
6

Analytic Strategies

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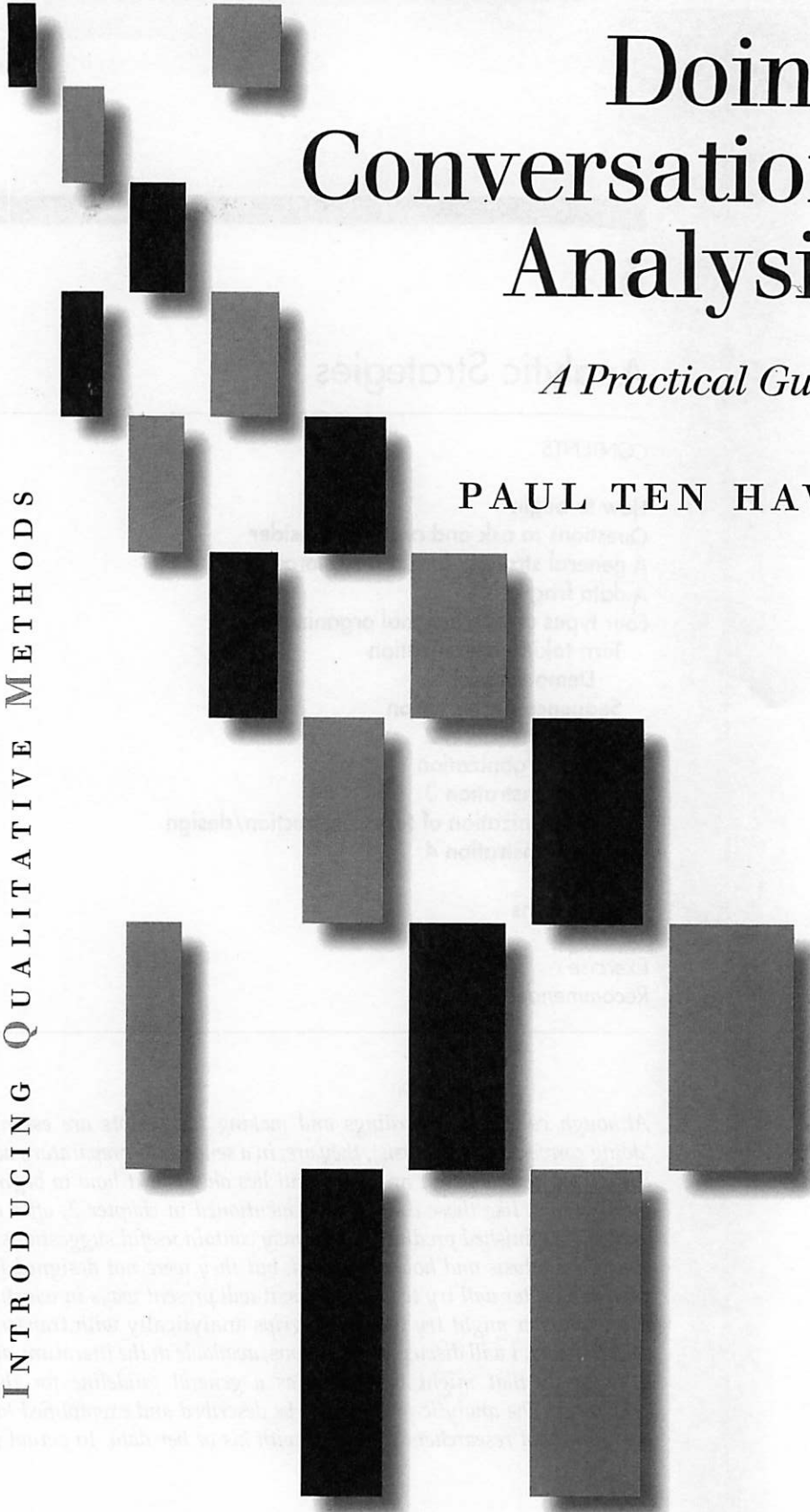
Although collecting recordings and making transcripts are essential parts of 'doing conversation analysis', they are, in a sense, still preparatory activities. The basic task, conversation analysis, still lies ahead. But how to begin? Most CA publications, like those discussed or mentioned in chapter 2, offer exemplars of analyses as finished products. These may contain useful suggestions as to how to start an analysis and how to proceed, but they were not designed to do so. The present chapter will try to do just this: it will present ways in which a beginning CA researcher might try to come to grips analytically with transcribed conversational data. I will discuss some options, available in the literature, and construct a synthesis that might be helpful as a general guideline for the beginning researcher. The analytic process will be described and exemplified here as one of an individual researcher struggling with his or her data. In actual practice it is

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A Practical Guide

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INTRODUCING QUALITATIVE METHODS



often a good strategy to share one's data and insights with others in a group. This will be discussed in a final section on the 'data session'. While the present chapter will focus on analytic exploration of single cases, the following one will deal with elaboration, extending an analysis using a larger collection of data in a comparative fashion.

It may be useful, in this context, to reiterate some earlier observations on CA's general purpose, or, in other words, to re-specify the 'animal' CA is after. On the surface, CA's analytic object consists of 'patterns of interaction' or 'sequential structures'. The basic interest, however, is in 'the social organisation underlying the production and intelligibility of ordinary, everyday social actions and activities (Heath & Luff, 1993: 306). Alternative formulations include the 'competences' or 'procedures' that participants in interactions use, but the general idea is that these are somehow shared among members and a normative part of membership (cf. Garfinkel & Sacks, 1970: 342). I suggested earlier, in chapter 3, that CA involves both an 'inductive' search for patterns of interaction, and an explication of the emic logic that provides for their significance.

How to begin

So, when one has collected some recordings and transcribed some parts of them, one can start the real job of CA, the analysis: finding patterns and explicating their logic. This means that one can begin by building a data-based argument about some aspect of talk-in-interaction. But which aspect? And where to start and how to do it? As in any qualitative inquiry, there is not *one best way*. One might start an analysis from a pre-given 'question', probably inspired by the literature, some theoretical thinking, practical interests, or common-sense presuppositions. But such a strategy is generally looked upon with some suspicion in CA (cf. chapter 3). As Psathas writes:

The variety of interactional phenomena available for study are not selected on the basis of some preformulated theorizing, which may specify matters of greater or lesser significance. Rather the first stages of research have been characterized as *unmotivated looking*. Data may be obtained from any available source, the only requirements being that these should be naturally occurring [...]. (Psathas, 1995: 45)

While earlier he has written:

This [unmotivated looking] is, of course, a contradiction or paradox since looking *is* motivated or there would be no looking being done in the first place. It is a term which is intended to imply that the investigator is 'open' to discovering phenomena rather than searching for instances of already identified and described phenomena or for some theoretically preformulated conceptualization of what the phenomena should look like. (Psathas, 1990a: 24-5, n. 3)

And he adds some quotes from Sacks' Lectures, including:

Treating some actual conversation in an unmotivated way, i.e., giving some consideration to whatever can be found in any particular conversation you happen to have your hands on, subjecting to investigation in any direction that can be produced off of it, can have strong payoffs. Recurrently what stands as a solution to some problem emerges from unmotivated examination of some piece of data, where, had you started out with a specific interest in that problem, it wouldn't have been supposed in the first instance that this piece of data would be a resource with which to consider, and come up with a solution for, that particular problem. (Sacks, 1984a: 27)

In a recent paper, Emanuel Schegloff (1996b) has provided a very useful explication of the idea (ideal?) of 'unmotivated looking', which specifically deals with subsequent steps in the analytic process. After a summary discussion of a number of CA findings, he writes:

Virtually all of these results emerge from an 'unmotivated' examination of naturally occurring interactional materials – that is, an examination not prompted by prespecified analytic goals [. . .], but by 'noticings' of initially unremarkable features of talk or of other conduct. The trajectory of such analyses may begin with a noticing of the action being done and be pursued by specifying what about the talk or other conduct – in its context – serves as the practice for accomplishing that action. Or it may begin [. . .] with the noticing of some feature of the talk and be pursued by asking what – if anything – such a practice of talking has as its outcome. (Schegloff, 1996b: 172)

Then he mentions 'three distinct elements' that ideally should be present in an empirical account of 'the action that some utterance implements':

- 1 'a formulation of what action or actions are being accomplished';
- 2 'a grounding of this formulation in the "reality" of the participants';
- 3 an explication of how a particular practice, i.e. an utterance or conduct, can yield a particular, recognizable action.

