Jack Sidnell

Conversation Analysis

An Introduction

WILEY-BLACKWELL

Language in Society

GENERAL EDITOR
Peter Trudgill, Chair of English Linguistics,
University of Fribourg

ADVISORY EDITORS
J. K. Chambers, Professor of Linguistics,
University of Toronto
Ralph Fasold, Professor of Linguistics,
Georgetown University
William Labov, Professor of Linguistics,
University of Pennsylvania
Lesley Milroy, Professor of Linguistics,
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Launched in 1980, *Language in Society* is now established as probably the premiere series in the broad field of sociolinguistics, dialectology and variation studies. The series includes both textbooks and monographs by Ralph Fasold, Suzanne Romaine, Peter Trudgill, Lesley Milroy, Michael Stubbs, and other leading researchers.

1. Language and Social Psychology, *edited by Howard Giles and Robert N. St Clair*
2. Language and Social Networks (second edition), *Lesley Milroy*
3. The Ethnography of Communication (third edition), *Muriel Saville-Troike*
4. Discourse Analysis, *Michael Stubbs*
5. The Sociolinguistics of Society: Introduction to Sociolinguistics, Volume I, *Ralph Fasold*
6. The Sociolinguistics of Language: Introduction to Sociolinguistics, Volume II, *Ralph Fasold*
7. The Language of Children and Adolescents: The Acquisition of Communicative Competence, *Suzanne Romaine*
8. Language, the Sexes and Society, *Philip M. Smith*

9. The Language of Advertising, *Torben Vestergaard and Kim Schrøder*

10. Dialects in Contact, *Peter Trudgill*

11. Pidgin and Creole Linguistics, *Peter Mühlhäusler*

12. Observing and Analysing Natural Language: A Critical Account of Sociolinguistic Method, *Lesley Milroy*

13. Bilingualism (second edition), *Suzanne Romaine*

14. Sociolinguistics and Second Language Acquisition, *Dennis R. Preston*

15. Pronouns and People: The Linguistic Construction of Social and Personal Identity, *Peter Mühlhäusler and Rom Harré*

16. Politically Speaking, *John Wilson*

17. The Language of the News Media, *Allan Bell*

18. Language, Society and the Elderly: Discourse, Identity and Ageing, Nikolas Coupland, *Justine Coupland, and Howard Giles*

19. Linguistic Variation and Change, *James Milroy*

20. Principles of Linguistic Change, Volume I: Internal Factors, *William Labov*

21. Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach (second edition), *Ron Scollon and Suzanne Wong Scollon*

22. Sociolinguistic Theory: Language Variation and Its Social Significance (revised edition), *J. K. Chambers*

23. Text and Corpus Analysis: Computer-assisted Studies of Language and Culture, *Michael Stubbs*

24. *Anthropological Linguistics, William Foley*

25. American English: Dialects and Variation (second edition), *Walt Wolfram and Natalie Schilling-Estes*

26. African American Vernacular English: Features, Evolution, Educational Implications, *John R. Rickford*

27. Linguistic Variation as Social Practice: The Linguistic Construction of Identity in Belten High, *Penelope Eckert*

28. The English History of African American English, *edited by Shana Poplack*
29. Principles of Linguistic Change, Volume II: Social Factors, *William Labov*
30. African American English in the Diaspora, *Shana Poplack and Sali Tagliamonte*
31. The Development of African American English, *Walt Wolfram and Erik R. Thomas*
32. Forensic Linguistics: An Introduction to Language in the Justice System, *John Gibbons*
33. An Introduction to Contact Linguistics, *Donald Winford*
34. Sociolinguistics: Method and Interpretation, *Lesley Milroy and Matthew Gordon*
35. Text, Context, Pretext: Critical Issues in Discourse Analysis, *H. G. Widdowson*
36. Clinical Sociolinguistics, *Martin J. Ball*
37. Conversation Analysis: An Introduction, *Jack Sidnell*

Conversation Analysis

AN INTRODUCTION

Jack Sidnell

WILEY-BLACKWELL
A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication

This edition first published 2010 © 2010 Jack Sidnell

Blackwell Publishing was acquired by John Wiley & Sons in February 2007.

Blackwell's publishing program has been merged with Wiley's global Scientific,

Technical, and Medical business to form Wiley-Blackwell.

Registered Office

John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester,

West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, United Kingdom

Editorial Offices

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

For details of our global editorial offices, for customer services, and for information

about how to apply for permission to reuse the copyright material in this book

please see our website at www.wiley.com/wiley-blackwell.

The right of Jack Sidnell to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a

retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical,

photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by the UK Copyright,

Designs and Patents Act 1988, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books.

