective' understandings between social actors.

Second, CA develops empirically Goffman's (1955, 1983) insight that social interaction embodies a distinct moral and institutional order that can be treated like other social institutions,

such as the family, economy, religion and so on. By the 'interaction order,' Goffman meant the institutional order of interaction; CA studies the practices that make up this institution, as a topic in its own right.

Third, all levels of linguistic production (including syntactic, prosodic and phonetic) can be related to the actions (such as greetings, invitations, requests) or activities (instructing, cross-examining, performing a medical examination and diagnosing etc.) in which people are engaged when interacting with one another. In this way conversational organizations underlie social action (Atkinson and Heritage 1984); hence CA offers a methodology, based on analyzing sequences in which actions are produced and embedded, for investigating how we accomplish social actions. This is applicable equally to both verbal and non-verbal conduct, as well as the integration between them, in face-to-face interaction (e.g. Goodwin 1981).

Fourth, it is evident that the performance by one participant of certain kinds of actions - e.g. a greeting, question, invitation etc. - sets up certain expectations concerning what the other, the recipient, should do in response; that is, he or she may be expected to return a greeting, answer the question, accept or decline the invitation, and so on. Thus such pairs of actions, called in CA *adjacency pairs*, are normative frameworks within which certain actions should properly or accountably be done: the normative character of action, and the associated accountability of acting in accordance with normative expectations, are vitally germane to sociology's sense of the moral order of social life, including ascriptions of deviance.

Fifth, CA relates talk to social context. CA's approach to context is distinctive, partly because the most proximate context for any turn at talk is regarded as being the (action) sequence of which it is a part - and in particular the immediately prior turn. Also, CA takes the position that the 'context' of an interaction cannot be exhaustively defined by the analyst a priori; rather, participants display their sense of relevant context (mutual knowledge, including what each knows about the other; the setting; relevant biographical information; their relevant identities or relationship, etc.) in the particular ways in which they design their talk - that is, in the recipient design of their talk.

Finally, as this approach to context suggests, CA is equally applicable to institutional interactions as it is to mundane conversation (Drew and Heritage 1992). The social worlds of the law, medicine, corporations and business negotiations, counseling, education, public broadcast media and other such institutional and workplace settings besides, are conducted through talk-in-interaction. CA has increasingly come to focus on how participants in such settings manage their respective institutional activities, for instance as professionals (doctors, lawyers etc.) or as lay persons (clients, patients, students etc.). Methodologically, the objective of CA research into institutional interactions is to reveal the practices through which participants manage their interactions as a specialized form of interaction, for instance as a news interview (Clayman and Heritage 2002), as doing counseling (Perakyla 1995), as courtroom cross-examination (Drew 1990), as a medical visit (Heritage and Maynard 2006) and so forth. In such research, CA connects very directly with ethnographic sociology (Maynard 2003), and offers a distinctive, rigorous and fruitful methodology for investigating the organizational and institutional sites of social life.

### CA and methodology

These volumes are being published in a *methodology* series - and yet, as you will see, there is not a section, or any chapters, which focus specifically on methods of analysis. In part, this is because CA is at its heart a discovering science, and in the end there are no recipes for how to make discoveries. Thus there are, with rare exceptions (eg. Wootton 1989; ten Have 1999), few published discussions of, or guides to, CA methods. Training in methods - in how to begin to make observations, build collections of phenomena of analytic interest, and develop a analyses of those phenomena - tends to be hands-on, obtained through workshops, summer schools and the like. Having said that, and whilst none of the chapters is explicitly methodological in orientation (though see below concerning chapter 37 by Heritage), all the chapters exemplify CA's methodology - or more strictly, *methodologies*. By this we mean that the pattern of reasoning and standards of evidence represented in CA's methodologies are to be found in the ways the authors have assembled data, in the observations they make about those data, how they show collections of some phenomena and demonstrate from those collections the recurrence and systematicity of those phenomena, how they 'distributionalise' phenomena into specific sequential environments, and generally how authors build and develop their analyses. So

that whilst the kinds of methods sections which are familiar in journal papers in many disciplines (data source/characteristics, sampling, controls, statistical techniques etc.) generally do not appear in the chapters in these volumes, nevertheless these chapters, taken collectively, embody both the general principles underlying CA research and analysis, and guidance about how CA investigations are conducted.

