



# transcription matters

transcribing talk and interaction to facilitate  
conversation analysis of the taken-for-granted  
in young children's interactions

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## ABSTRACT

The development of transcripts is central to the work of many researchers yet questions of what and how researchers transcribe, and why, receive little attention in research literature. Conversation analysis is one research approach that has consistently addressed the integral relationship between theoretical and methodological perspectives, transcript development and transcript analysis. This article considers that relationship. An analysis of classroom talk is used to establish how aspects of young children's interactional competence are found in features of talk made available for analysis through transcription that deliberately and methodically seeks to record taken-for-granted features of social interaction.

KEYWORDS *conversation analysis, talk, transcription, young children*

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## introduction

Transcripts are the focus for the analytic work of many researchers in the humanities and social sciences. However, consideration of transcription and transcript development is relatively scant in the research literature (Edwards, 2001). There is little discussion of transcription matters in research reports and journal articles that report empirical studies, and methodology handbooks address data collection at length but give little attention to transcription. Frequently, transcription is regarded as mechanical and mundane work (Lapadat, 2000), and is given over to paid transcribers (Tilley, 2003). The taken-for-granted approach to transcription overlooks the centrality of transcripts to the theoretical and methodological perspectives that inform studies and to the research questions that they address. This may result in unforeseen limitations on what can be interpreted from data

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or generalized about it (Edwards, 1993b), and on the trustworthiness of qualitative data analysis reported in studies.

This article examines transcription through consideration of conversation analysis (CA) and its application to a study of young children's taken-for-granted competence. In the sections that follow, I review the literature about transcription giving emphasis to the perspectives of child language studies and CA; both influential in the research literature about transcription. I then outline CA and its perspective on talk and introduce the transcription notation used methodically in the conduct of CA studies. An analysis of young children's social interaction is then presented. Discussion considers the relationship between the theoretical and methodological perspectives that informed the study, the development of the transcript and its analysis. It is concluded that researchers need to ensure that transcript development aligns with other aspects of study design and is articulated in reports of empirical studies.

## **transcription**

Transcription is a complex but necessary process, largely because 'it is simply impossible to hold in mind the transient, highly multidimensional, and often overlapping events of an interaction, as they unfold in real time' (Edwards, 2001: 320). Transcription 'fixes' verbal and non-verbal actions and makes it possible for researchers to examine them in greater detail than is possible 'on the hop' when talking with people, observing their interactions in the field, or viewing recordings of those interactions. Transcription is, however, an interpretive practice rather than merely a technical one (Mischler, 1991).

Transcription is a selective process (Ochs, 1979) whereby data provided by recordings are reduced and represented (Baker, 1997) in print. That is, out of all the verbal and paralinguistic information available, including visual actions in the case of video recordings, only some of the information is recorded in transcripts. Transcripts therefore result in a reduced version of the original recordings. This leads some researchers to view transcripts as the data (Ochs, 1999), and others to assert that recordings always remain *the* data and transcripts the means *to get at* them (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998).

The process of reduction and representation of data (Green et al., 1997) through transcription should be informed by the theoretical perspective that guides a study (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1998). Ochs's seminal work (1979, 1999) articulated the theoretical and practical requirements of transcription (Ochs, 1999) and established the integral nature of both in the process of developing a transcript. Ochs examined transcription practices in child language studies to articulate the ways that transcription represents adults and children in particular ways. Ochs argued that the predominant way of representing turns in talk clearly gave emphasis to the talk of adults rather than children. Thus, employing alternate ways of representing children's talk could be used to challenge cultural

assumptions that are implicit in the act of transcription. Ochs outlined her own deliberate practice of using parallel columns in a transcript and placing children's talk in the left column (a position frequently given to adult talk in transcripts). This illustrates that transcription is ultimately 'a creative, authorial act that has political effects' (Bucholtz, 2000: 1461).