Requirement (1) has to be extensively exemplified with data displays and analyses. Requirement (2) involves the demonstration that the participants in the data have indeed understood the utterance as doing that kind of action, most often by inspecting subsequent talk. Requirement (3) indicates that such demonstrations of particular understanding are not, in themselves, sufficient. One should 'provide analytically the grounds for the possibility of such an understanding' (Schegloff, 1996b: 173), whether that was actually discernible in subsequent utterances or not.

These are rather strong requirements which show that a seemingly 'loose' idea like 'unmotivated looking' should not be taken to open the door to a 'sloppy' kind of analysis. An 'open mind' at the start does not preclude a rigorous analysis later in the project.

So, the generally preferred strategy is to *start* from the data at hand, and not from any preconceived ideas about what the data 'are' or 'represent'. However, as I suggested before, the conceptual apparatus that has been built up over the last thirty years or so provides a present-day researcher with a general perspective on conversational data which it would be silly to ignore completely. Indeed, Schegloff's recent analyses (as in 1992a, 1996a, 1996b) are evidently based on cumulative insights and findings. Therefore, I take a 'moderate' position on this issue by recommending a tentative, open-minded approach to the data at hand, using just a few basic concepts from the CA tradition to structure one's 'looking'. But even then, the fundamental 'material' with which one is working is one's understanding of what the participants are *doing* in and through their talk-in-interaction, and for this hearing and/or looking at the recording, with the transcripts at hand, is still the essential way to proceed (and to check later in the analytic process).

My proposals in this matter are partly inspired by some earlier suggestions by Schegloff. In a 'Didactic Seminar' given at the American Sociological Association Meetings in San Francisco, August 1989, he proposed a preparatory analytic routine in three steps:¹

- 1 Check the episode carefully in terms of *turn-taking*: the construction of turns, pauses, overlaps, etc.; make notes of any remarkable phenomena, especially on any 'disturbances' in the fluent working of the turn-taking system.
- 2 Then look for *sequences* in the episode under review, especially adjacency pairs and their sequels.
- 3 And finally, note any phenomena of *repair*, such as repair initiators, actual repairs, etc.

Schegloff presented these suggestions in terms of 'roughing the surface' before one actually starts the analysis. Therefore, I suggest that a beginning CA researcher should first collect a set of transcribed interactional episodes, and then *systematically* work through these data in a series of 'rounds' of pre-specified analytic attention, guided by a list of broad CA concepts like those in this list. This will be the basic idea of the general strategy that I will present later in the chapter, but before that, I will survey one other proposal.

Questions to ask and areas to consider

In their recent introductory chapter on CA, Anita Pomerantz and B.J. Fehr (1997: 71-4) offer their readers some 'tools to help you develop your conversation analytic skills', which consist of 'questions to ask and areas to think about' in inspecting tapes and transcripts. They formulate five tools to be applied subsequently:

1. Select a sequence.

Here, also, the idea is to start with a 'noticing', which is not premeditated in any way. Then, they suggest, you should search for both the start and the end of the sequence of which the noticed talk or action is a part.

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. [...] When looking at (or for) sequence openings and closing, treat them as product of negotiation. (Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997: 71)

While this sounds simple, it may not be so easy to 'locate' sequence beginnings and endings in particular cases. One issue is that in many cases a 'thread' does not start with a marked 'initiative', but rather with something being 'hinted' at. The utterance in which this hint is taken up would then be the 'official' start of the sequence. In the analysis of the full sequence, however, the utterance that in fact provided for its possibility should also be considered. At the other end, sequences may 'trail off', rather than being clearly concluded. Then, one could use the marked start of a next sequence as, in fact, ending the previous one. Quite often, however, the two seem to be relevant at the same time, in the sense that participants alternate between the two, or that one still talks in terms of the previous one, while another has already started a new sequence. These remarks should not discourage efforts to try to find sequences, but rather pass a warning that you might encounter hard to decide, and therefore interestingly deviant cases.

2. Characterize the actions in the sequence.

Here the idea is to describe a sequence's actions on a turn-by-turn basis. This involves trying to answer the question 'What is this participant doing in this turn?' for each consecutive turn. By doing this systematically for all the turns that make up the sequence, one produces an 'actional' description of the sequence, so to speak, which should be completed by a consideration of the relationship between the actions, for instance as initiatives and responses of some sort. Again, this may not always be an easy task, as a turn's action(s) may be complex and ambiguous. One should treat these characterizations as provisional, therefore, as open to revision when the analysis progresses.

3. Consider how the speakers' packaging of actions, including their selection 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.

The notion of 'packaging' refers to the *form* chosen to produce the action, from the alternatives that might have been available, as in the many ways in which a 'greeting' may be done or the variety of correct but different ways in which one can refer to a person.

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. (Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997: 72-3)

The interesting thing about this is that there are always different ways in which 'something' can be done, and that the 'selection' from the set of possibilities carries meaning. Therefore, one should always consider an actual expression as meaningfully chosen from the set of relevant alternatives for it.

4. Consider how the timing and taking of turns provide for certain understandings of the actions and the matters talked about.

This involves a detailed turn-by-turn consideration of the turn-taking process:

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. (Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997: 73)

This refers to the essential aspect of 'getting the floor' in a conversation. A fuller discussion of the issues involved in considering 'turn-taking' will be given later in the chapter.

5. Consider how the ways the actions were accomplished implicate certain identities, roles and/or relationships for the interactants.

This final area of consideration refers to the 'rights, obligations, and expectations' that are constituted in the talk. It seems a bit surprising that the authors formulate this area in terms of such 'traditional' concepts as 'identities, roles and/or relationships', which carry a relatively 'fixed' status. I take it, however, that they would agree that 'identities, roles and/or relationships' are being (re-)negotiated at every moment during the talk.² I think one might try to differentiate, in the analysis, first, the 'rights, obligations, and expectations' that are demonstratively oriented to in the interaction itself, and, second, how these local orientations relate to certain more permanent 'identities, roles and/or relationships'. Examples of the first might be 'story-teller/recipient', 'questioner/answerer', etc., while the second would include things like 'mother/child', 'doctor/patient', etc.

In the conclusion of their chapter, Pomerantz and Fehr write:

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. (Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997: 87)

To my mind these are interesting and useful proposals which I will take up again in my own 'synthesis', to be elaborated below. For the moment, let me note that in this strategy, as in the one described as 'unmotivated looking', the starting point is some 'noticing' in the transcript that something 'interesting' seems to be happening at some moment. From that moment on, the purpose of the strategy is to elaborate and contextualize that rather intuitive moment.

Except for the issues of 'identities, roles and/or relationships', that last mentioned 'area' in the proposal by Pomerantz and Fehr, the strategies discussed so far have suggested a concentration on the talk 'itself', rather than its 'context'. In other words, these proposals have referred to 'pure CA', rather than 'applied CA', as distinguished in chapter 8.³

A general strategy for data exploration

The suggestions and proposals that I have discussed so far in this chapter are not to be seen as *required* ways of doing CA. In fact, its authors explicitly say that there are many ways in which one can approach data in a CA project. So my to be proposed synthesis is not better than the ones discussed above, but rather one I happen to prefer for present purposes and which I will use to elaborate and illustrate a number of the issues involved. For the moment, I will present the first part of my proposal, which concerns the analytic exploration of a piece of data, however that may be selected. In the next chapter, I will return to the issues of data selection, both for the starting point of the analysis, and for the further elaboration of it.

My proposed general analytic strategy, as far as the analytic exploration of single instances is concerned, consists of the following general suggestions, which presuppose the availability of a recording of naturally occurring verbal interaction, and a detailed transcript, as discussed in the previous chapters.

