

least potentially relevant to our central preoccupation, although we will not give them any special attention.

Our examination of adjacency pair-based sequences will be organized as follows. First, we will spell out the main features of the basic minimal form of the adjacency pair, and the minimal sequence which it can constitute (pp. 13–27). Second, we will explicate some of the ways in which sequences can expand well beyond the minimal, two-turn sequence which the adjacency pair itself constitutes – pre-expansions (pp. 28–57), insert expansions (pp. 97–114), and post-expansions (pp. 115–68), yielding extensive stretches of talk which nonetheless must be understood as built on the armature of a single adjacency pair, and therefore needing to be understood as expansions of it. In the course of describing these expansions, we will examine a key feature of adjacency pairs – their “preference” structure (pp. 58–96). Third, we will take up larger sequence structures to which adjacency pairs can give rise and of which they may be building-blocks – such as topic-proffering sequences (pp. 169–80), sequence-closing sequences (pp. 181–94), and sequences of sequences (pp. 195–216). Fourth, we will touch on some respects in which sequences and the practices which give rise to them can vary in particular contexts (pp. 220–30), and can be flexibly deployed in ways that give rise to non-canonical forms (pp. 231–250). At the end (pp. 251–64), we will take up some suggestions for using the materials that have been presented so that they can become part of the reader’s analytic resources, ready to be activated by the data you, the reader, have occasion to examine.

2 The adjacency pair as the unit for sequence construction

We begin with the most elementary features of adjacency pairs and their basic mode of operation.

In its minimal, basic unexpanded form an adjacency pair is characterized by certain features.¹ It is:

- (a) composed of two turns
- (b) by different speakers
- (c) adjacently placed; that is, one after the other
- (d) these two turns are relatively ordered; that is, they are differentiated into “first pair parts” (FPPs, or Fs for short) and “second pair parts” (SPPs, or Ss for short). First pair parts are utterance types such as question, request, offer, invitation, announcement, etc. – types which *initiate* some exchange. Second pair parts are utterance types such as answer, grant, reject, accept, decline, agree/disagree, acknowledge, etc. – types which are *responsive* to the action of a prior turn (though not everything which is responsive to something else is an S). Besides being differentiated into Fs and Ss, the components of an adjacency pair are
- (e) pair-type related; that is, not every second pair part can properly follow any first pair part. Adjacency pairs compose pair *types*; types are exchanges such as greeting–greeting, question–answer, offer–accept/decline, and the like. To compose an adjacency pair, the FPP and SPP come from the same pair type. Consider such FPPs as “Hello,” or “Do you know what time it is?,” or “Would you like a cup of coffee?” and such SPPs as “Hi,” or “Four o’clock,” or “No, thanks.” Parties to talk-in-interaction do not just pick some SPP to respond to an FPP; that would yield such absurdities as “Hello,” “No, thanks,” or “Would you like a cup of coffee?,” “Hi.” The components of adjacency pairs

¹ Schegloff and Sacks (1973:295–96). A major resource on the adjacency pair may be found in the Sacks lectures for spring 1972 (Sacks, 1992b: 521–69); another early treatment is Schegloff (1968). Jefferson and Schenkein (1978) take a different view of what the minimal unexpanded unit of sequence organization is and what should be treated as expanded. What they treat as “unexpanded” is what will be later treated here as “minimally post-expanded,” and involves the addition of a third turn. The Jefferson and Schenkein analysis is compelling for the data which they examine, but those data represent but one configuration of sequence organization, through which a particular kind of interactional dynamic is pursued. The account offered here is designed for different goals and, in particular, for more extended and general scope. It should be compatible with the Jefferson and Schenkein account for sequences of the type they address.

Much of our daily life is spent talking to one another, in both ordinary conversation and more specialized settings such as meetings, interviews, classrooms, and courtrooms. It is largely through conversation that the major institutions of our society – economy, religion, politics, family, and law – are implemented. This is the first in a new series of books by Emanuel Schegloff introducing the findings and theories of conversation analysis. Together, the volumes in the series, when published, will constitute a complete and authoritative “primer” in the subject. The topic of this first volume is “sequence organization” – the ways in which turns-at-talk are ordered and combined to make actions take place in conversation, such as requests, offers, complaints, and announcements. Containing many examples from real-life conversations, it will be invaluable to anyone interested in human interaction and the workings of conversation.