Methodologically, Ochs proposed that issues of generalizability are raised when researchers ignore transcription procedures (1999). Variants in ways of transcribing data may result in errors that impact significantly on research findings due to child language researchers' interest in early instances and the small number of instances recorded in the early stages of development. Generalizability is also considered at length by Bloom (1993) and Edwards (1993a) in relation to computer analysis of transcripts of children's talk. Both argue that the need to establish the developmental occurrence of language features and forms requires consistency and specificity particularly when this relates to computer coding of occurrences from large data bases (Edwards, 2001) that are a repository for the work of numerous researchers. For example, differences in transcription across projects may impact on computer searches, and require researchers to anticipate variants across data sets.

Edwards (1993a, 1993b) emphasizes that language acquisition research provides a strong illustration of the necessity for accuracy in transcription since variation and inconsistencies impact very strongly on research findings. She states:

language acquisition research makes unusually strong demands on the accuracy of the data compared to most areas of language research. The central data can be extremely infrequent, and a handful of examples can be highly significant. (Edwards, 1993a: 214)

Edwards illustrates the significance through examples taken from the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES) archive data (MacWhinney and Snow, 1992) where 'missing' or overlooking one early instance of a linguistic form, due to variance in transcription, impacts statistically on what can be said about its occurrence in children's speech.

Standardization of transcription notation is one solution to the problem of variation in transcription practices (Dressler and Kreuz, 2000; Du Bois, 1991; Edwards, 1993b). Edwards has developed a set of principles and strategies to inform the work of researchers within child language. Edwards emphasizes the need for researchers to understand transcription and to make informed decisions about it during the research process. Yet, there are a plethora of approaches to transcription (Johnson, 1999) within the field, and across disciplines where researchers make transcripts the focus for analysis (Dressler and Kreuz, 2000; O'Connell and Kowal, 1994).

Increasingly, the literature that addresses transcription calls for researchers to have awareness of transcription as integral to the research process (Müller and Damico, 2002), and for researchers to provide more specific accounts of

transcription in the reporting of studies (Bucholtz, 2007; Oliver et al., 2005). CA is one research perspective that has been acknowledged continuously in the literature as an approach that makes apparent the integral relationship between transcripts and the theoretical and methodological views that inform their development and analysis (Johnson, 1999; Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999; Ochs, 1979). The CA approach to transcription has been influential in other fields, such as child language studies (Bucholtz, 2007; Duranti, 1997; Ochs, 1979).

In CA we find a tight fit between the theoretical and methodological perspectives employed, the transcript that is developed and the analysis of it that results. Transcript development in CA cannot be separated from its 'analytic concerns' (Psathas and Anderson, 1990: 75). Distinctively, CA researchers draw on a single method of transcription developed within the field. The Jefferson Transcription System provides a method of representing data that is 'useful and adequate' (Psathas, 1995), or 'generally sufficient for most CA purposes' (ten Have, 2007: 94). Its use has been essential to the consolidation of the approach as a credible field of inquiry within sociology. From the CA perspective, the transcript records sense-making and transcription is 'a process of theorizing and demonstrating social order; the transcript is an account of that theory of social order' (Baker, 1997: 119).

## **conversation analysis and the taken-for-granted**

The field of CA originated from the work of Harvey Sacks (1995), an American academic who pioneered the detailed examination of recorded conversations so as to describe the organization of everyday language use and the social order that it revealed (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998). Sacks rejected the use of recollections of talk and the use of invented talk constructed for the purposes of analysis. His approach was ground-breaking within sociology for its analysis of *actual* talk as the focus for studying and accounting for the social order. It was part of Sacks's attempt to deal with 'specific, singular events of human conduct' (Heritage, 1984: 235) since 'if you can't deal with the actual details of actual events then you can't have a science of social life' (Sacks, 1995: 26). To this end, Sacks gave his analytic attention to the ordinary, everyday and mundane in order to describe 'how it is that persons go about producing what they do produce' (Sacks, 1995: 11).