In what follows we will set out some of the more fundamental methodological precepts or cornerstones of CA.

### Some Basic Methodological Positions

(1) The most obvious methodological precept of CA will probably be quite familiar to you - that its data consist of video or audio recordings of naturally occurring interactions, between people going about their 'normal' business. From the inception of CA, it has been argued that recordings are the only workable data base for CA studies because they capture interactional events as they occur in real time more accurately, with more detail, and with more capacity for repeatable inspection than any other method of data collection. It is these features which have made recorded data mandatory for CA studies and which distinguish it from other approaches which essentially address human conduct, as it were, second-hand – for example, by asking hypothetical questions about conduct, or surveying persons about what they ordinarily do. In addition, CA has insisted on recordings of naturally occurring interactions - this in contrast to experiments and role plays which intervene in the conduct under investigation and often influence it in unknown ways.

As we have already indicated, the recordings that CA works with may be of any kind of interaction (on recording data in the field, see Goodwin 1993; ten Have 1999, Ch.4). Indeed CA research covers, in addition to ordinary conversations between friends or family over the telephone or face-to-face, interactions with, and in, stores of one kind or another; calls to the emergency services; meetings between colleagues; factory shop-floor activities; the electronic and other multi-modal forms of communication received by controls rooms; medical consultations in primary and secondary care (including forms of telephone medicine in primary care); lawyers interactions with their clients; police interviews with suspects; media interviews;

various forms of psychotherapy sessions (which was one of the kinds of data first used in CA investigations) and other such counselling; order taking over the telephone, by expert order takers, including video recordings of their key board and monitor activities; classroom and other pedagogic interactions; interactions among children, and between children and their carers; interactions between native and non-native speakers of a language; and helplines - to name but a few! Recordings of interactions in these settings have supported studies which are variously considered studies of ordinary conversation, studies of institutional talk, and studies of work (or workplace studies). Because of the variety of kinds of interactions on which CA investigations draw, the field has come to be regarded as the study of *talk-in-interaction*.

Recordings, whether audio or video, are generally transcribed according to the transcription system developed over the years, and largely through Jefferson's research (Jefferson 1983; 2004). The aim of transcribing is twofold: to provide a representation of interactional materials for the purposes of observational analysis (and subsequently for publication), and to represent the detail of participants' verbal and nonverbal conduct as far as is possible given the constraints and affordances of text (ten Have 1999 Ch.5, Roberts and Robinson 2004). The kind of details that are represented include: overlapping talk (the precise points of overlap onset and offset), timing (pauses between words or utterances), some phonetic and prosodic aspects of speech (e.g., amplitude, emphasis, sound stretching, and terminal intonation); other sounds (laughter, audible inhalation or exhalation), and body behaviour (gaze direction, gesture, bodily orientation etc.). Researchers tend to work, particularly in the early stages, from the transcriptions in conjunction with listening to or viewing the recordings.

(2) Second, CA methodology is action-focused. The goal is to identify the *patterns*, *practices* or *devices* which underlie meaning and action - that is, through which we interact and communicate in meaningful, *accountable* ways with one another. There are perhaps four underlying characteristics of talk-in-interaction which we focus on, in whatever data are being investigated. These are:

- Turn taking
- turn design or construction
- Sequence, and sequence organization
- Action

When we begin analyzing data, we are examining in close detail the particular way in which a turn or turns is/are constructed; what actions speakers are engaged in, or conducting, or even ‘performing’, in a turn at talk; how turns are responsive to one another, and thereby build into sequences; what shapes or patterns those action sequences comes to exhibit; and how it is, then, that speakers manage social actions and activities in interaction with one another.

