

Presenting Emanuel Schegloff
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Emanuel Schegloff is a co-originator (with the late Harvey Sacks and Gail Jefferson) and the leading contemporary authority in the field which has come to be known as 'conversation analysis' (henceforth CA). This field, once described as 'perhaps the only completely new sociological research methodology developed in the United States since World War II,' first found published expression in Schegloff's 'Sequencing in Conversational Openings' (Schegloff, 1968). Since that time the field has developed very substantially. Many hundreds of research papers and monographs in conversation analysis have now been published and, in addition to North America, CA is practiced in many countries in Europe, Scandinavia, Asia and Australasia. As this list suggests, CA is finding application in a substantial number of languages. Its use has also broadened from its original and primary domain - ordinary conversation - to increasingly diverse social interactions ranging from those in medical, educational and legal settings, to those involving the deployment of complex communication technology, and from studies with a focus on the acquisition of language and communicative competence to those which focus on interactional and pragmatic aspects of their loss. Both the specialty and its findings are very widely recognized among the practitioners of such cognate social science fields as anthropology, linguistics, psychology, cognitive science and communication, and are finding applications in fields such as medicine, neuroscience, and human-computer interaction.

During the past thirty or so years, Schegloff has pursued a long series of studies which have established many of the major concepts and findings that are now treated as axiomatic in the field. The outstanding insight, cogency and ingenuity of his conceptualization of conversation analysis and of his research output are internationally acknowledged as a major intellectual achievement. Schegloff has developed the field of CA, not by means of theoretical manifestos, but rather and exclusively through a series of fine grained empirical studies of the details of interactional conduct. These studies have shown the truly remarkable degree to which

social organization - a 'syntax' of action - inhabits the practices and behaviors that make up human social interaction. They have constituted an extended demonstration that and how the empirical details of human interactional conduct can be brought under precise analytic control, and have served as an inspiration to the specialty which Schegloff has co-founded.

In developing conversation analysis, Schegloff has established a major sociological input into a domain - linguistic behavior - which was previously treated largely as the province of philosophy, psychology and linguistics. A number of significant sociological theorists - for example Marx, Durkheim, Mead, Parsons, Bourdieu and Habermas - have commented, in some cases extensively, on the social character of language and its significance as a social institution and as a medium of action. None of these writers however has been able to develop a conceptually coherent framework for the sociological analysis of interactional conduct, let alone develop that framework into an empirical discipline through a cumulative and interlocking series of empirical investigations.

Schegloff's development of CA has involved a major reconceptualization of extant perspectives on the nature of language and social interaction, of the kinds of data which are relevant and appropriate for the study of language, and of the analytic procedures through which empirical investigation may best be forwarded. This reconceptualization is based on the recognition that social interaction is, as he puts it, 'the primordial site of human sociality,' and that the demands of social interaction are central in shaping the development and use of language. At the same time it embodies the recognition that the sociological study of interaction cannot be developed as a coherent discipline without detailed attention to the ways in which the properties of language are systematically exploited in the prosecution of interactional tasks. The hallmark of Schegloff's work, then, is its treatment of language behavior as situated social action and interaction whose details may be profitably investigated from a specifically sociological perspective.

As a sociological approach to the study of language and social interaction, CA embodies a synthesis of the perspectives of two highly original social scientists, Erving Goffman and

Harold Garfinkel, both of whom directly influenced Sacks and Schegloff. From Goffman (1955, 1964, 1983) came the notion that social interaction is not merely a medium through which other aspects of the social world - for instance, social status, gender or personality - are manifested. Instead Goffman insisted that social interaction is to be conceived as a social institution in its own right, with its own normative organization and moral obligations which, in turn, are linked to other aspects of the social world through face, role and identity. Drawing from Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown, Goffman conceived social interaction as the product of a set of moral rights and rituals - a 'syntax' as he once put it (Goffman 1967:2) - irreducible to individual psychology. It was this conception which licensed, indeed mandated, the study of social interaction - what Goffman (1983) later termed the 'interaction order' - as a subject matter in its own right.

Harold Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology contributed a different, but complementary, perspective. Emerging from the phenomenological tradition for which the problem of intersubjectivity and shared understanding had been a major stumbling block, Garfinkel's researches developed the proposition, whose main progenitors were Alfred Schutz and Ludwig Wittgenstein, that shared understanding and mutual intelligibility among humans are possible only through approximate, revisable and above all practical and shared methods of reasoning whose results are unavoidably inscribed in courses of social action. This approach provided the basis for the notion, developed in Sacks and Schegloff's earliest papers, that actions are a resource through which the parties to an interaction can see, and see in common, "where they are" in a given interaction, and how each is positioned relative to the other.