According to Heritage, there are three basic assumptions that have informed the work of CA researchers. These are that:

- (1) interaction is structurally organized;
- (2) contributions to interaction are contextually oriented;
- and (3) these two properties inhere in the details of interaction so that no order of detail can be dismissed, a priori, as disorderly, accidental or irrelevant. (Heritage, 1984: 241)

In practice, these assumptions result in analysis that attends to talk on a turn-by-turn basis, consideration of how talk responds to prior talk and provides a context for further talk, and the need to look aggressively for and take account of all talk when examining phenomena. The study of social phenomena is data driven rather than theoretical, and 'the empirical conduct of speakers is treated as the central resource' for analysis (Heritage, 1984: 243).

Specifically, Sacks posited a turn-taking system, also called a speech exchange system. His work involved the analysis of members' management of the system (Watson, 1992), using recordings of naturally occurring talk. An early work by Sacks and colleagues (Sacks et al., 1974) provided a 'bare-bones' description of turn-taking that continues to inform the work of CA. Concepts or features of talk that are central to this, and later work, include: transition-relevance place, overlap and repair, adjacency pair, and preference (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998). These aspects of interaction are frequently 'invisible' to researchers until made available for study through transcription, and are considered to constitute a social and cultural competence that is taken for granted by ordinary members of society in the accomplishment of their social activities.

CA attention to the taken-for-granted in relation to children illustrates how the approach contributes to understandings of the relationship between talk and the social order. The methodological perspective presumes children to be active in the construction of their social worlds, and studies describe how children competently accomplish their social activity through talk. Young children have been shown to manage their own disputes in childcare centres, while giving token gesture to adult intervention (Danby and Baker, 2000). Young children help each other during early literacy lessons, managing multi-party talk (Davidson, 2008), and are adept at contributing to whole-class instructional talk driven by complex questions that teachers ask (Baker and Freebody, 1993). Integral to these understandings of children's orderly conduct is empirical evidence made available through transcription of recordings.

## **Jefferson notation and transcript development**

Production of a CA transcript is more than just developing a 'readable' transcript and must be done by the analyst since 'in listening closely enough to transcribe something of what you hear, you will have thoughts about the conduct to explore further' (Pomerantz and Fehr, 1997: 87). Transcription is therefore regarded as an aspect of the analytic process itself (Psathas and Anderson, 1990). The process of transcription proceeds in tandem with repeated examination of recorded data (Silverman, 1998). Transcripts may alter as the analytic process progresses (Mondada, 2007) and different interactional phenomena become of interest.

The transcription system employed in CA was developed by Gail Jefferson (1985, 1996). It is employed universally by those working from the CA perspective.

According to Hutchby and Wooffitt, 'a CA transcript embodies in its format and in the phenomena it marks out the analytic concerns' that drive the work of conversation analysts (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 76). Transcript notation encompasses two types of concerns; the dynamics of turn-taking and the characteristics of speech delivery (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998). Jefferson notation encompasses symbols to represent aspects of each. As well, researchers may develop additional symbols where examination of a certain phenomenon requires it (ten Have, 2007) and employ similar ways of presenting transcripts in the reporting of studies (Psathas, 1995). In the examples that follow most, but not all, symbols have been used (see Atkinson and Heritage, 1999, and Psathas and Anderson, 1990, for detailed presentation of the notation system) (Table 1).

**table 1** transcription symbols

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|     |                                                                              |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| [ ] | <i>Overlap in speakers' talk</i>                                             |
|     | Teacher: and you can sit next to Melodie (0.2) [and you sit here]            |
|     | Peter: [Miss Anderson]                                                       |
| [[  | <i>Utterances that begin at the same time</i>                                |
|     | Teacher: [[no]                                                               |
|     | Student: [[wha]t else can I do                                               |
| =   | <i>Talk between speakers that latches or follows without a break between</i> |
|     | Teacher: okay=                                                               |
|     | Jamie: =and is there only two                                                |

The sign is also used when talk within an utterance has been separated for convenience sake, such as where complex overlap occurs.

|  |                                             |
|--|---------------------------------------------|
|  | Cathlyn: I can [tell you] it's got a water= |
|  | Mckielia: [Dominic]                         |
|  | Cathlyn: =sl [ide ]                         |
|  | Dominic: [Dom]inic                          |

(0.2) *Used to indicate length of silences, pauses and gaps in tenths of seconds*

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
|  | Teacher: okay (0.6) now |
|--|-------------------------|

Gaps may occur within an utterance or in talk between speakers.