It is here that the insistence on recordings and detailed transcription can often pay off. Conduct which can have the appearance of being ‘the same’ or equivalent may turn out on, on closer inspection, to have a different interactional salience, and hence not to be equivalent. For example, repetitions might be treated as if they were undifferentiated phenomena. But different prosodic realisations of repeats (Couper-Kuhlen 1996; Curl 2005) or the sequential circumstances in which something is being repeated, and specifically what object is being repeated (Schegloff 1996a), can all crucially influence the activity being conducted through a repeat.

Since much of CA involves discovery in a basic ‘natural history’ sense, it involves the observation, description and specification of interactional practices. For this reason, CA’s methodology is generally not quantitative. The observational tasks of CA precede any effort to map the distribution of interactional practices in social space. Moreover, any effort to code a practice (which is a prerequisite to such mapping) can only follow a thorough and exhaustive qualitative analysis of its properties (Schegloff 1993).

CA’s methods attempt to document and explicate how participants arrived at understandings of one another’s action during the back-and-forth interaction between them, and how in turn they constructed their turns so as to be suitably responsive to prior turns. So CA

focuses especially on those features of talk which are salient to participants' analyses of one another's turns at talk, in the progressive unfolding of interactions.

(3) As we have already intimated, there is a fundamental sense in which the name 'conversation analysis' is a misnomer. The originating impulse of CA was Sacks's effort to establish whether a stable reproducible cumulative natural observational science of social action was possible (Sacks 1984; Schegloff 1992; Drew 2004). From its very inception, CA investigated interaction that is 'institutional' in character. Harvey Sacks's first lectures focused on telephone calls to a suicide prevention center in San Francisco, and many later lectures dealt with interactions in group therapy sessions (labelled "GTS" in lectures and other papers). Sacks examined these data as *conversation* in order to locate fundamental conversational practices within them. However it is also possible to examine institutional data for their distinctive features as the embodiment of social *institutional* tasks. This latter task, however, involves some adjustments in the stance analysts should take towards data.

The distinction between 'conversation' and 'institutional interaction' rests on participants' orientations to their respective identities (eg. as friends; or their having some institutional identities which are relevant to the current interaction, such as doctor and patient), and to the roles and activities which are associated with those identities. As we argued in our collection on institutional interactions (Drew and Heritage 1992), CA research has, in part, been inspired by the recognition that ordinary conversation is the predominant medium of interaction in the social world: in Schegloff's resonant phrase, conversation is the 'primordial scene' of social life. It is worth quoting Schegloff at length.

"I take it that, in many respects, the fundamental or primordial scene of social life is that of direct interaction between members of a social species, typically ones who are physically co-present. For humans, talking in interaction appears to be a distinctive form of this primary constituent of social life, and ordinary conversation is very likely the basic form of organization for talk-in-interaction. Conversational interaction may then be thought of as a form of social organization through which the work of the constitutive institutions of societies gets done -institutions such as the economy, the polity, the family,

socialization, etc. It is, so the speak, sociological bedrock. And it surely appears to be the basic and primordial environment for the development, the use, and the learning of natural language" (Schegloff 1996b:4).