- Starting with an arbitrarily or purposively selected part of the transcribed data, work through the transcript in terms of a restricted set of analytically distinguished but interlocking 'organizations'. For this purpose I propose the following four: *turn-taking organization*; *sequence organization*; *repair organization*; and *the organization of turn-construction/design*. This 'work through' involves a *turn-by-turn* consideration of the data in terms of practices relevant to these essential organizations, such as taking a turn in a specific way, initiating a

sequence, forgoing taking up an issue, etc. In other words, the task is to specify practice/action couplings as these are available in the data, where the actions are as far as possible formulated in terms of the four organizations.

- In actual research, this may be done in a variety of practical formats, as *remarks* written on a printed transcript, as 'analytic descriptions', or as *codes and observations* added in a separate column to the transcript, using a specialized 'qualitative data analysis program' (cf. chapter 7).
- On the basis of this process, try to formulate some *general* observations, statements, or rules that tentatively summarize what has been seen. When a particular interest or phenomenon has emerged, focus on it, but keep it in context in terms of these four organizations.

These are, of course, very general suggestions. Therefore, I will try to put some detailed, empirical flesh on these abstract and general bones below. For the moment, I only want to articulate its similarities and differences in relation to the strategies previously discussed. The proposal picks up the major ideas of the 'unmotivated looking' strategy, but with two modifications. The first is the suggestion of working through the data systematically, and the second is that the noticing process is framed within the four organizations, which, to my mind, summarize CA's basic analytical knowledge, as it has been built up over the years. The requirements and suggestions from Schegloff that I have discussed before, including grounding in the 'reality' of the participants and explication of the practice/action coupling, are included in my proposal.

Compared to the proposal by Pomerantz and Fehr, I think that my synthesis covers most of their 'areas and questions'. The order in which one or another 'area' should be covered could be a point of discussion. Where they suggest starting with a sequence, for instance, I propose working through the turn-taking first. My reason is that I feel that speaking-at-all precedes building relations between spoken utterances.

Furthermore, as I discussed in the section on their proposal, I prefer to provisionally restrict the consideration of the 'identities, roles and/or relationships' involved in the interaction to those that are formally describable in terms of local issues of turn-taking, sequencing, etc. In other words, 'rights, obligations, and expectations' are taken up in terms of the four organizations only, at least provisionally. A similar restriction is proposed regarding various other contextual or structural properties like gender, age, social class, ethnicity, institutional tasks, etc. As I suggested, knowledge of such properties may be needed to *understand* the actions that utterances perform, but I would rather *bracket* such institutional or structural properties for a first round of formal analysis.

Therefore, I have not included any references to permanent identities or institutional settings in the proposal. I prefer to start with an analysis in terms of the formal properties of the organization of talk-in-interaction,

before tackling issues of how practices/actions relate to 'context'. In other words, I would prefer to start the analytic process by 'bracketing' any 'fixed' knowledge about institutional roles and restraints. But I would *not* invite analysts to ignore contextual features as far as these are used as an aid in understanding the local action performed in the utterances and other conduct.⁴ In short, I would like to propose building up a sense of *genre*, including issues of identities, relationships, tasks, etc., from the formal data analysis, rather than presupposing these issues as being globally, and therefore locally, relevant (cf. Schegloff, 1991).

A data fragment

In order to be able to demonstrate some aspects of my proposal, I will first give a data fragment that can be used to exemplify some of the phenomena I will be talking about. It is taken from a GP consultation, recorded in the Netherlands,⁵ in which a mother (M) consults with her 9-year-old daughter (L), because the latter has been 'tired' and 'giddy' for a while. We enter the consultation when the physician (D) has just given a preliminary assessment of the case, a blood shortage, and in the second line (72), he announces a blood test. Before that, however, he apparently fills in the patient's record card and talks a bit with her. She is not very talkative, however, and later her mother adds a few comments.

Excerpt 6.1

- 71 D: >'k wee- niet of het wat ↑is=
 71 D: I don't know whether it's something=
 72 D: =maar we kunnen ('t) even (↓prikken).<
 72 D: =but we can just prick.<
 73 (1.4)
 74 D: 'hh ↓draaiierig,
 74 D: 'hh giddy,
 75 (7.8)
 76 D: 'hh want dat is ↑niet leuk hè?
 76 D: 'hh 'cause that's no fun, is it?
 77 (0.6)
 78 D: als je zo loopt te tobben.
 78 D: when you are having to struggle like that.
 79 M: huhm
 80 (2.5)
 81 D: welke ↑klas zit je Liesbeth?
 81 D: which form are you in Liesbeth?
 82 (0.8)
 83 L: in de ↑vierde.=
 83 L: in the fourth.=
 84 D: =in de vierde gaat goed?
 84 D: =in the fourth going alright?

- 85 (0.8)
 86 L: ja=
 86 L: yes=
 87 D: =jā?
 87 D: =yes?
 88 D: m- je >kan nou=
 88 D: b- you can(not) now=
 89 D: =je bent nou nat- te moe om te ↑wgrken of niet een beetje.<
 89 D: =you are now nat- too tired to work or not a bit.
 90 (.)
 91 D: soms.
 91 D: sometimes.
 92 L: ↑nee hoor.
 92 L: no.⁶
 93 D: nee?
 93 D: no?
 94 (2.6)
 95 D: alleen als je ↑thuiskomt.
 95 D: only when you come home.
 96 (.)
 97 L: (°nhee°)
 97 L: n(h)o
 98 M: 's↑morgens
 98 M: in the morning
 99 (0.7)
 100 M: >°kan ze ook echt niet=
 100 M: she really cannot=
 101 M: =oh ik ben nog zo moe zegt ze dan=
 101 M: =oh I'm still so tired she says then=
 102 M: =ja: je moet toch uit bed komen<
 102 M: =yes you still have to get up
 103 (.)
 104 M: maar °hh
 104 M: but °hh
 105 (2.5)
 106 M: °(nou is ze een) ↑ochtend (slapertje)=
 106 M: but she is a morning sleeper=
 107 M: =want 'avonds moet ik (ze) dringen om naar ↑bed te gaan°=
 107 M: =because in the evening I have to press her to go to bed=
 108 M: =(°en smorgens dan°°)
 108 M: =and in the morning then
 109 ((8.2: writing))
 110 D: 'hhh hhh
 111 ((4.7: writing))

Four types of interactional organization

In this section, I will explain in somewhat more detail the four analytically distinguished but interlocking organizations that I propose to use in the exploratory analysis of data segments like the one just given. These are, to

repeat: *turn-taking organization; sequence organization; repair organization; and the organization of turn-construction/design.*

Turn-taking organization

The idea of 'turn-taking' as an organized activity is one of the core ideas of the CA enterprise. As Sacks has observed, the basic fact about 'conversation' is that, overwhelmingly, there is one and only one person speaking at a time, while speaker change recurs with minimal gap and minimal overlap. This 'fact' is seen as a continuous achievement of the parties to the conversation, which they accomplish on a turn-by-turn basis, or, more precisely, at any 'transition relevance place', at the end of any 'turn constructional unit' (TCU). The latter can be equated with the 'turn-constructional component' of conversation's turn-taking system, as defined in the classic paper on turn-taking by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson:⁷

There are various unit-types with which a speaker may set out to construct a turn. Unit-types of English include sentential, clausal, phrasal, and lexical constructions. Instances of the unit-types so usable allow a projection of the unit-type under way, and what, roughly, it will take for an instance of that unit-type to be completed. [. . .] The first possible completion of a first such unit constitutes an initial transition-relevance place. Transfer of speakership is coordinated by reference to such transition-relevance places, which any unit-type instance will reach. (Sacks et al., 1978: 12)

In the paper it is argued that there are several ways in which speaker change can be organized: a next speaker can be selected by the previous one, a speaker can self-select, or the present speaker can continue speaking. These three options are, according to the authors, hierarchically organized: other-selection goes before self-selection, which goes before continuation. This 'system' of conversational turn-taking has a number of interesting properties, including that it is 'locally managed', as well as 'interactionally managed' or 'party-administered'. This involves that the system works 'again and again' at each next possible completion point, after the production of each TCU, and that this management is an interactional one, involving all the parties in the interaction. They remark:

For conversationalists, that turn size and turn order are locally managed (i.e. turn-by-turn), party-administered (i.e. by them), and interactionally controlled (i.e. any feature being multilaterally shaped), means that these facets of conversation, and those that derive from them, can be brought under the jurisdiction of perhaps the most general principle particularizing conversational interaction, that of 'recipient design.' With 'recipient design' we intend to collect a multitude of respects in which talk by a party in a conversation is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are the coparticipants. In our work, we have found recipient design to operate with regard to word selection, topic selection, the admissibility and ordering of sequences, the options and obligations for starting and terminating conversations, and so on. (Sacks et al., 1978: 42-3)

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In other words, turn-taking is one aspect of conversation in which a locally sensitive fine-tuning takes place, which is not only actively adapted to the particular recipients involved, but in so doing co-constitutes the parties as participants in 'this conversation'.