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
|  | Wayne: um (0.2) like |
|  | (0.5)                |
|  | Teacher: I like      |

(.) *Indicates micro intervals*

|  |                                           |
|--|-------------------------------------------|
|  | Dion: Miss Anderson I (.) can't find mine |
|--|-------------------------------------------|

? *Rising inflection*

|  |                                                  |
|--|--------------------------------------------------|
|  | Teacher: how did you know how to write sandwich? |
|--|--------------------------------------------------|

?, *Rising inflection that is less marked*

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
|  | Cathlyn: Miss Anderson?, |
|--|--------------------------|

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(table 1 continued)

(table 1 continued)

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|                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ↑                                                            | <i>Marked rising intonation</i><br>Teacher: and ↑jam (0.6) sandwiches                                                                                                                                                                          |
| ↓                                                            | <i>Marked falling intonation</i><br>Teacher: ↑now (0.8) ↓very (0.6)                                                                                                                                                                            |
| !                                                            | <i>An animated tone</i><br>Teacher: what's got into you!                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <u>un</u>                                                    | <i>Underline shows emphasis, with capitals indicating even greater emphasis</i><br>Cathlyn: <u>it was YUMMY</u>                                                                                                                                |
| SO                                                           | <i>Upper case indicates loudness</i><br>Teacher: CATHLYN                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| ° °                                                          | <i>Indicates softness</i><br>Cathlyn: I have to tell you something about °the overnight stay° (0.4) um                                                                                                                                         |
| :::                                                          | <i>Indicates that a prior sound is prolonged</i><br>Mckiel: Domini::c                                                                                                                                                                          |
| The number of colons used indicates the length of the sound. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| (it)                                                         | <i>Indicates that the transcriber is uncertain about the word/words</i><br>Melodie: I gotta um (0.9) (brown berry)                                                                                                                             |
| ( )                                                          | <i>Empty parentheses indicate that word/s could not be worked out</i><br>Peter: he doesn't want to ( )                                                                                                                                         |
| (( ))                                                        | <i>These are used to indicate transcriber's verbal descriptions of talk, talk that cannot easily be transcribed, or visual actions</i><br>Ivan: ((walks to teacher with book on his head in a roof shape)) Lincoln<br>it's keeping rain off me |
| →                                                            | <i>Indicates lines of transcript of relevance to analysis or discussion at hand</i>                                                                                                                                                            |
| 8                                                            | Teacher: well you finish that then (0.2) ↑okay                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 9 →                                                          | Dominic: very ((looking at the teacher))                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| NB As well, lines are numbered for reference purposes        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

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Researchers may develop or employ symbols that are necessary for their particular studies (Gardner, 2001). For example, the study of crying (Hepburn, 2004) requires symbols not usually used by transcribers. The transcript examined in the next section of this article records classroom talk in a literacy lesson. In the development of the transcript, it became necessary to indicate when children named letters or sounded them out. So, if children named the first letter of 'like' it was recorded as 'l'.

Wayne: 'l' ((jumps back in his chair))

If a child made the sound of a letter then the notation recorded that. For example, if the first letter of 'like' was sounded out then it was recorded in the following way:

Melodie: luh

While researchers may develop some specific notation symbols, the Jefferson Transcription System continues to provide the basis for the development of transcripts in CA studies and for the analyses that researchers conduct within this perspective (ten Have, 2007). The following analysis incorporates many of the notation symbols and illustrates the ways these inform analysis.

## CA transcript and analysis

The analysis examines talk during a writing lesson that required independent activity by 25 students who were at the end of their first and second years of formal schooling. Details concerning the choice of setting and data collection have been presented in various publications based on this research (Davidson, 2007, 2008). Here it is simply noted that five children and a teacher were seated at a table where recording devices had been placed. Other children also approached the table during the lesson, and their actions were recorded. Transcripts of the interaction were later developed using Jefferson notation. All talk that could be heard on the recordings was included in the development of the transcript.