There are two senses of 'primordial' in what Schegloff says here. The first, quite explicitly, is that all forms of social organization are, to a greater or lesser extent, managed through conversation between persons. The second is more implicit: all other forms of (eg. 'institutional') talk-in-interaction are transformations of 'ordinary' conversation, which is therefore the comparative measure against which other forms of talk-in-interaction can be examined. Thus conversation is "a kind of benchmark against which other more formal or 'institutional' types of interaction are recognized and experienced. Explicit within this perspective is the view that other 'institutional' forms of interaction will show systematic variations and restrictions on activities and their design relative to ordinary conversation" (Drew and Heritage 1992:19). So ordinary conversation can be considered the most fundamental form of talk-in-interaction, the form from which all others derive. The study of ordinary conversation, preferably casual conversation between peers, may thus offer a principled approach to determining what is distinctive about interactions involving, for example, the specialisms of the school or the hospital or the asymmetries of status, gender, ethnicity etc. A clear implication is that comparative analysis that treats institutional interaction in contrast to normal and/or normative procedures of interaction in ordinary conversation will present at least one important avenue of theoretical and empirical advance (see e.g. Drew and Sorjonen 1997, Heritage 2004). This does not compromise the fundamental aim of CA, to uncover the *general* practices through which conduct in interaction is constructed and is accountable, and through which it is comprehended by participants. However, the application of CA's methodology, and its sequential analysis of language and conduct, is based on a recognition that these general practices may be highlighted through comparative analysis, including talk in institutional interactions; and that general practices of action and understanding may be put to specialized uses and take distinctive forms in institutional settings. This is congruent with the expansion of the sociolinguistic programme from the Labovian focus on linguistic variation according to speaker identities, to Gumperz's demonstration that interactional settings are at least as salient as identities in accounting for language variation.

(4) Up until now we have characterized CA as an essentially qualitative method of analysis. The final question we consider in this section concerns the circumstances under which quantification is an appropriate tool for CA: put simply, is there a role for quantification in CA. This question has emerged particularly in the context of analyses of institutional interaction where large data sets are not uncommon, and where – as in medicine for example - connections between interactional conduct on the one hand, and outlooks, attitudes and outcomes may be part of the investigative process.

In our view, the coding and quantification of interactional data is not appropriate in what might be termed 'discovering' CA. If the goal is to characterize previously unidentified interactional practices, this cannot be done by coding and counting because these activities presuppose that the practice is already identified and stably described. Accordingly there is no alternative to the kind of close analysis and dense description that is necessarily qualitative in character. It is this perspective that was summarized in Schegloff's (1993) observation that "one is a number."

At the same time however, reference is often made in CA studies, including some in these volumes, to the relative frequency of a phenomenon. Such references are usually informal, even casual; so that something may be said to occur 'overwhelmingly', 'generally', 'commonly' or 'frequently'. So, implicitly and informally at least, distributional and statistical claims are sometimes being made. Moreover, recent research (ie. since about 2002) has begun to develop methods of coding which are based on intensive and detailed (qualitative) analysis of data through which an understanding is gained of how a phenomenon works interactionally (ie. what are its interactional properties) (Heritage 2004: 137-141). Some of these codings are relatively straightforward and highly reliable because they are based on quite formal properties of turn design, such as whether or not questions are prefaced with statements, or are negatively formulated (Clayman and Heritage 2002); or whether a doctor describes what he/she is feeling or seeing during the physical examination of a patient (termed by Heritage and Stivers 1999 'online commentary'; for a statistical treatment of online commentary, see Mangione-Smith et al. 2003). Others are more complex: for example Clayman and Heritage's analysis of presidential news conferences combines ten separate features of question design into four dimensions of aggressive

questioning (Clayman et al 2005, 2006). However complex or otherwise the coding task involved, it is clear that statistical analyses of, for instance, questioning forms and sequences in US Presidential press- conferences (Clayman et al 2005, 2006), or of the use and consequences of online commentary in physician-patient (primary care) interactions (Mangione-Smith et al. 2003), or the effectiveness of question form in eliciting patients' thus far unmet concerns, towards the end of medical consultations (Heritage and Robinson 2006, Heritage et al. 2006), are generating important results in areas which have traditionally been core to CA's investigations - for instance, how turn design impacts on, or has consequences for, next speaker's subsequent response, and the unfolding sequences which emerges from that response. As a result CA's traditional reluctance to quantify its emergent results is likely to recede, especially when research involves comparatively large data sets, and where, for instance, connections between linguistic form and communicative outcomes are being explored.