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Sequence Organization in Interaction

A Primer in Conversation Analysis

EMANUEL A. SCHEGLOFF

SCHEGLOFF

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are "typologized" not only into first and second pair parts, but into the *pair types* which they can partially compose: greeting-greeting ("Hello," "Hi"), question-answer ("Do you know what time it is?", "Four o'clock"), offer-accept/decline ("Would you like a cup of coffee?", "No, thanks," if it is declined).

The basic practice or rule of operation, then, by which the minimal form of the adjacency pair is produced is: given the recognizable production of a first pair part, on its first possible completion its speaker should stop, a next speaker should start (often someone selected as next speaker by the FPP), and should produce a second pair part of the same pair type. The product of this practice and these features may be represented schematically in a very simple transcript diagram:

- A First Pair Part
B Second Pair Part

None of these features – (a)–(e) above and the basic rule of operation – is rigid or invariant, and they all require some elaboration. As part of their exploitation as a resource for sequence construction, adjacency pair-based sequences can come to have more than two turns (though still two basic parts), they can be separated by intervening talk (what will be discussed later as insert expansions), they can on occasion be articulated by the same speaker as a way of conveying two "voices" (though this use relies on the basic property that Fs and Ss are produced by different speakers), some utterance types can be used as both Fs and Ss (for example, complaint can be used to initiate a sequence but also in response to an inquiry; an offer can be an FPP but also a response to a complaint) and, under specified circumstances, as both Fs and Ss at the same time (as when someone asks you to repeat your question, and you do – thereby doing both an S in granting their request and an F, since in doing so you re-ask your question), etc. In the next several pages, we take up a number of observations about the minimal, basic unit, the adjacency pair, which elaborate its features and explore some of its flexibility.

Adjacency, nextness, contiguity, progressivity

Among the most pervasively relevant features in the organization of talk-and-other-conduct-in-interaction is the relationship of adjacency or "nextness." The default relationship between the components of most kinds of organization is that each should come next after the prior. In articulating a turn-constructive unit, each element – each word, for example – should come next after the one before; in fact, at a smaller level of granularity, each syllable – indeed, each sound – should come next after the one before it.

So also with the several turn-constructive units that compose a multi-unit turn; so also with the consecutive turns that compose a spate of talk; so also with the turns that compose a sequence, etc. Moving from some element to a hearably-next-one with nothing intervening is the embodiment of, and the measure of, progressivity. Should something intervene between some element and what is hearable as *a/the next one due* – should something violate or interfere with their contiguity, whether next sound, next word, or next turn – it will be heard as qualifying the progressivity of the talk, and will be examined for its import, for what understanding should be accorded it. Each next element of such a progression can be inspected to find how it reaffirms the understanding-so-far of what has preceded, or favors one or more of the several such understandings that are being entertained, or how it requires reconfiguration of that understanding. For our purposes in this book, what will matter most is the relationship between successive turns; and what matters most immediately is the difference between the adjacent turns relationship on the one hand and adjacency pairs on the other.

The relationship of adjacency or "nextness" between turns is central to the ways in which talk-in-interaction is organized and understood. Next turns are understood by co-participants to display their speaker's understanding of the just-prior turn and to embody an action responsive to the just-prior turn so understood (unless the turn has been marked as addressing something other than just-prior turn). This is in large measure because of the way turn-taking for conversation works; namely, one turn at a time – and, specifically, exclusively *next turn* allocation.² That is, as each turn comes to possible completion and transition to another speaker becomes possibly relevant, it is transition to a *next* speaker that is at issue. If the turn is to be allocated by the current speaker selecting someone, it is *next* speaker that is being selected; and if no selection by just-ending speaker is done and another participant self-selects, it is for the *next turn* that they are self-selecting. However this contingency is handled, each participant has to have been attending to the just-ongoing-about-to-be-possibly-complete turn to determine (a) if he or she has been selected as next speaker, or (b) if *anyone* has been selected as next speaker in order to determine whether they can properly self-select as next speaker, and (c) what action(s) are implicated by the just-ending turn, relative to which any next turn will be understood. Each next turn, then, is examined for the understanding of the prior turn which it displays, and the kind of response which it embodies, and this is endemic to the organization of conversation without respect to adjacency pairs. The

² Note that this discussion is focused on conversation in particular. Because different organizations of turn-taking can characterize different speech-exchange systems (Sacks et al., 1974:701 n. 11, 729–31), anything that is grounded in turn-taking organization may vary with differences in the turn-taking organization. It is a matter for empirical inquiry, therefore, how the matters taken up in the text are appropriately described in non-conversational settings of talk-in-interaction, for example, in courtrooms-in-session, in traditional classrooms, etc.

adjacency relationship taken up in this paragraph operates most powerfully *backwards*, each turn displaying its speaker's understanding of the prior.