Building from these perspectives, CA focuses on the competencies which persons use and rely on to co-construct orderly and mutually understandable courses of action. Accepting John Austin's supposition that we 'do things with words,' CA has developed as a program of research by mapping the resources with which members of the social world produce, recognize, understand and manipulate spoken interactions. Its basic assumption is that while the resources for the construction of conduct are highly institutionalized (in a Durkheimian or Parsonian sense), they also serve as the building blocks for highly particularized courses of conduct, and

for specifically meaningful activities fitted to the singular characteristics of particular persons and contexts.

The creative fusion of perspectives derived from Goffman and Garfinkel is present from the earliest papers that launched conversation analysis. For example, in 'Opening Up Closings' (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973), there is an analysis of a two sequence process through which telephone conversations are ordinarily closed comprising: (i) a pre-closing exchange (e.g. Okay-Okay) and (ii) a terminal exchange (e.g. Goodbye-Goodbye). A Goffman-style analysis might deal with these sequences as an interactional ritual, departures from which would be face-threatening and sanctionable. The CA treatment acknowledged the moral requiredness of the sequences, while also giving an analysis of their functional necessity as resources whereby the participants can show their readiness (and negotiate) to (i) move in the direction of jointly terminating an interaction, and (ii) actually achieve a complete termination. In this analysis the two sequences are shown to be the parties' practical means for analyzing and showing "where we are" in the conversation, and this, in turn, is yoked to the moral considerations that bear on their participation within them. The result is a single integrated analytic framework for the analysis of social action that transcends the separate insights of Goffman and Garfinkel. As the analysis in 'Opening Up Closings' and other early CA papers clearly showed, because actions embody both reflections on the past and projections into the future, and do so reflexively and co-constructively, they are resources whereby the participants' analyses of the past are expressed in current actions which define the present and, step-by-step, progress the construction of the interaction's future.

It is one thing to describe these basic characteristics of interaction and to promulgate their centrality to any analysis of its organization, it is quite another to embody these general principles in conceptualizations and analyses of specific interactional phenomena. The growth and development of CA has been substantially contingent on this achievement to which Schegloff has made a substantial, indeed latterly, an overwhelming contribution. Paper after paper, whether single authored or coauthored with Sacks and Jefferson, identifies major

structural axes of interaction: turn taking (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974), sequence organization (Schegloff 1968, 1972, 1995, Schegloff and Sacks 1973), repair (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977), overall structural organization of conversation (Schegloff 1968, Schegloff and Sacks 1973), word selection (Schegloff 1996b), turn organization (Schegloff 1996c), and so on.

Each one of these papers establishes a domain of study by identifying absolutely fundamental choices that participants in conversation must make, and isolating elements of the functional architecture through which these choices are made. None of these papers is intended to be definitive of its topic; each sketches a terrain. Yet, remarkably, while most of these areas have undergone extensive expansion over the years, whether in the form of progressive internal refinements in the empirical territory staked out, or through wholesale additions to it, the basic frameworks that were developed in the initial papers as much as thirty years ago have remained remarkably intact.

For example, the initial work on turn-taking, which specified that a participant was initially entitled to a single turn constructional unit, and that speaker transition can be achieved without significant gap or overlap, has come to accommodate collaborative utterances (Lerner 1991, 1996), and a machinery of overlap management (Schegloff *forth*). It has also easily accommodated a range of findings about the role of gaze, gesture and body deployment in the management of turn-entry and turn exit (Goodwin 1981, 1984, 1986). It has been integrated with work on prosody (Local and Kelly 1986, Couper-Kuhlen and Selting 1996, Schegloff 1998). It helped to motivate work aimed at understanding how turn-taking is initiated (Schegloff 1968), terminated (Schegloff and Sacks 1973) and suspended (Sacks 1974). It has also served as a powerful resource when examined comparatively with other non-conversational turn-taking systems, such as those which are characteristic of courtroom questioning, or interviews (Atkinson and Drew 1979, Heritage and Greatbatch 1991, Button 1992).

Similarly, the initial specification of sequential organization in terms of the notion of conditional relevance and the adjacency pair concept (Schegloff 1968, 1972, Schegloff and

Sacks 1973) has been expanded to include pre-sequences (Schegloff 1980, 1988a, 1988b) that occur prior to the base pair and which may be directed either at the upcoming first pair part (for example to have the other offer something, rather than the speaker to request it [Schegloff 1984, 1995]) or directed at the second pair part to shape the likelihood that a particular second pair part (e.g., an acceptance) will be forthcoming. It also accommodates insertion sequences, and post-expansions (Schegloff 1972, 1995). Or again, an initial paper on repair organization (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977) has been enriched with papers on self-repair in various places in a speaker's turn (Schegloff 1979, 1987a), papers on the origins and corrections of misunderstanding (Schegloff 1987b, 1992b, 1997). These lists could be elaborated.

The conclusion I draw from this concerns the extraordinarily far-sighted theoretical conceptualization of the original papers, which quite deliberately left gaps where the evidence was incomplete, and developed the basic concepts in ways that did not foreclose on the possibilities of further discovery. The result is that the major conceptual maps which Schegloff has sketched have not had to be redrawn and that there has been, and remains, tremendous scope for others to contribute to the emerging body of work.