It is essential, I think, for an adequate understanding of the CA enterprise, to see that what basically defines the 'units' of the turn-taking system, the TCUs, is not some objectively describable set of structural, such as grammatical, prosodic or whatever, properties, but its *action potential for participants*.

What can we say TCUs have in common, aside from intonation (if that) and possible completion? The key may be that they are productions whose status as complete turns testifies to their *adequacy as units for the participants*, units which are addressable with the generic issue for practical actors (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973: 299): 'why that now?' Overwhelmingly this issue is grounded for practical actors as parties to interaction by some version of the *action(s)* the unit is doing [. . .]. (Schegloff, 1996a: 111-12)

In other words, it's the ability to 'do' something, be it proposing, requesting, accepting, showing surprise, or whatever, that makes a sound or string of sounds into a TCU; an ability that it may share with a nod, a gesture, or a smile. This 'actional' perspective does not exclude, of course, that syntactic, intonational, and other properties of utterances might be interestingly examined to see how they can be used to contribute to discernible action completion for participants (cf. Ford & Thompson, 1996).

Demonstration 1 I will now try to demonstrate a perspective on turn-taking organization by discussing a few turn-taking phenomena that are discernible in the transcript (excerpt 6.1) given above. As to the 'one-at-a-time, no-gap, no overlap' properties, we can see that there is no overlapping speech in this segment, but that there are *gaps*, and some are even quite long, over a second (cf. Jefferson, 1989), as in lines 73 (1.4), 75 (7.8), 80 (2.5), 94 (2.6), 105 (2.5), 109 (8.2), and 111 (4.7). The first two are 'owned' by D, who is writing in the record, so his talk, as in line 74, can be seen as a kind of 'secondary activity' in relation to his 'main involvement', writing (cf. Goffman, 1963). His tone of speaking, in 74, has an 'absent' quality; audible on the tape, but not transcribable. The last two very long pauses seem also due to the writing activity, which is audible on the tape. One can observe that, in this episode, the doctor addresses the girl but is not very successful in getting her to talk at any length. He does not react at all, however, to the later 'fill-ins' by the mother (98-108), probably having returned to his writing after a bit of 'conversation' with the daughter. The other longish pauses can be related to this situation: the (2.5) one in 80 follows a sequence in which the daughter has not reacted verbally; the (2.6) in 94 is 'owned' by the doctor, who was not successful in getting her confirmation for his suppositions (in 88-9); the (2.5) pause in 105, finally, is 'owned' by the mother, and may be related to the fact that no reaction from D is forthcoming.

Another aspect of turn-taking, which is relevant in a three-party situation, like this one, is *speaker selection*. I have touched on this, saying, first, that D addresses L, who only reacts minimally if at all (76–97), and, second, that M's explanations (98–108) are ignored by him. In both phases, it is quite clear who is being addressed, from the content, the address forms, and the 'epistemological situation' (who can be supposed to have or not have which kinds of information), but it will probably also have been 'enacted' by the speaker's body.

In short, these summary observations should suffice to show that considering a spate of interaction in terms of turn-taking already gives you a penetrating understanding of what is going on in it, and forces you to consider other aspects of the interaction, to which we now turn.

Sequence organization

A second core idea of CA is that utterances in interactional talk are *sequentially organized*. The idea of 'sequence' refers to the common experience that 'one thing can lead to another'. This may be one reason why people sometimes refuse a simple act, such as returning a greeting, because they do not want to be involved in what might follow from that (cf. Sacks, 1992a: 49–51).

For conversations, this means that any utterance in interaction is considered to have been produced for the place in the progression of the talk where it occurs (i.e. the 'slot' it 'fills'), especially just after the preceding one, while at the same time it creates a context for its own 'next utterance'. The concepts of *adjacency pairs* (AP), as discussed in chapter 2, is the major instrument for the analysis of sequential organization, but a sequence quite often includes more than just two pair-parts. In many cases, an item in 'third position' is added to the two utterances in AP format, as an acknowledgement or evaluation by the first speaker of the item produced in second position.

It is an essential part of the adjacency pair format that the relationship between the two parts is a *normative* one. After a first pair-part, the next utterance is, at first, heard as a relevant response to the first, as a fitting second pair-part. When that is not possible, when there is no response, or when it does not 'fit', that is an accountable matter, a 'noticeable absence' (cf. the discussion in chapter 2, including the explication of 'conditional relevance'). A third position acknowledgement, however, while possible, is not normatively required to the same extent. As was made clear in the extended definition of adjacency pairs, quoted in chapter 2, the second pair-part is expected in the immediately *next* position. There are cases, however, where this does not occur, without this non-occurrence being 'noticeable'. One example is that a new sequence can be 'inserted' in the one that was just started, for instance by a request for clarification or specification (cf. Schegloff, 1972: 76–9). So a first Question (Q1) can be followed by another Question (Q2) by the would-be answerer, which is then first answered by the speaker who produced Q1 (A2), before the questioned answers the first

answer (A1); so you get the order Q1, Q2, A2, A1. This is just one type of *sequence expansion*, which serves to illustrate the point that nothing in the AP structure works 'automatically'; whether a sequence format is followed through, restricted, expanded, or broken off, that's up for the parties to negotiate on a turn-by-turn basis (cf. Jefferson & Schenkein, 1978).

Some AP-formatted utterance pairs function as a preparation for a next pair, as a *pre-sequence*, so you can have pairs that have implications for what can follow. They can be designed to check whether a certain condition for a possible next action exists, and they are conventionally heard to be doing just that (Sacks, 1992a: 685-92; Schegloff, 1980). A variety of *pre's* have been described in the CA literature, including pre-invitations, pre-requests and pre-announcements. A special kind of pre-sequences are those that may lead to a temporary 'lifting' of the ordinary turn-taking system, in the sense that one party gets the right to produce a multi-turn unit like a story or a joke and thus becomes the 'primary speaker', while the other(s) become recipients of that 'discourse unit' (Houtkoop & Mazeland, 1985). Such tellings are often prepared by a *preface*, which offers a kind of pre-view about what will be told, inquires into its 'tellability' (i.e. 'do you know X?', 'have you heard about Y?'), and thereby instructs the recipients in what kinds of response is expected (laughter, alignment, etc.) and when (at the punch-line, etc.). Such longer units can have their own internal sequential structure, of course, which permit the recipients to time their reactions, in response sequences (cf. Sacks, 1974, 1978).

While a 'pre' is evidently designed to do the preparatory work it does, explore whether the conditions for a particular *core sequence* are met, conversationalists can also be seen doing such explorations in a much less obvious way. Gail Jefferson has analysed such tricks, as when people give a *trouble-premonitory* response to an inquiry (1980), or when they offer a *gloss* that may be 'unpacked' if the recipient shows any interest in such an expansion (1985a). So even the start of a sequence may be a negotiable matter, whether openly or covertly.