Designations used by companies to distinguish their products are often claimed

as trademarks. All brand names and product names used in this book are

trade names, service marks, trademarks or registered trademarks of their

respective owners. The publisher is not associated with any product or vendor

mentioned in this book. This publication is designed to provide accurate and

authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold on the

understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services.

If professional advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of

a competent professional should be sought.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sidnell, Jack.

Conversation analysis : an introduction / Jack Sidnell.

p. cm. — (Language in society)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4051-5900-5 (hardcover : alk. paper) —

ISBN 978-1-4051-5901-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Conversation analysis. I. Title.

P95.45.S54 2010
302.3’46—dc22
2009026815

The truth is, the science of Nature has been already too long made only a work of the brain and the fancy: It is now high time that it should return to the plainness and soundness of observations on material and obvious things.

Robert Hooke (1635–1703)

***Micrographia*, 1665**

Contents

[Acknowledgements](#)

[Transcription Conventions](#)

[1 Talk](#)

- [Intersecting Machineries](#)
- [Historical Origins of Conversation Analysis](#)
- [Sacks's First Lectures on Conversation](#)
- [Understanding in Conversation](#)
- [Conversation and Intrigue](#)
- [Conclusion](#)
- [Notes](#)

[2 Methods](#)

- [Acquiring Data](#)
- [Transcribing and Making Observations](#)
- [Observation as a Basis for Theorizing](#)
- [Keys: Another Way to Access the Technical Features of Talk-in-Interaction](#)
- [Making Collections](#)
- [Managing a Collection and Developing an Analysis](#)
- [Concluding Remarks on Conversation-analytic Methods](#)
- [Notes](#)

3 Turn-Taking

- The One-at-a-Time Rule and its Exceptions
- Awaiting Completion: A Possible Solution?
- Grossly Apparent Facts of Conversation
- Constructing Turns-at-Talk
- Points of Possible Completion Create Transition-Relevant Places
- How Turns are Distributed in Conversation
- Practices of Next-Speaker Selection
- Where the Action is: The Transition Space
- The Transition Space: A Closer Look
- Overlap and Interruption
- Conclusion
- Notes

4 Action and Understanding

- Adjacency Pairs and Conditional Relevance
- "A context of publicly displayed and continuously updated intersubjective understandings"
- Irony in Conversation
- The Power of Sequential Analysis
- Conclusion
- Notes

5 Preference

- Preferred and Dispreferred Responses
- Structural Consequences of Preference Organization

Concurrent Preferences
Compliments: Concurrent Preferences
Action-Based Preference vs. Design-Based Preference
Type-Conformity Preference
Minimization and Recognition in References to Persons: Twin Preference Structure
General Preferences in the Organization of Interaction
Notes

6 Sequence

Pre-expansion
Insert Expansion
Post-expansion
Conclusion
Notes

7 Repair

The Preference for Self-Repair
Self-repair
Other-Initiated Repair
Open-Class Repair Initiators
Class-Specific Question Words Used to Initiate Repair
Repetition With and Without a Question Word
Offering a Candidate
Repair as a Vehicle for Action
Conclusion

Notes

8 Turn Construction

The Anatomy of the Turn
Turn Beginnings
Turn Endings
Interaction Within the Turn
Collaboratively Built Turns
Conclusion
Notes

9 Stories

Bland Fact: Stories Take More than One Utterance
Recognizability: Story Format
Entitlement
Second Stories and Listening Techniques
Audience Diversity
Spouse Talk, Co-tellership
Conclusion
Notes

10 Openings and Closings

Pick-ups
Telephone Openings
Conversation Openings: The Core Sequences
How-are-you Inquiries

Mildly Downgraded Versions: “Trouble-Premonitory” Response to Inquiry
Trajectories to Anchor Position
Closings
Conclusion
Notes

11 Topic

The Practices of Topic Talk
Three Topic-Generating Sequences
Topic Shift
Stepwise Transition
Conclusion

12 Context

Approaches to Context
Talking Context into Being
A Case Study: Talk in Inquiries
Conclusion
Notes

13 Conclusion

Conclusion
Notes

References

Index

Acknowledgements

Although I am listed as the sole author of this book it would not have been possible to write it without contributions of various kinds from many other people. I first encountered CA as a graduate student in the writings of Chuck and Candy Goodwin. Their work initiated me to the discipline of close observation and formed the basis for my continued study of social interaction. Later, while I was a visiting professor at UCLA, Candy encouraged me to take Manny Schegloff's classes. His influence has been massive and there is evidence of it on every page of this book. Chuck, Candy and Manny are not only towering scholars of social interaction: they are also wonderful people who have been incredibly generous with their time. Thanks here is small recompense for all that I have taken from them.