During independent writing, the students and their teacher completed numerous and varied activities. So, many analytic points resulted from the analysis of the lesson. For the purpose of this article, I examine some of the ways the children and their teacher managed their interaction to take account of the presence of numerous others and accomplished their own activity.

Initially, the analysis establishes how the teacher initiates interaction with one student who is seated at the table, and how the student and another manage their competing interactions with her. The teacher seats herself by Cathlyn (recorded within (( )) in line 1) and begins to read aloud what Cathlyn has written during the lesson (1). Her reading emphasizes the word 'peanut' through the use of rising intonation on 'peanut' (indicated by ↑ in line 1 of the transcript). A silence occurs immediately following the word 'peanut' (recorded as (0.4) in line 1). Commonly referred to as a transition-relevance place (Sacks et al., 1974), the gap is potentially a place where Cathlyn might speak to respond to the teacher's reading of her text but did not. In response to the notable absence of talk (Sacks, 1995), the teacher takes away a big book that is on the table (1).

- 1 Teacher: ((sits down beside Cathlyn)) I love ↑peanut (0.4) ((takes book))
- 2 [now (0.2) sound butter out though]
- 3 Dion: [Miss Anderson I] =
- 4 ((teacher turning))
- 5 Dion: = found mine
- 6 Cathlyn: 'b' ((looks at the teacher who is looking at Dion))
- 7 Wayne: what =
- 8 Cathlyn: = 'u' ((looking at the teacher))
- 9 Teacher: well you finish that then (0.2) ↑okay



The removal of the big book is followed by a directive that Cathlyn should sound out the word 'butter' (2). The use of 'though' indicates sounding out as an alternative action and relates to her removal of the book, that is, that the word butter can be found in the book and that Cathlyn is going to copy it. The teacher's directive is overlapped by the talk of Dion (3) who summons the teacher through the use of her name and provides an announcement ('I found mine'). Dion's utterance is emphasized (and the underlining of it in the transcript indicates this). The teacher's action, to turn, is the response required by the summons. In providing this response, the teacher indicates that she is attending to Dion, and no longer directly interacting with Cathlyn. Nevertheless, Cathlyn begins to say the letters of 'butter' (lines 6 and 8) and looks at the teacher (thus she provides a response to the previous directive). Her actions occur during a gap in the talk between the teacher and Dion (6–8) thus are potentially 'hearable' by the teacher and appeared to take account of the silence between the teacher and Dion. When the teacher does speak (9), her talk 'receipts' Dion's announcement ('well') and then directs Dion's next action ('finish that then'). Although the upward intonation (marked by  $\uparrow$ ) on the word 'okay' occasions a response (to agree); Dion does not respond.

In the talk that follows, another student initiates interaction with the teacher. The analysis of the ensuing talk establishes how Dominic and Cathlyn interact with the teacher simultaneously and how the teacher manages the overlapping interactions and talk. Dominic begins his interaction with the teacher (10). His one-word utterance ('very') is accompanied by a non-verbal action; he looks at the teacher, thus indicated that his talk was directed at her. The teacher does not respond immediately. This gap (11–12) is interesting although it is not clear why the teacher waits. During the gap, Cathlyn is heard to speak aloud as she writes the first letter of 'butter' (11). Cathlyn's utterance can be considered to be designed to be heard as responding to the teacher's previous directive that she should sound out the word 'butter'. Or, it might be heard as indicating that Cathlyn is writing the letters of 'butter' correctly. Either way, it appears as an attempt to maintain interaction with the teacher as Dominic seeks to initiate interaction with her.

- 10 Dominic: very ((looking at the teacher))  
 11 Cathlyn: 'b': ((writing))  
 12 (0.8)  
 13 Teacher: it was [ $\uparrow$ very ]  
 14 Cathlyn: [u] ((writing))  
 15 (0.6)  
 16 Teacher ↓very  
 17 Cathlyn: 't' (0.2) 't' (0.2) 'e'

- 18 (0.4)  
 19 Teacher: yes  
 20 (0.8)  
 21 Cathlyn: 'r'  
 22 (0.5)  
 23 ((Mckielia looking in Dominic's direction))

The teacher's utterance in line 13 is a reply to Dominic. The teacher reads, or says, the sentence that Dominic has written so far ('it was') and she adds the word 'very', emphasizing it with an upwards rise in intonation ( $\uparrow$ ). The silence that follows provides a transition-relevance place (14), or place for Dominic to speak next. In fact, the upwards intonation and pause, is designed to occasion (or require) this particular response from Dominic. When he does not respond, the teacher repeats the word (16), although gives it a different emphasis through the use of falling intonation ( $\downarrow$ very').