Another kind of sequence-like structure consists of repetitive *cycles* of similar sequences, such as question-answer sequences in an interrogation or interview. In a discussion of questions and answers in two-party conversations, Harvey Sacks has written:

A person who has asked a question can talk again, has, as we may put it, 'a reserved right to talk again,' after the one to whom he has addressed the question speaks. *And*, in using the reserved right he can ask a question. I call this rule the 'chaining rule,' [. . .]. (Sacks, 1972: 343)

So this would allow for an endless repetition of question-answer sequences. Similarly 'endless' series may consist of arguments and counter-arguments, reproaches and defences, etc.

Sequences, then, are *patterns* of subsequent actions, where the 'subsequentiality' is not an arbitrary occurrence, but the realization of locally

constituted projections, rights, and obligations. These remarks should suffice, for the moment, to suggest ways in which a sequential analysis of interactional data might proceed.⁸ Let's now take another look at our data fragment from the Dutch GP consultation.

Demonstration 2 We enter the consultation at a point where the physician, D, concludes the previous sequence, and announces a later action (71-2). After a (1.4) pause, we get a one-word utterance, 'hh ↓draai^{er}ig,' ('hh giddy'), in 74. As I see it, this is not addressed to anyone in particular, although it might have been taken as a 'formulation' of one of the symptoms that has been voiced earlier by the mother. In that case, it might have been affirmed, as a positive 'decision' on it.⁹ In any case, it is not taken up (at least not vocally), so we have a kind of 'no sequence'-case here.

After the pause, D provides a kind of 'emphatic' assessment of the child's condition in two parts (76-8). It is designed as an alignment with her, and therefore invites her confirmation; this is enforced by the tag 'hè?' She does not, however, react at all (at least not vocally). The mother does, in a vague way (79). As noted before, there follows a longish pause, which may be related to this lack of uptake. Then D has another go with a rather stereotypical 'which form are you in Liesbeth?' (81). This question gets an answer, although it does not come too quickly. Rather than being 'just' an informative question, it works as a 'pre'. D acts in accordance with the 'chaining rule', discussed above, by speaking again, first repeating the just given answer, and then attaching an equally stereotypical next question to it: 'going alright?' (84). This gets the 'projected' affirmative answer from the child, which is, again, repeated. I have called the two questions 'stereotypical' because they seem to belong to a restricted standard repertoire for any adult wishing to 'have a conversation' with a child of that age; no negative evaluation is intended.

Still following the 'chaining rule', D has repeated the girl's yes-answer, but with a 'try-marked' (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979) intonation contour, 'ja?' (yes?; 87). He does not provide space for any elaboration of her answer, however, and continues with what turns out to become a 'formulation' of what can be considered to be an 'upshot' of some of the descriptions that have been provided earlier by the mother. Although the turn (some aspects of its construction will be considered later) clearly projects a positive decision from the girl, she reacts with 'no plus particle': '↑nee hoor.' (cf. discussion in Demonstration 4). D again produces a try-marked repeat of the answer (omitting the particle) and subsequently offers another 'restriction' on the formulation: 'only when you come home' (95). The girl, however, persists in not endorsing it, although with a rather soft and timid ('^onhee°') (97).

Then the mother offers an unsolicited 'addition' to previous descriptions, containing homely observations and reported speech from both her daughter and herself (98-102). D does not react vocally, however. After a pause, she adds a kind of 'context' for these descriptions, in the sense of

an overall typification of her daughter's sleeping habits,¹⁰ but this trails off (108) while the physician is writing.

Talk-in-interaction is mostly 'other-directed', either inviting the other to respond, or responding itself. In the fragment we have been discussing, such appeals were not too successful: it takes two to sequence. But even the very limited answers that L gave were used by D to build a series of connected sequences, the first (81-3) becoming a pre-sequence to the next (84-7), which in turn acts like a pre-sequence for the core-sequence of this part (88-93). Next we will consider a type of organization that sometimes complicates the sequential picture, leading to special insertion sequences.

Repair organization

In chapter 2, we already encountered instances of *repair*, organized ways of dealing with various kinds of *trouble* in the interaction's progress, such as problems of (mis)hearing or understanding. What we saw in those instances was that repair has to be initiated, for instance by a complaint like 'I can't hear you', and that, once initiated, it creates an urgency which can lead to a postponement, or even abandonment, of a projected next action. In a series of later papers, especially by Schegloff, phenomena of repair have been analysed in depth as sequentially structured phenomena (Schegloff, 1979b, 1987b, 1992a; Schegloff et al., 1977; see also Jefferson, 1974, 1987, on the more specific phenomena of 'error correction').

At its simplest, a repair sequence starts with a *repairable*, an utterance that can be reconstituted as the *trouble source*. It should be clear that any utterance can be turned into a repairable. The initiative can be taken by the speaker of the repairable, which is called a 'self-initiated repair', or others can take such an initiative, 'other-initiated repair'. And the repair itself can be done by the original speaker, 'self-repair', or by others, 'other repair'. One can observe that speakers sometimes cut off the current utterance to re-start it correcting an obvious mistake, or using a different expression (cf. Jefferson, 1974, for examples and analyses). A speaker can also use the 'transition relevance place', just after an utterance is completed, to initiate self-repair. Another type of repair sequence emerges when a turn's recipient reacts to it in a way that demonstrates some kind of misunderstanding, after which, the original speaker, recognizing the trouble from the uptake, initiates repair on his or her previous turn, in 'third position', so to speak (Schegloff, 1992a). These would all be cases of self-initiated self-repairs.

When another participant initiates repair, this is most often done in the next turn, by a *next turn repair initiator* (NTRI for short). This is quite often done with a short item like 'huh?', 'what?', etc. This gives the original speaker an opportunity to self-repair the trouble source, by offering a clearly articulated repeat, or by using a different expression, possibly preceded by 'I mean' or something like that. Alternatively, another speaker may also offer a candidate understanding of a target utterance, possibly

in a format like 'you mean X?', which the original speaker can then accept, reject, or rephrase.

You may remember from my discussion of Sacks' first Lecture that he observed that an item like 'I can't hear you' can be used anytime, anyplace. It is, as he called it: an "occasionally usable" device. That is to say, there doesn't have to be a particular sort of thing preceding it' (Sacks, 1992a: 6). The other side of this coin is that when it is *not* used, when no repair is initiated in 'next turn', that itself is an event, a 'not doing repair'. In other words, because 'next turn' is the natural place for other-initiated repair, any next turn that is not used for that purpose thereby 'is not doing repair'. Therefore, Schegloff (1982) has argued that one significant aspect of 'continuers' like 'uh huh' is that they signify that the recipient of a previous turn does *not* use this place for initiating repair (or any other marked action). This would not absolutely exclude a repair initiation on the previous turn-taking place later, but such an initiative would require more 'work'. As an additional observation, one can say that when 'next turn' is used to do the action projected by the previous one, this is even a stronger way of 'not doing repair'. In short, although manifest repair may be more or less rare in a particular stretch of talk, as a possibility repair is omni-relevant.

These notes should suffice for a recognition and provisional analysis of repair phenomena; the literature cited should be consulted for more elaborate insights into their organization.

Demonstration 3 It should be clear that repair phenomena, while frequently occurring, are not a 'regular' part of talk-in-interaction. Repair is typically 'occasioned' by problems of understanding. Looking at the fragment of the Dutch consultation, discussed earlier, we seen no apparent repair phenomena or anything else resembling 'problems of understanding'. The interactants do seem to have problems, with which they deal in various ways, but these seem to be problems of 'misalignment', rather than misunderstanding. In fact, I scanned the complete transcript from which the fragment was taken, but there was no instance of repair to be used here for a demonstration. Therefore, I have selected a clear instance of repair from another Dutch consultation, quoted below.