I had the good fortune of attending the Advanced Summer Institutes in the summers of 2002, 2003 and 2005. During this time I learned much not only from the instructors – John Heritage, Gene Lerner, and Manny Schegloff – but also from my student peers. Some of the analyses presented in this book developed out of discussions that took place at these institutes, others have their beginnings in notes I took during Manny's classes or in data sessions at UCLA. My own academic generation (broadly defined) is rich with brilliant conversation analysts – in classes and data sessions I have learned especially from Becky Barnes, Ignasi Clemente, Rod Gardner, Makoto Hayashi, Trine Heinemann, Mardi Kidwell, Celia Kitzinger, Chris Koenig, Irene Koshik, Anna Lindström, Harrie Mazeland, Lorenza Mondada, Geoff Raymond, Jeff Robinson, Federico Rossano, Marja-Leena Sorjonen, Tanya Stivers, Erik Vinkhuyzen, Sue Wilkinson, and many others. To all, many, many thanks.

Tanya Stivers, my collaborator on many projects, provided insight, encouragement and support. She read the entire manuscript and provided comments and suggestions that improved it immensely. She also arranged a meeting and data session with Gail Jefferson – an event that significantly shaped my own conception of what conversation analysis is all about.

Federico Rossano has been a source of inspiration since we first met in 2003. One shortcoming of the present work is that it does not adequately take into account his cutting-edge work on interaction and visible conduct. Federico's unstinting friendship and constant good humor (not to mention his love for and appreciation of good food) have seen me through many difficult times and made the good ones that much more enjoyable.

I am grateful to many other CAsts for comments on parts of this book: thanks especially to Ceci Ford and Anna Lindstrom who used an earlier version in their courses. Thanks also go to all the Toronto-area CAsts with whom I've enjoyed many lively discussions and energetic data sessions – Jeffrey Aguinaldo, Pam Hudak, Clare MacMartin, Tanya Romaniuk, Linda Wood.

A very special thanks to the many students who have read chapters from the book or participated in lectures upon which they were based. I must single out Norie Romano especially who transcribed many of the conversations I present.

At Wiley-Blackwell, I'd like to thank Glynis Baguley, Kelly Basner, Julia Kirk and especially Danielle Descoteaux.

Finally, I thank my beautiful and loving wife and our two daughters Sula and Ginger for providing the supportive and joyful environment within which it was possible to write this book. More importantly, I thank them for their conversation . . . the nuances of which never cease to amaze me.

The book is dedicated to the memory of a great conversationalist: Phyllis “Dee” Greene (1941–2007), my mother-in-law and dear friend.

Transcription Conventions

I. Temporal and sequential relationships

Overlapping or simultaneous talk is indicated in a variety of ways.

[	Separate left square brackets, one above the other on two successive lines with
[	utterances by different speakers, indicate a point of overlap onset, whether at the start of an utterance or later.
]	Separate right square brackets, one above the other on two successive lines with
]	utterances by different speakers, indicate a point at which two overlapping utterances both end or where one ends while the other continues, or simultaneous moments in overlaps which continue.
=	Equal signs ordinarily come in pairs, one at the end of a line, and another at the start of the next line or one shortly thereafter. They are used to indicate two things: (1) If the two lines connected by the equal signs are by the same speaker, then there was a single, continuous utterance with no break or pause, which was broken up in order to accommodate the placement of overlapping talk. (2) If the lines connected by two equal signs are by different speakers, then the second followed the first with no discernible silence between them, or was “latched” to it.
(0.5)	Numbers in parentheses indicate silence, represented in tenths of a second; what is given here in the left margin indicates 0.5 seconds of silence. Silences may be marked either within an utterance or between utterances.
(.)	A dot in parentheses indicates a “micropause”, hearable, but not readily measur- able without instrumentation; ordinarily less than 0.2 of a second.

II. Aspects of speech delivery, including aspects of intonation

.	The punctuation marks are not used grammatically, but to indicate
?	intonation. The period indicates a falling, or final, intonation contour,