### The organization of these volumes

Earlier we suggested that four underlying characteristics of talk-in interaction are turn-taking, turn design, sequence and sequence organization, and social action. We have organized the contents of first three of these volumes in terms of these characteristics, selecting for inclusion papers which constitute foundational work in CA, as well as some of the studies which have been published in more recent years in which CA's programme has been progressed. Together, they represent the cumulative developments of the field, and some of the more recent directions in which those developments have taken. We have been able to include only a small proportion of the papers which we would like to have included; there is so much more happening in this field, that is both consolidating CA's earliest themes and insights, and opening up new areas and topics of research. The chapters in the fourth volume focus on CA's application to institutions. Our aim in this necessarily selective set of papers has been to provide the core for anyone researching or teaching CA.

Each of the volumes in this set focuses on a particular theme. The papers in Volume 1 cover the basic practices associated with turn-taking and repair. We begin with the classic paper on turn-taking published by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson in *Language* in 1974. This paper

delineates the basic mechanisms of turn-taking in terms of turn-construction and allocation between speakers. The paper's basic model has been elaborated in a large additional literature dealing with various facets of turn-construction (represented in this volume by Lerner) and allocation (two chapters by Jefferson). The balance of Volume 1 is occupied with papers addressing a second major domain of CA research – repair. Any form of systemic organization has as a basic 'engineering' problem the matter of how to fix problems when the system encounters difficulties or breaks down. 'Repair' names a constellation of practices through which participants resolve breakdowns in the production and intelligibility of talk, including those of speaking, hearing and understanding. The research literature represented in these papers distinguishes between the initiation of repair and its accomplishment and describes the practices by which (self and other-) initiation and achievement of repair are managed.

Fundamental to the very idea of interaction is the notion of sequence, which is taken up in Volume 2. The organizations and shapes of sequences are closely associated with the kinds of activities in which speakers are engaged. Each of the contributions to this volume explore this association between action and sequence organization and shape. A central axis in this organization is social solidarity and affiliation, and a number of the elements of sequence organization explored in this volume concern ways in actions and sequences are built to avoid and minimize disaffiliative actions and promote and maximize affiliative ones. Other chapters explore the deployment of sequences to create contexts in which news can be delivered, troubles described and complaints launched. And finally sequences are described that are fundamentally concerned with the opening and closing of conversation itself.

Volume 3 focuses on turn design and action formation. When a speaker takes a turn at talk, he or she designs that turn in the sense of selecting the details of the *verbal construction* (this from a range of linguistic resources, at different levels of linguistic production) through which an action is accomplished. Thus for example the turn must be launched in some specific way, its trajectory must implement the selected action with particular linguistic means, and the turn must be brought to a close in a determinate fashion. Each of the papers in this volume demonstrates how speakers design or construct their turns, selecting from the alternative ways in which they might have 'filled that slot', so as to enact or accomplish particular actions. Implicit in

some papers, and explicit in others, is the notion that there can be a tight connection between the construction of a particular kind of action, the context in which it is produced and the specific linguistic means to realize it.

Earlier we highlighted the way in which CA encompasses more than the study of ordinary everyday conversations of a social or informal character. It is applied equally to the investigation of the sequential and linguistic forms to be found in the interactions through which the business of institutions is conducted, for example, in the media, education, law, medicine and so forth. Volume 4 provides an overview of research in this area. Chapters in this volume investigate the ways in which lay and professional participants (eg. patients and doctors, witnesses and lawyers) orient to and enact their specialized organizational tasks and thereby fulfil their institutional roles. As in each of these volumes, we have not been able to include all the papers we would have liked; but this selection provides an up to date view of the work that is beginning to emerge in this field, especially concerning interactions in medicine and the mass media.

Our aim in these volumes has been to provide a resource for anyone interested in CA's methodology, beginners and experts alike; and to address the interests of an audience from diverse disciplinary backgrounds. We very much hope that you will enjoy the articles reproduced here, and that you will find them useful in your own research and teaching.

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