Excerpt 6.2

- | | | |
|----|----|--|
| 7 | D: | vertel het es |
| 7 | D: | <i>what's up</i> |
| 8 | P: | 'hh nou dokter ik heb de laatste twee weken maagpijn (.) en als ik eet |
| 8 | P: | <i>'hh well doctor I've had stomach ache for the last two weeks (.) and when I eat</i> |
| 9 | P: | h dan is het net of er hier wat begint te bewegen hierin |
| 9 | P: | <i>h then it's like as if something starts to move in here</i> |
| 10 | D: | hmmhm |
| 11 | P: | ook als ik drink |
| 11 | P: | <i>also when I drink</i> |

- 12 D: meteen
 12 D: at once
 13 P: e:h [ja meteen als ik gege- 'f ten minste als ik dus me' eten binnen heb
 13 P: uh [yes at once when I('ve) eat- o' at least when I've m' food inside
 14 D: [(of daarna)
 14 D: [or afterwards
 15 P: of als ik gedronken heb (.) en danne: 'hh ja dan naderhand heb ik maagzuur
 15 P: or when I've drunk (.) and then uh 'hh then afterwards I have gastric acid
 16 (2.1)
 17 D: hartwater
 17 D: heartburn
 18 (2.0)
 19 P: wattijsta'
 19 P: what's that
 20 D: hh
 21 P: huhh
 22 D: oprispingen
 22 D: belches
 23 P: ja: da- dat noem ik dan maagzuur
 23 P: yes tha- that's what I call gastric acid
 24 D: ja het zuur denk ik dan pr[oef je [ook ech[t zuu[r
 24 D: yes acid I think in that case you really taste acid
 25 P: [hh [d'r [komt [water
 25 P: 'hh water comes up
 26 D: ja
 26 D: yes
 27 P: en dan naderhand dan brandt het
 27 P: and then afterwards then it burns
 28 D: ja
 28 D: yes
 29 P: en dan wordt het zuur
 29 P: and then it becomes acid
 30 D: hmmm

We enter the consultation as the physician asks the patient to tell her story (7). She explains her problem: stomach ache and a funny feeling in her stomach when she has eaten or drunk something (8–11). He asks about the timing of the feelings in relation to the eating or drinking (12), which she then explains (13, 15). She then uses the expression 'maagzuur' (*gastric acid*, 15). There is a (2.1) pause, after which he offers an alternate description 'hartwater' (*heartburn*, 17). After another long pause (2.0, line 18), she utters a 'next-turn repair initiator', 'wattijsta' (*what's that*, 19), in a surprised/amused tone. After a bit of laughter, D offers another alternate expression: 'oprispingen' (*belches*, 22). This leads to an extended exchange of descriptions (23–9). P confirms D's 'oprispingen' and adds that this is what she calls *gastric acid* (23). D, in turn, confirms her description, and adds a further detail, tasting (24). P, starting in overlap, offers an even more extended characterization in three phases (25, 27, 29), each of which

is confirmed by D (26, 28, 30). Now a sufficient understanding is apparently achieved, as D continues with a question concerning possible causes (not quoted here).

So the physician, in this case, offers a more restricted term, *heartburn*, as an alternative to a relatively vague one, *gastric acid*, in the patient's complaint description. The issue, for him, is apparently whether she just feels the acid in her stomach area, or whether she tastes it in her mouth. She, however, does not seem to know the term *heartburn*, so she requests an explanation. This leads to an exchange of descriptions which solves the issue. Both parties actively cooperate in achieving a solution, demonstrating their shared interest in a correct description.

In the technical terms of repair organization, the primary trouble source seems to be *gastric acid*. D's alternative, *heartburn*, is then a case of other-initiated other-repair. This becomes a trouble source on its own, however, as P uses a shortened NTRI, *what's that*. D repairs his *heartburn* with *belches*, but now that the issue of correct and specific characterization has been raised, the parties cooperate in an exchange of more extended description until the issue is apparently solved. Repair, then, offers participants an important secondary device for achieving intersubjective understanding.

The organization of turn-construction/design¹¹

The fourth type of 'organization' that I want to propose in an exploratory analytic shopping list does not have an elaborate, structured approach in the CA tradition as have the previous three. There are a number of more or less separate sets of ideas and insights that can throw light on the procedures underlying the construction of utterances and their components, whether 'turn constructional units', starters, or completers. I will just summarize a few of these, without any hope of being comprehensive.

Consider the concept of *recipient design*, which was summarized in the quote from Sacks et al. (1978) in the section on turn-taking above. The general idea is that a speaker builds an utterance in such a way that fits its recipient. This may be an issue of constructing the utterance for it to be understandable for this particular recipient, given the knowledge that the speaker presupposes the recipient to have. Consider how you might refer to a person, for instance, when talking to someone else. In a five-and-a-half-page essay, Sacks and Schegloff (1979) have discussed two 'preferences' with regard to the organization of 'reference to persons', one for 'minimization' and one for 'recipient design'. There are many correct ways in which one can refer to a person, but one of the most efficient ones is to use a 'recognitional', such as a first name. It may require quite an elaborate analysis of the mutually supposed knowledge of the speaker, the recipient, and the situation to use a first name effectively, without a need for a repair. In an earlier paper, Schegloff (1972) has analysed reference to places, or 'locational formulations', for which similar analyses may be

n binnen heb
inside

heb ik maagzuur
gastric acid

ent to tell her
nny feeling in
He asks about
ng (12), which
gzuur' (*gastric*
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ffers an even
each of which

required. It should be noted, however, that this involves not only the two parties to the interaction, the speaker and the recipient, but also understanding the current activity. In a context of direction giving, for instance, more precise locational indications may be required (cf. Psathas, 1991) than for constructing the setting for the telling of a funny anecdote.

A different conceptual tradition within CA that is related to issues of turn design goes under the somewhat confusing name of *preference organization*. The general idea is: (1) that, when alternative actions are open possibilities, one may be 'preferred', that is, expected and chosen if possible; and (2) that the difference between 'preferred' and 'dispreferred' alternatives is demonstrated in the *turn shape* chosen for doing one or the other. In other words, turns can be designed to *show* they are doing the preferred, or the dispreferred, alternative action. For instance, an invitation projects an acceptance as a preferred response. An accepting utterance will display this status by being quick and direct, no specific 'account' being given. A rejection, however, will tend to be delayed, preceded by a 'formal' acceptance, more often inferable than directly formulated, and quite often accounted for by giving a reason for it. To quote from a classic study of 'preferred/dispreferred turn shapes':

Two types of shapes are of interest [here]: One type is a design that maximizes the occurrence of the actions being performed with them, utilizes minimization of gap between its initiation and prior turn's completion, and contains components that are explicitly stated instances of the action being performed. The other type minimizes the occurrence of the actions performed with them, in part utilizing the organization of delays and nonexplicitly stated action components, such as actions other than a conditionally relevant next. The respective turn shapes will be called *preferred-action turn shape* and *dispreferred-action turn shape*. (Pomerantz, 1984: 64)

In short, turns can be 'packaged' or 'formulated' in ways that show their relative 'preference' status. It should be noted that there are two aspects of 'preference' that have been discussed in the CA literature; only one, referring to 'turn shapes', is discussed here. The other has to do with structural regularities as to which kinds of alternatives are generally preferred or dispreferred. Schegloff (1988b: 453-5) calls the latter 'structure-based', and the earlier mentioned one 'practice-based' (cf. Heritage, 1984a: 265-80, and Levinson, 1983: 332-45, for overviews which stress the structure-based approach).

So, any conversational action can be performed in many *different* ways; how a turn is designed is a meaningful *choice*. That choice will be informed by a speaker's knowledge of the situation in general and the participants in particular. In designing a turn's format, the speaker fits the utterance to the evolving momentary situation as well: the preceding utterances, for instance by using previously used expressions and compatible pronouns, and the attention given by the hearers at the moment the utterance is being produced (cf. Goodwin, 1979). Hearers, on their

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part, will understand the utterance in a similar fashion as 'designed' for its occasion, as chosen from a set of alternatives, etc. Some utterance choices can be seen as falling in two classes, such as 'positive' and 'negative', while others seem to be 'scalable' or 'gradable' on a continuum, for instance in enthusiasm. These classes or scale positions may differ in terms of 'preference', as discussed above, in terms of 'formality', in terms of grades of positive or negative evaluation (Pomerantz, 1978, 1986), or as speaking 'for oneself' ('I') or 'for the organization' ('we'). This list is obviously incomplete, but I think the lesson is clear that formatting choices deserve serious attention.