The *adjacency pair* relationship is a further organization of turns, over and above the effects which sequential organization invests in adjacency per se. Adjacency pair organization has (in addition to the backwards import just described) a powerful *prospective* operation. A first pair part projects a prospective relevance, and not only a retrospective understanding. It makes relevant a limited set of possible second pair parts, and thereby sets some of the terms by which a next turn will be understood – as, for example, being responsive to the constraints of the first pair part or not. And, as we shall see, the adjacency pair relationship invests a specially indicative import in the relationship of contiguity between first and second pair parts. Even if they are in adjacent turns – that is, no turn intervenes between them – other sorts of elements may be counted as obstructing or violating their contiguity, with considerable interactional import being attached to such a positioning.

Alternative second pair parts

Most adjacency pair types have alternative types of second pair part, a matter to be discussed in Chapter 5 under the rubric “preference organization.” But some sequence types (a very few) seem to have only one type of second pair part. The prototypes here are greetings and farewells or terminal exchanges (“bye byes”). Although there may be a variety of greeting forms with which to respond (“Hello,” “Hi,” “Hiya,” “Howyadoin,” etc.), and a responder may have a favorite or signature, or aim to return the same as was received (or different), these are not alternative *types* of response; they all reciprocate the greeting. And the same is the case for terminal exchanges (“Bye,” “Seeya,” “Ciao,” “Cheers,” “Later,” etc.). Actually, with great regularity greetings and their responses are done with the same form (“Hi,” “Hi”), as are farewells (“Bye,” “Bye”), and we may note that, where there are not alternative *types* of SPP, the actual SPP utterance frequently is not different from the FPP (at least in its lexical composition). But, with very few exceptions, there *are* alternative types of SPP with which to respond to an FPP.

Counters

There are alternatives to doing an appropriate SPP next after an FPP, and they will be taken up as part of our discussion of sequence expansion (and in particular, insert expansion, in Chapter 6). Virtually all such alternatives to an SPP in next turn are understood as deferring the doing of an SPP until a bit later, and are done in the service of a later SPP. But

there is one alternative to an SPP in next turn whose effect is quite different, and it requires mention at this point. That next turn is the “counter”; that is, before (or without) responding with an SPP to the just completed FPP, the same FPP (or a closely related modification of it) is redirected to the one who just did it.

A familiar experience may exemplify this tack anecdotally, before a display of more determinate empirical instances. Readers may recall emerging with a companion from some entertainment or cultural event – a movie, performance, exhibit, etc. – especially one testing the boundaries of familiarity, and asking, “Well, what did you think?” or “How did you like it?” and getting back not an answer, but instead, “How did *you* like it?” or “What did *you* think?” or just “How about *you*?” These are counters; they do not serve to *defer* the answering of the question (though the one doing the counter may end up answering later nonetheless); they *replace* it with a question of their own. They thus reverse the direction of the sequence and its flow; they reverse the direction of constraint.

Here are several empirical instances. In the first, a mother and her child of just over a year and a half are looking at a children's picture book together:

(2.01) Tarplee, 1991:1
 1 Chi: F → What's this
 2 Mom: F_{cnt} → er::m (.) yo[u t]ell me: what is it
 3 Chi: [° () °]
 4 (1.0)
 5 Chi: S → z:e:bra
 6 Mom: zebra:: ye:s

In line 1, the child has asked a question (an FPP), but in the next turn the mother does neither an answer nor a form of turn which projects later answering of the question. Rather, she redirects the same question back to its asker, for its asker to answer. Nor does she herself answer the question later.

The second instance is taken from a psychotherapeutic session:

(2.02) Scheflen, 1961:114, as adapted in Peyrot, 1994:17
 1 Pat: F → Do you think I'm insane now.
 2 Doc: F_{cnt} → Do you think so?
 3 Pat: S → No, of course not.
 4 Doc: But I think you are.

In this exchange, the doctor does end up answering (at line 4) the question which the patient asked, and so his redirecting it to the patient and getting an answer (at lines 2–3) ends up having only deferred the answer, and inserted one question–answer exchange inside another. But, following the sequence, as the participants did, in real time, when the doctor's question was asked at line 2, it did not project a later answer. It redirected the question, and could easily have been used to launch a line of inquiry by the doctor (e.g., at line

4, "Why not," etc., or "Why did you ask me then?," etc.). Again, then, the counter reverses the direction of the sequence.