The formality and generalizability of much of Schegloff's work (and indeed of work in CA more generally) has led some to the conclusion that his work embodies an indifference to the contexts in which interaction occurs - what Goffman referred to as "sins of noncontextuality" (Goffman 1981:32, see also Cicourel 1987, Duranti 1997). This criticism has always baffled those of us who know Schegloff's work well. Leaving aside the fact that much of what we mean by the 'context' of an utterance consists of the prior turn and sequence in which it is produced, and that commonly the most relevant 'distal' elements of social context are embedded in those prior turns and sequences, and setting aside also the broader point that the whole of CA can be construed as an attempt to explicate the meaning of 'context' in interaction, there is the evidence concerning his attitude towards context that comes from Schegloff's papers. Surely there are few more nuanced and detailed accounts of the contexts of utterances than those rendered by Schegloff himself, especially in those of his papers that are largely devoted to the explication of

a single episode of interaction. And his ability to link context with the details of utterances in informal settings like data sessions is legendary. It is difficult for us to recognize the Schegloff of these subtle analyses in the comments of those critics who assert that Schegloff's work takes little account of context.

A key to this misperception may arise from looking at the different research objectives that Schegloff sets himself in different papers. Some of these papers (for example, Schegloff 1987c, 1988c, 1992a) pursue what might be termed a particularizing objective, and are aimed at grasping what was accomplished in a singular course of action. For these papers the explication of the context that is relevantly invoked and 'in play' for the participants must be, and is, central to the analysis he develops. However, the majority of Schegloff's papers aim at maximizing the level of generalization that can be achieved about the role and significance of particular practices of interaction. In developing these papers, the concern with context must be primarily 'negative'. The analyst must be concerned with investigating the contextual 'boundaries' of the practice in question, and with examining ways in which it can be particularized. For example, in his paper on "Confirming Allusions" (Schegloff 1996a) dealing with the ways in which a repeat can be used to confirm another's understanding of what was previously conveyed as an allusion, Schegloff points to the range of activities which can be achieved through the practice but without compromising the basic generalization that this kind of repeat recurrently does 'allusion confirming.' Thus although, in research pursuing this second, generalizing kind of objective, 'context' will tend to be downplayed relative to the generalizations that the analyst is in search of, this downplaying should not be confused with an ignorance of the contexts of each data extract, or a failure to take them into account, or to factor them into consideration in constructing the generalizations that are arrived at.

In the last analysis, CA constitutes the most sustained attempt yet mounted to build a natural history of human interaction; a natural history variously inflected by culture, but likely embodying a substantial mass of commonality in human interactional practices, and possibly a good measure of universality. This effort at a natural history of interaction is one that has had

many obstacles. Perhaps most fundamentally there is what Schegloff once described as 'implacable familiarity of the materials with which we work.' This familiarity of the 'already known' is one that can lead observers to doubt the point of what is being done, and delude researchers into the belief that there is nothing there to be discovered. Then there is the belief, common to linguists (Chomsky 1965), philosophers (Searle 1969) and sociologists (Parsons 1937), that the empirical world of social action and interaction is too chaotic to sustain serious empirical research, as if the organization of social action were just a kind of random Brownian motion. And then there is the view that conversation is just idle chit-chat, and that one would be better spending one's time studying serious, consequential interactions, or looking at the 'real business' (for example, status advancement, or group maintenance) that the actions implement. Or that one might as well study invented actions as embodied in theatrical scripts, or even scenarios one made up oneself.

Against all of this (and many, more discipline-specific obstacles as well), Schegloff's research has repeatedly and painstakingly demonstrated that behind the 'implacable familiarity' of everyday actions lie fascinating and exact orders of organization of great generality and scope. Again and again he has shown that, in social interaction, it is order rather than chaos that is the norm; precise, specific order; order that the participants use and rely on to achieve their interactional objectives. Above all, almost every paper he has written underwrites the notion that because 'language is the vehicle for living real lives', the primary research site for CA must be the 'real life' of ordinary conversational interaction. These are demonstrations that cannot be imagined or theorized; they can only be done empirically.

Schegloff's manifesto-free method of articulating theory through detailed empirical specification poses a particular challenge for his audience. Only careful, attentive reading can fully extract the conceptual, empirical and methodological lessons to be drawn from his work. Here it should be noted that all of Schegloff's papers, even those which seem to be created just for the occasion, are designed to be interlinked and to make a contribution to the overall architectonic structure of CA findings. Each of them conceptualizes a practice, or an

organization of practices, or elaborates on the details of an organization, thus contributing structure or texture (and commonly both) to the overall architecture of the domain under investigation. Though free-standing, his papers should not, in the end, be read as if they were fully independent of one another. They are written as parts of a whole fabric. Each one is a brick in an open analytical edifice which invites further additions. It is Schegloff's privilege to have contributed more than a few of the foundation stones of this structure, just as it is ours to celebrate that contribution, and to build on it.

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