Demonstration 4 For my demonstration of these issues of turn construction/design, I propose to return to our first example (excerpt 6.1), of the mother consulting with her daughter, and discuss two sequences selected from that segment. Here's a first one:

Excerpt 6.1, detail a

- 76 D: 'hh want dat is ↑niet leuk hè?
76 D: 'hh 'cause that's no fun, is it?
77 (0.6)
78 D: als je zo loopt te tobben.
78 D: when you are having to struggle like that.
79 M: huhm
80 (2.5)

D has chosen rather emphatic and informal ways of packaging his actions here. 'Leuk' (76) is a standard positive assessment of almost anything, especially among young people. The expression 'tobben' (78), on the other hand, seems to be too strong for the occasion, since it is ordinarily used for more serious kinds of troubles and worries. Taken together, it seems a rather patronizing way of talking.

As a second example, let's take a later sequence, taking off from the child's answer to the question as to which form she is in:

Excerpt 6.1, detail b

- 84 D: =in de vierde gaat goed?
84 D: =in the fourth going alright?
85 (0.8)
86 L: ja=
86 L: yes=
87 D: =ja?
87 D: =yes?
88 D: m- je >kan nou=
88 D: b- you can(not) now=

- 89 D: =je bent nou nat- te moe om te ↑werken of niet een beetje.<
 89 D: =you are now nat- too tired to work or not a bit.
 90 (.)
 91 D: soms.
 91 D: sometimes.
 92 L: ↑nee hoor.
 92 L: no [particle].
 93 D: nee?
 93 D: no?
 94 (2.6)

As I have suggested before, D seems to have carefully arranged a situation in which he can return to a discussion of the ways in which she might experience her symptoms. The way in which the utterance is constructed, which 'accomplishes' this return to medical matters, displays the difficulties he is experiencing while doing it: 'm- je >kan nou=je bent nou nat- te moe om te ↑werken of niet een beetje.<' (*b- you can(not) now=you are now nat- too tired to work or not a bit.*' (88-9). He starts with a cut-off 'm-', which I take to project the conjunction 'maar' (*but*). This projects a contrast with 'being in fourth form'. It is followed by an unfinished 'je >kan nou', which, in the present context, I take to project a negative assessment of the ability to do her schoolwork well (rendered in English as *b- you can(not) now*, 88). Then there is a grammatically complete clause, although one word is cut-off: 'je bent nou nat- te moe om te ↑werken' (*you are now nat- too tired to work*), in which 'nat-' can be understood to project 'natuurlijk' (*naturally*, in the sense of 'of course', 89). This clause, while being answerable in itself, is followed by two 'post-completors': 'of niet' (*or not*) and 'een beetje' (*a bit*), which offer first a negative and then a mitigated alternative to the strong *too tired to work* in the main clause. After a mini-pause, still another mitigated alternative is offered: 'soms.' (*sometimes.*, 91). The girl answers '↑nee hoor.' (*no + particle*, 92). I hear this as a negation of the main clause, with therefore the three mitigated alternatives included. If she would have chosen one of these, she would have indicated this by saying something like 'yes, sometimes'. She uses 'nee' (*no*) with the particle 'hoor' to package her action. Dutch particles like 'hoor' are very hard if not impossible to translate. 'Hoor' is only used in an interactional context and seems to have a 'mitigating', reassuring, or soothing effect. In the present case, the 'mitigation' may concern the fact that she is contradicting the physician, or it may be heard as suggesting that the situation is not as bad as the mother has presented it.¹²

It seems clear, in any case, that both parties work hard here, to be careful in what they are saying. The physician breaks off a first attempt before he formulates a personalized candidate assessment for the girl to endorse, in line with the descriptions offered earlier by the mother, but before she gets an opening to respond, he adds two alternatives, and after a mini-pause even a third. It may very well be that the girl has shown some reluctance to endorse the main clause, or even shakes her head, but I cannot know

that because I have to rely on an audio recording only. The girl's adding of the particle 'hoor' to her *no* can be seen as displaying attention to the relationship-sensitive aspects of her contradiction.

These two short demonstrations should suffice to support the claim that it pays to pay close attention to the ways in which turns-at-talk are constructed and designed.

Discussion

These 'demonstrations' have illustrated how a first 'go' at some pieces of data might be organized as a systematic analytical exploration. The result would be an analytically informed description of the interaction on display in the data. When such a description has raised a specific interest, or when the situation is rather complex, it might be developed into a full-blown case study. Quite often, one would feel the need to support some of the claims in such a study with additional data, for example to demonstrate similar usages elsewhere, or contrastive examples that might be used to put the focus observations in perspective. Alternatively, one might take the case at hand as a 'first' in a collection of related phenomena. In order to build such a collection in a sensible way, you would have to decide on a category which your first case exemplifies. Such a decision can, of course, be revised or specified later, as you consider more and more cases. 'Analytic elaborations' will be the topic of the next chapter. Before I bring this chapter to a close, however, by inviting you to another 'exercise' and some 'recommended reading', I want to discuss a particular format of *collective* data exploration that seems to be a rather unique feature of CA practice: the so-called data session.

Data sessions

As noted before, data exploration involves two related but distinguishable processes, 'understanding' and 'analysis'. In the previous sections of this chapter, I offered suggestions for organizing these operations as these would be done by an individual researcher confronting a piece of data. In actual CA practice, however, collective explorations in 'data sessions' play an important part, both in principle and in practice. The principle is that both in the 'understanding' and in the 'analysis', the issue is not one of individual 'interpretations', but rather of sharable and shared understandings which can and should be analysed in procedural terms. Individual intuitions do play a part in the analytic process, but these should be disciplined in various ways, by inspecting the data for any demonstration of local, practical analyses or formulations, but also by explication of one's findings and insights for others to inspect critically. The data session can be seen both as a kind of playground to mutually inspire one's

understanding of the data, and as an environment that requires a rather specific 'discipline'.

A 'data session' is an informal get-together of researchers in order to discuss some 'data' – recordings and transcripts. The group may consist of a more or less permanent coalition of people working together on a project or in related projects, or an *ad hoc* meeting of independent researchers. The basic procedure is that one member brings in the data, for the session as a whole or for a substantial part of it. This often involves playing (a part of) a tape recording and distributing a transcript, or sometimes only giving a transcript. The session starts with a period of seeing/hearing and/or reading the data, sometimes preceded by the provision of some background information by the 'owner' of the data. Then the participants are invited to proffer some observations on the data, to select an episode which they find 'interesting' for whatever reason, and formulate their understanding, or puzzlement, regarding that episode. Then anyone can come in to react to these remarks, offering alternatives, raising doubts, or whatever. What is most important in these discussions is that the participants are, on the one hand, *free* to bring in anything they like, but, on the other hand, *required* to ground their observations in the data at hand, although they may also support them with reference to their own data-based findings or those published in the literature. One often gets, then, a kind of mixture, or coming together, of substantial observations, methodological discussions, and also theoretical points.

Spontaneous reactions to interaction displays often have a more or less subjective, impressionistic and individualistic character. People have a kind of 'natural trust' in their primary reactions to people. In a collective data-based and data-responsive discussion, these first and naïvely trusted impressions can be subjected to constructive criticism in order to check them with what is available in the data. Furthermore, the group can 'force' the individual observer to go beyond individualistic assessments of actions in order to start reasoning in terms of the ultimate goal of CA, which is to explicate the resources used to accomplish particular (inter)actions, to explicate the procedural infrastructure of interaction. These sessions are especially useful when the group is mixed in terms of background and expertise, as long as there is a basic agreement on method and purpose. It is very useful and beneficial for all if some participants have a linguistic background, for instance, and others a social science orientation.