In the third instance, Vic is a janitor/custodian, socializing with buddies in a local used-furniture store. His wife Carol comes to the door and "calls him" (lines 4-5).

- (2.03) US, 3:10-23 (previously appeared as [1.06])
- 1 Mik: Jim wasn' home, [°(when y'wen over there)]
 2 Vic: [I didn' go by theh.]=
 3 Vic: =I [left my garbage pail in iz [hallway.=
 4 Car: [Vi:c, [[Vic(tuh),
 5 Car: [Vic(tuh),
 6 Vic: =Yeh?
 7 Car: F → C'mmere fer a minnit.
 8 (0.7)
 9 Vic: F_{ent} → Y'come [he:re. [please?
 10 Car: [You c'co[me ba:ck,
 11 Vic: I haftuh go t'the bathroom.=
 12 Car: =Oh.
 13 (3.5)

When Vic responds from a distance (line 6), Carol asks him to detach himself from his friends and come closer (line 7); this is a first pair part – a request. What it requests is a physically realized action, not one implemented by an utterance (though it is not uncommon that, when such a requested action is done next by the recipient of the request, it is accompanied by some utterance – for example, a compliance token such as "sure"). Such requested physically enacted actions are under the same constraints as talk-embodied ones would be: the first pair part makes relevant the occurrence of an appropriate second pair part, which should come "next." In this episode, however, what comes next is not Vic's compliance with the request, not the projected second pair part, but rather a counter; he reverses the sequence (line 9), and makes Carol the recipient of the same request she had directed to him.

In the fourth instance, Tony has called his ex-wife Marsha about the return of their teenage son Joey, who ordinarily lives with him, after the son's holiday visit to his mother in a city some four hundred miles away.

- (2.04) MDE-MTRAC: 60-1/2, 1
- 1 ring
 2 Mar: Hello:?
 3 Ton: Hi: Marsha?
 4 Mar: Ye:ah.
 5 Ton: How are you.
 6 Mar: Fi:ne.
 7 (0.2)
 8 Mar: F → Did Joey get home yet?
 9 Ton: F_{ent} → Well I wz wondering when 'e left.

- 10 (0.2)
 11 Mar: 'hhh Uh:(d) did Oh:.h Yer not in on what
 12 ha:ppen'. (hh) (d)
 13 Ton: No (h) o=
 14 Mar: S → =He's flying.
 15 (0.2)
 16 ((continues))

In this exchange, Marsha's question to Tony at line 8 is not followed by an answer, even though an answer may be understood to be conveyed by implication in the following turn. Instead of answering, Tony asks his own question, a version of the same question but as seen from the point of view of the destination of a trip rather than from its point of origin. In effect, then, this is a counter to Marsha's question, and it is Marsha who ends up answering, not Tony (nor does Tony answer later). Here again, the counter reverses the direction of the sequence, and it reverses the direction of constraint.

What does that mean, "reverses the direction of constraint"? In order to make clear what is meant by "reversing the direction of constraint," we need to take up what we call "relevance rules," because the adjacency pair is one main locus of relevance rules, one place in talk-in-interaction where they have a specially notable bearing. Because this is an important topic in its own right, we will linger on it a bit, but the discussion will come back to the sense of "reversing the direction of constraint."

Relevance rules and negative observations

The organization of turn-taking provides a way (for co-participants and for us as external observers) to say non-trivially that someone in particular is not speaking, when in fact *no one at all* is speaking. It is by virtue of a "rule" or "practice" having been invoked or activated which makes it relevant for that particular "someone" to be talking. Even though no one is talking, it is the relevance introduced by a prior speaker having selected someone as next speaker that makes *that* person be specifically singled out as not talking, even when there is general silence.

But this is just a special case of a much more general issue, one concerning what we will call "negative observations." There is an indefinitely large and extendable number of things that have not been said, of events that have not happened, of persons who are not speaking, of actions that are not being performed by someone who *is* speaking. This paragraph has not so far reported who won the American Presidential election in 1992, or 1988, or . . . , etc. Any asserted observation of an absence is at risk of being but one of a virtual infinity of absent occurrences or activities, and in that sense a *trivial* observation or assertion (however true). For the noting of an absence to be *non-trivial*, we need a "relevance rule" that makes it relevant for something to happen or be done or be mentioned, etc. Then, if it does not

happen (or is not done or is not mentioned, etc.), it is “missing” in a different sense than the sense in which everything that does not happen is missing, and with a different import. We can then speak of it as a “noticeable absence” or an “official absence” or a “relevant absence.” Negative observations imply relevant absences, and relevant absences imply relevance rules. Noticing that someone in particular is not speaking constitutes a claim of sorts that this is a relevant absence (as set against the non-speaking of everyone else), and turns on some relevance rule that makes it so – such as a prior speaker having selected the noticed one as next speaker. The turn-taking organization, then, constitutes (among other things) a set of relevance rules.