In line 17, we see that Cathlyn continues to speak aloud, and that the teacher responds to her talk (19) with affirmation that the naming and recording of the letters was correct. The confirmation of correctness also indicates that the teacher has resumed her activity with Cathlyn. Cathlyn names the final letter of 'butter' in line 21. Since the transcript records when Cathlyn was writing (e.g. line 11), the absence of this activity during her spelling of the letters indicates that she was not writing, and therefore was addressing her talk at the teacher.

Dominic again initiates interaction with the teacher. As previously, his utterance is about the spelling of the word 'very', though this time his talk takes the form of a direct question (24) rather than the one-word utterance he used in line 10 ('very'). The question is marked through rising intonation on the word 'very' (indicated through the use of?). The design of this turn, as a direct question, more powerfully requires the provision of an answer by the teacher.

- 24 Dominic: how do you spell very?  
 25 (0.4)  
 26 Teacher: what does very start  $\uparrow$ with (0.2) veah  
 27 ((Mckielia writing 'a'))  
 28 (1.0)  
 29 Dominic: 'v' ((begins to write))  
 30 (1.0)

Rather than providing the spelling of the word, the teacher's response is a question that is given after a silence. So, 'what does very start  $\uparrow$ with' requires that Dominic state the first letter himself. The teacher makes the sound 'veah' (26) and after a gap, Dominic replies with the name of the letter (29). It is noted in the

transcript that he begins to write immediately after he has named the letter 'v' and that a silence ensues. Both these aspects of interaction between the teacher and Dominic are interesting, since teachers' regularly evaluate the correctness of students' answers supplied in response to questions (Freebody, 2003; Mehan, 1979), and since Dominic writes without receiving that evaluation.

The transcript also records the actions of Mckiela, a student who was sitting beside Dominic throughout his interaction with the teacher. In line 23 (above) it is noted that Mckiela looks in Dominic's direction, and then writes a letter in her book (line 27 above). The attention that Mckiela gives to Dominic, through her nonverbal actions, becomes of importance in relation to the teacher and her observations of children's activity at the table. Specifically, the teacher interacts with Mckiela to stop her copying from Dominic.

The design of the teacher's turn (31) indicates her awareness that Mckiela is copying, although works to minimize the effect of the formulation on Mckiela and those around her (particularly Dominic). The teacher uses the words 'just copying' so names Mckiela's activity and implies (through 'just') that copying is a less worthy activity than writing independently (or by yourself). The use of intonation that is rising but weak (indicated by?), and laughter, softens what is otherwise an accusation. In other words, and at the very least, Mckiela's actions *look like* copying. The teacher completes her utterance and the silence provides a transition-relevance place for Mckiela to speak (32).

- 31 Teacher: ((looking at Mckiela)) you're not just copying Dominic's are you?,  
 32 ((laughing)) (1.0) Dominic can help you (2.0) D- Dominic look at me  
 33 ((mouth forms /e/ position))  
 34 ((Dominic looking at the teacher))  
 35 (1.0)  
 36 Teacher: ↓very  
 37 (1.2)  
 38 Dominic: 'e'  
 39 ((teacher nods and Dominic begins to write))  
 40 (1.8)

In the absence of comment from Mckiela, the teacher extends her own turn (32). Her statement that Dominic can give help serves several purposes: it affirms that Mckiela can get help from another student; it acknowledges that Mckiela needs help; and it nominates Dominic as a helper. Since Dominic is seated between the teacher and Mckiela, the teacher's statement is potentially overheard by Dominic and indicates that he is to help Mckiela. The teacher therefore directs the interaction that can occur between the two and makes a distinction between copying and help. Copying is not condoned but helping is.