Data sessions are an excellent setting for *learning* the craft of CA, as when novices, after having mastered some of the basic methodological and theoretical ideas, can participate in data sessions with more experienced CA researchers. I would probably never have become a CA practitioner if I had not had the opportunity to participate in data sessions with Manny Schegloff and Gail Jefferson. And, on the other hand, having later to explicate my impressions and ideas to colleagues with different

backgrounds, both novices and experts, helped me to be more clear about my ideas, methodologically, theoretically, and substantively.

My discussion of data sessions has, so far, been based on my own experience. In fact, the only real description I have been able to find in the literature is included in a very practically instructive paper by Brigitte Jordan and Austin Henderson (1995: 43–6). Group sessions are an important part of what they call 'interaction analysis', as practised in the Institute for Research on Learning and Xerox PARC, both in Palo Alto, California. At these labs 'multi-disciplinary collaborative work groups [...] are assembled for particular projects', but they also have arranged

the Interaction Analysis Laboratory (IAL), an ongoing permanent forum in which researchers from different projects present tapes. The IAL meets for 2 or 3 hr each week. Researchers ('owners') bring tapes, often with transcripts or content listings, from their respective projects and, after a brief introduction to the setting of the recorded activities and any special interests the researcher may have, the group works together to analyse the tape. (Jordan & Henderson, 1995: 44)

The general process reported is that the tape runs and is stopped whenever someone wants to make a remark on the activities recorded. Observations and hypotheses 'must be of a kind for which the tape in question (or some related tape) could provide confirming or disconfirming evidence'. In order to avoid endless speculation it is sometimes agreed to stop the tape for no more than 5 minutes.

Collaborative viewing is particularly powerful for neutralizing preconceived notions on the part of researchers and discourages the tendency to see in the interaction what one is conditioned to see or even wants to see. (Jordan & Henderson, 1995: 44)

The authors cite several examples of cases in which trained observers were convinced that they had seen something happening, or not happening, while repeated group viewing proved them wrong. They further stress that 'ungrounded speculation about what individuals on the tape might be thinking or intending is discouraged', but that it is often possible to discuss 'mental events' on the basis of what is visible in the actual situated practices and reactions. The discussions are audio recorded and used later by the 'owner' of the tape as a resource for more extensive analysis, or more focused data collection.

In short, when the data are challenging, the company mixed, and the atmosphere serious but relaxed, a data session is one of the most rewarding experiences in the CA enterprise.

EXERCISE

Select an interesting data excerpt, say a half page to a page of transcript, which can be seen as a 'natural unit', or a few 'natural units', in its setting. Consult the tape with the transcript and make a detailed analytic description of the excerpt, using the proposed strategy as a general guideline. Write a report containing the preliminary findings, suggestions for the issues that you would like to pursue in later work, and methodological reflections on the process of discovery and your experiences with the analytic strategy.

See appendix B for extended instructions.

Recommended reading

On analytic strategies and CA methodology:

Pomerantz, A., & B.J. Fehr (1997) 'Conversation analysis: an approach to the study of social action as sense making practices'. In: T.A. van Dijk, ed., *Discourse studies: a multidisciplinary introduction*. London: Sage: 64-91

Some exemplary studies which focus on one case:

Goodwin, C. (1987) 'Unilateral departure'. In: G. Button & J.R.E. Lee, eds, *Talk and social organisation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters: 206-18

Hopper, R. (1995) 'Episode trajectory in conversational play'. In: P. ten Have, & G. Psathas, eds, *Situated order: studies in the social organization of talk and embodied activities*. Washington, DC: University Press of America: 57-72

Sacks, H. (1974) 'An analysis of the course of a joke's telling in conversation'. In: J. Sherzer & R. Bauman, eds, *Explorations in the ethnography of speaking*. London: Cambridge University Press: 337-53

Schegloff, E.A. (1978) 'On some questions and ambiguities in conversation'. In: W.U. Dressler, ed., *Current trends in text linguistics*. Berlin: De Gruyter: 81-102 (reprinted in: J.M. Atkinson & J. Heritage, eds, *Structures of social action: studies in conversation analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 28-52)

On turn-taking:

Sacks, H., E.A. Schegloff, & G. Jefferson (1978) 'A simplest systematics for the organization of turn taking for conversation'. In: J.N. Schenkein, ed., *Studies in the organization of conversational interaction*. New York: Academic Press: 7-55 (originally 1974)

On turn organization:

Schegloff, E.A. (1996a) 'Turn organization: one intersection of grammar and interaction'. In: E. Ochs, E.A. Schegloff & S.A. Thompson, eds, *Interaction and grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 52-133

On sequence organization

Sacks, H. (1992a, 1992b) *Lectures on conversation*. 2 vols. Edited by Gail Jefferson with introductions by Emanuel A. Schegloff. Oxford: Basil Blackwell *passim*

Note: Sacks discusses sequence organization in a number of lectures, for instance in the fall of 1967, vol. I: 624-92.

Schegloff, E.A. (1980) 'Preliminaries to preliminaries: "Can I ask you a question?"', *Sociological Inquiry* 50: 104-52

Note: the studies reviewed in chapter 2 are also very relevant for this topic.

On repair:

Schegloff, E.A. (1979b) 'The relevance of repair to syntax-for-conversation'. In: T. Givon, ed., *Syntax and semantics 12: discourse and syntax*. New York: Academic Press: 261-88

Schegloff, E.A., G. Jefferson, & H. Sacks (1977) 'The preference for self-correction in the organization of repair in conversation', *Language* 53: 361-82 (also in: G. Psathas, ed., *Interactional competence*. Washington, DC: University Press of America: 1990: 31-61)

On turn-construction/designs:

Pomerantz, A. (1984) 'Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes'. In: J.M. Atkinson & J. Heritage, eds, *Structures of social action: studies in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 57-101

Pomerantz, A. (1986) 'Extreme case formulations: a way of legitimizing claims', *Human Studies* 9: 219-30

Sacks, H., & E.A. Schegloff (1979) 'Two preferences in the organization of reference to persons in conversation and their interaction'. In: G. Psathas, ed., *Everyday language: studies in ethnomethodology*. New York: Irvington: 15-21

Schegloff, E.A. (1972) 'Notes on a conversational practice: formulating place'. In: D. Sudnow, ed., *Studies in social interaction*. New York: Free Press: 75-119

Note: this paper is also relevant to the topic of sequence organization.

Notes

1. The formulation of these 'steps' is mine, based on my recollection of Schegloff's proposals.
2. In fact, this is how I read the two 'demonstrations' that they provide in the chapter, to which the reader is referred for more elaborate discussions of this strategy.
3. I have postponed a discussion of John Heritage's (1997) proposal concerning the analysis of institutional talk to chapter 8.
4. Therefore, I have, in the transcripts included in this book, kept the institutional identifications, rather than changing these to A, B, etc.
5. Therefore, the transcript is bi-lingual, with the Dutch original being

followed line-by-line with a gloss in English. For the general argument you can read only the gloss; for details you need to consult the Dutch. I am sorry for the inconvenience.

6. Dutch particles like 'hoor' are very hard, if not impossible, to translate; cf. the short discussion in Demonstration 4.
7. For convenience, I have chosen to use a variant version of the paper, published in a collection edited by Schenkein in 1978, to be referred to as Sacks et al. (1978). See Schegloff (1996a) for further elaborations.
8. For institutional settings, a variety of specialized sequential structures have been described, but these will be discussed in chapter 8 on 'applied CA'.
9. The concept of a 'formulation' is used here in the sense introduced in Garfinkel & Sacks (1970) and elaborated in Heritage & Watson (1979, 1980) referring to the phenomenon that the character, *upshot*, or *gist* of a conversational activity may be made explicit in a later utterance, which is then called the 'formulation' of that activity; when it refers to things done or said by another party, it invites that party to decide on its correctness, elaborate its meaning, or whatever.
10. Cf. Locker (1981) for the use of 'person types' in lay explanations of symptoms, etc.
11. The expression 'turn-construction/design' has been chosen to collect a number of aspects of how participants construct, design, formulate, or package their turns.
12. These observations were partially inspired by an e-mail message from Robert S. Kirsner of UCLA; cf., for example, Kirsner & Deen (1990).