Adjacency pair organization is also a major locus of relevance rules. What relates first and second pair parts can be termed a relationship of “conditional relevance.” “First” and “second” do not refer merely to the order in which these turns *happen* to occur; they refer to design features of these turn types and sequential positions. The very feature of “first-ness” sets up the relevance of something else to follow; it projects the relevance of a “second.” It is the occurrence of a first pair part that makes some types of second pair part relevant next; that relevance is conditioned by the FPP. If such a second pair part is produced next, it is heard as *responsive* to the first pair part which preceded. If such a second pair part is not produced next, its non-occurrence is as much an event as its occurrence would have been. It is, so to speak, noticeably, officially, consequentially, absent. The relevance of some turn type which can be a second pair part is conditional on the occurrence of a first pair part from the same pair type. Often enough, the person who can be observed (relevantly) to be “not talking” (by reference to the turn-taking rules) can be heard as well to be “not answering” when their “non-talking” follows a prior utterance which was a question. Thus, the silence in a room can nonetheless often be characterized (and, in the first instance, *heard*) specifically for *who is not talking*, and *what kind of talk they are not doing*. The first of these is furnished by turn-taking organization, the second by adjacency pair organization, and specifically by hearing to be missing the kind of second pair part (or *some* kind of second pair part) made relevant by a just-preceding first pair part.

But relevance rules contribute not only to how silences get heard, but also to how the talk itself gets heard. Just as not talking after a question can thus be “not answering,” so a great variety of talk after a question invites hearing as, and does get heard as, “answering” (even if, on occasion, “answering indirectly”). Academic inquiry is sometimes puzzled by how some apparently semantically unrelated talk gets heard as an answer, especially when trying to build the “artificial intelligence” for computers to answer questions “naturally” or to recognize answers. (For example, how can “It’s raining” – or even “Isn’t it raining?” – be a recognizable answer to “Are we going to the game?”) What is critical here is that the action which some talk is doing can be grounded in its *position*, not just its *composition* – not just

the words that compose it, but its placement after a question. Talk after a question invites hearing for how it could be answering, and invites it from those who can bring all the particulars of the setting to bear, rather than by some general rules of interpretation. Just as the questioner presents a puzzle of sorts to its recipient, so does the one who responds; that challenge is, “how is this an answer?” and “what answer is it?” At the same time, doing something which is analyzable/recognizable as a relevant second pair part is its speaker’s way of showing an understanding that the prior turn was the sort of first pair part for which this is a relevant second. Doing something which can be an answer displays an understanding of the prior turn as a possible question.

Adjacency pairs organize with special potency these relevance rules, which can imbue the talk following a first pair part with its sense or meaning, and can imbue the *absence* of talk with sense or meaning or import as well. Given, via the turn-taking organization, that the absence of talk can be an event in its own right, the adjacency pair’s relevance rules infuse it with a specifiable action import. The first pair part thus sets powerful constraints of action (what the recipient should do) and of interpretation (how what the recipient does should be understood) on the moments just following it. Relevance rules are a key part of the glue that binds actions together into coherent sequences.

The earlier observation that counters following first pair parts “reverse the direction of constraint” should now be more readily accessible. The recipient of some first pair part is put under certain constraints by it – either to do a relevant second pair part, or be heard as “not doing” such a relevant second pair part. We will see in Chapter 6 that recipients of first pair parts are not without resources for dealing with these constraints. But for now we should notice that “counters” take the very constraints that were just cast on the *recipient* of the first pair part and shift them back onto its *speaker*; they “reverse the direction of constraint.”

Upshot

What relevance rules do, then, is to set the initial terms for conduct and interpretation in the next moments following their invocation. They do not *define* those next moments and what occurs in them; virtually nothing in interaction is that unilateral. But it is by reference to a first pair part that what follows gets selected, done, and understood. The first pair part casts a web of meaning and interpretation which informs the surrounding talk. But “surrounding talk” can include more than just second pair parts. As we bring under examination more of the sequences which can grow out of adjacency pairs, we will see how much more, and where.