The teacher then returns to her interaction with Dominic. After a false start (indicated by 'D-' in line 32), the teacher directs that Dominic look at her. This directs his attention to her mouth as she forms the letter silently. Dominic complies with the teacher's directive by looking at her (line 34) and a gap in the talk (35) provides a place for Dominic to take a turn and state the letter. When he doesn't, the teacher states the word 'very'. After a gap, Dominic names the letter (38). This time, the teacher confirms the correctness of his answer (39). Then Dominic begins to write.

After directing the actions of Mckielia and Dominic, the teacher then interacts with another student who is seated at the table. In the sequence of talk that occurs, the teacher secures help for another student and brings about interaction between the two students.

The teacher indicates a shift in her activity through the use of 'now' (41). The question that follows works to direct Melodie to help Wayne. The teacher's talk tells the word that Wayne requires ('like') and also 'shapes' the form that Melodie's help will take. The teacher's directive indicates that Melodie shouldn't tell and requires that she indicate her compliance ('okay Melodie?').

- 41 Teacher: now (0.2) are you helping (0.2) Wayne write like? (0.4)  
 42 don't tell him (0.2) just help him okay Melodie?,  
 43 (1.2)  
 44 Wayne: li:ke  
 45 (3.5)  
 46 Melodie: lu: [:::h]  
 47 [((teacher opens mouth to form 'l'))]

While the teacher's talk is directed at Melodie, it also indicates to Wayne what he should be doing since he is seated at the table and is part of the 'overhearing audience' to the interaction between the teacher and Melodie. In fact, gaining help for Wayne requires that he hear her directive.

While the teacher acts to get help for Wayne, she also constrains it by directing that Melodie should not tell. The use of 'just' hearably rates help as *less than* telling and as *not* telling. The use of 'okay' and Melodie's name requires confirmation from Melodie. Her nod indicates her understanding and the teacher's nod receipts this in turn. The teacher's actions involve her assessment that Melodie knows how to give 'help' that isn't 'telling' since she gives no further explanation.

Wayne and Melodie orient to the teacher's directive although not immediately. First, there appears to be the problem of 'who should start?' evinced by the silence (43) that follows the interaction between the teacher and Melodie. Wayne waits for that help that he has heard the teacher direct and Melodie waits for Wayne to initiate the talk since she has been told not to tell. When Wayne

speaks (44) his utterance clearly takes account of the teacher's talk. He does not ask Melodie for help to write 'like', instead his one-word utterance repeats the word that the teacher has indicated as the focus for help. There is a long silence (45) before Melodie responds with the sound that represents the first letter of 'like' (46). The teacher's action, to make the shape of the letter with her mouth (47), overlaps Melodie's turn and indicates that Melodie's utterance is consistent with 'not telling'.

At the same time as the teacher makes the shape of the sound (47 above), Cathlyn initiates talk with her (48). Although her talk can be clearly heard, the teacher does not respond. In the silence that follows, Dominic watches the interaction between Melodie and Wayne (49–50). Dina also summons the teacher. The transcript indicates that her talk is soft as she approaches the table (indicated by the use of the double dots in line 51).

- 48 Cathlyn: [Miss And] erson  
 49 ((Mckielia looking at her pencil// Dominic watching Melodie and  
 50 Wayne))  
 51 Dina: °Miss Anderson° ((walking towards the table))  
 52 Teacher: I love pe[anut butter] ((reading from Cathlyn's book))  
 53 Melodie: [what does it] start with  
 54 (0.8)  
 55 Dina: is that [how you write] peanut butter sandwich  
 56 Melodie [lu:::h]  
 57 Wayne: 'i'

The teacher reads the sentence that Cathlyn has written so far (52), in response to her summons. Dina's question is directed at the teacher during the silence between Cathlyn and the teacher (55), however, Melodie and Wayne are heard to continue the interaction that will eventually result in the recording of the word 'like'.

## discussion

The focus on the ways the teacher and children manage interactions during independent writing results in descriptions of interactional phenomena that are central to the accomplishment of social activity. Descriptions draw on features of interaction that were encoded deliberately and methodically within the transcript. For example, prolonged overlap of talk does not occur during talk between an individual child and the teacher. Instead, we witness gaps in the talk. Since ordinary conversation is accomplished with minimal gaps or slight overlap (Sacks et al., 1974), this finding illustrates adult and children's

orientations to their identities of 'teacher' and 'student' in the classroom. In classrooms, students are required to answer known-answer questions, and pauses often indicate that students seek to find what it is that their teachers want to hear (Baker and Freebody, 1993). Teachers also take extended turns, so may pause without students taking a turn (McHoul, 1978). These deviations from ordinary conversation contribute to the institutional 'feel' of classroom talk (McHoul, 1978) and the accomplishment of instructional activity.

In the analysis, we see students seeking to get the attention of the teacher in various ways. For example, they use her name as a summons. According to CA, a summons requires a response since it is an adjacency pair or sequence where the first turn occasions and requires a particular second. So, a question powerfully requires an answer (Sacks, 1995). The teacher provides a response on some occasions. At other times she withholds her response in order to interact with other children. Or, in the case of questions, she inserts a question rather than provides an answer. In this way, she is able to interact with students but avoid telling them answers.

Non-verbal actions are important in the getting and maintaining of interaction, and in the provision of help (in the case of the teacher). Overall, members of the classroom orient to the words and non-verbal actions of others. Individuals observe the teacher's interactions with others in order to initiate and maintain their own interactions with her. This visible orientation to the social activity of others displays interactional competence.

The CA transcript does double duty in the analysis; it produces features of talk and interaction for analysis and it enables the explication and description of those same features. For example, the noting of overlap and gaps in talk is a standard practice in the development of a transcript from the perspective of CA. Through documenting overlap in talk and gaps in talk in a transcript, researchers may notice phenomena 'that may subsequently form part of an analytic account' (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 75) that is particular to a study. Further, features are inscribed selectively in the transcript; that is, they represent only some of the features of the data recorded. Selection of features is informed by the CA methodological perspective, and consistent with it. For example, one methodological imperative is that the analysis arises from, and establishes, the orientations of research participants. So, seeking information from the teacher was an orientation of participants in the analysis, even though the classroom lesson required that children write independently. A second imperative is that the recordings remain the data, so orientations will be related to observable activity detailed and described through an iterative process of working between recordings and transcripts.

The presentation of CA research in journals and reports takes account of the need for researchers to be explicit about transcript development and use of transcriptions for analysis (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998). For example, in this

article all data analysed are presented and accompany the detailed analysis. This not only helps to make the analysis clearer for the reader, but it allows the reader to analyse as well. The latter is another methodological imperative of the approach. It provides an opportunity for readers to make their own analysis of talk and interaction based on the transcript provided. In this way, the researcher is accountable for the analysis produced, and alternative analyses are made possible. Over time, the detailed examination and presentation of transcripts has led to 'the cumulative and publicly verifiable nature of conversation analytic research' (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 92).

## conclusion

CA provides an example of a research methodology that makes 'unusually strong demands on the accuracy of the data' (Edwards, 1993a: 214). While not all studies that examine language data adopt transcription methods that require the same degree of specificity, the approach illustrates the importance of a coherent relationship between the theoretical and methodical perspectives of a study, development of a transcript and the interpretations that result from its analysis. In seeking to reveal the taken-for-granted ways that talk and interaction accomplish ordered activity, conversation analysts must ensure that their transcription practices are transparent and carry the necessary information that enables them to reveal taken-for-granted accomplishments of social activity and the social order. The approach provides an illustration of the ways that transcription matters in CA research, but more broadly can inform how researchers from other theoretical and methodological perspectives view and approach the development of transcripts and transcript analysis. Specifically, it is important to be aware of how theoretical and methodological perspectives inform transcription, and to articulate the 'what, how and why' decisions of the transcription process. By addressing transcription in the planning stages of research, in its conduct and in the reporting of studies, researchers make apparent an integral aspect of research.

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