, ¿	not necessarily the end of a sentence. Similarly, a question mark indicates rising intonation, not necessarily a question, and a comma indicates “continuing” intonation, not necessarily a clause boundary. The inverted question mark is used to indicate a rise stronger than a comma but weaker than a question mark.
::	Colons are used to indicate the prolongation or stretching of the sound just preceding them. The more colons, the longer the stretching. On the other hand, graphically stretching a word on the page by inserting blank spaces between the letters does not necessarily indicate how it was pronounced; it is used to allow alignment with overlapping talk.
-	A hyphen after a word or part of a word indicates a cut-off or self-interruption, often done with a glottal or dental stop.
word	Underlining is used to indicate some form of stress or emphasis, by either increased loudness or higher pitch. The more underlining, the greater the emphasis.
word	Therefore, underlining sometimes is placed under the first letter or two of a word, rather than under the letters which are actually raised in pitch or volume.
WOrd	Especially loud talk may be indicated by upper case; again, the louder, the more letters in upper case. And in extreme cases, upper case may be underlined.
°	The degree sign indicates that the talk following it is markedly quiet or soft.
°word°	When there are two degree signs, the talk between them is markedly softer than the talk around it.
–:	Combinations of underlining and colons are used to indicate intonation contours: If the letter(s) preceding a colon is (are) underlined, then there is an “inflected” falling intonation contour on the vowel (you can hear the pitch turn downward).
:	If a colon is itself underlined, then there is an inflected rising intonation contour.
↑ or ^ ↓	The up and down arrows mark sharper rises or falls in pitch than would be indicated by combinations of colons and underlining, or they may mark a whole shift, or resetting, of the pitch register at which the talk is being produced.
> < < >	The combination of “more than” and “less than” symbols indicates that the talk between them is compressed or rushed. Used in the reverse order, they can indicate that a stretch of talk is markedly slowed or drawn out. The “less than” symbol by itself indicates that the immediately following talk is “jump-started”, i.e. sounds like it starts with a rush.
hhh (hh)	Hearable aspiration is shown where it occurs in the talk by the letter *h* – the more *h*’s, the more aspiration. The aspiration may represent

°hh °hh	breathing, laughter, etc. If it occurs inside the boundaries of a word, it may be enclosed in parentheses in order to set it apart from the sounds of the word. If the aspiration is an inhalation, it is shown with a dot before it (usually a raised dot) or a raised degree symbol.

III. Other markings

(( ))	Double parentheses are used to mark the transcriber's descriptions of events, rather than representations of them: ((cough)), ((sniff)), ((telephone rings)), ((footsteps)), ((whispered)), ((pause)), and the like.
(word)	When all or part of an utterance is in parentheses, or the speaker identification is, this indicates uncertainty on the transcriber's part, but represents a likely possibility.
( )	Empty parentheses indicate that something is being said, but no hearing (or, in some cases, speaker identification) can be achieved.

1

Talk

Talk is at the heart of human social life. It is through talk that we engage with one another in a distinctively human way and, in doing so, create what Erving Goffman (1957) once described as a "communion of reciprocally sustained involvement." We use talk to argue, to complain, to woo, to plead, to commemorate, to denigrate, to justify, to entertain and so on. Clearly, if we didn't talk we would not have the lives we do.

This book offers an introduction to "conversation analysis" (CA): an approach within the social sciences that aims to describe, analyze and understand talk as a basic and constitutive feature of human social life. CA is a well-developed tradition with a distinctive set of methods and analytic procedures as well as a large body of established findings. In this book I aim to introduce this tradition by guiding readers through a series of topics including turn-taking, action formation, sequence organization and so on. In this introductory chapter I attempt to give some of the flavor of the approach by examining a few fragments of conversation, sketching out in broad brush strokes some basic ways in which they are organized. My goal is essentially twofold. First, and most importantly, I hope to convey at least some of the immediacy of conversation analysis – the fact that what is most important for conversation analysis is not the theories it produces or even the methods it employs but rather the work of grappling with some small bit of the world in order to get an analytic handle on how it works. Secondly, I want to make a point

about the way that conversational practices fit together in highly intricate ways. In the interests of clarity I have divided this book into chapters each of which focuses on some particular domain of conversational organization. In point of fact, of course, these different domains of organization are fundamentally interconnected. This interconnectedness creates something of a problem for a book like this one. It means that if we start off talking about the way turns at talk are distributed we soon find it necessary to make reference to the ways in which troubles can be fixed and this then requires some discussion of the way sequences of actions hang together. As Schegloff (2005: 472) suggests, it seems as though one can't do anything unless one knows everything! Where then to begin? We have to start somewhere and since the book in its entirety is an attempt to come to terms with the interconnectedness of practices in talk-in-interaction, here I just want to jump into the water. My aim for now, then, is simply to show that, in conversation as in talk-in-interaction more generally, one thing truly is connected to a bunch of other things.

Intersecting Machineries

And so, to that end, here is a bit of conversation. To understand it, you'll need to know that Ann and her husband Jeff had been entertaining two old friends and their young child. The friends had stayed overnight, for breakfast and into the early afternoon. After some rather extended goodbyes, the couple left and Ann and Jeff came back into the house. The following exchange then occurred:

(1)	Visit – FN	
01	Ann:	That was fun,
02		(0.4)
03	Jeff:	mm
04	Ann:	ish.

This short fragment may seem at first glance unremarkable but, as I hope to show in the following pages, it illustrates many important features of conversation. It also exemplifies the principle of interconnectedness that I've already alluded to. Another way to put it is to say that, if we take any bit of talk, such as that presented in the example above, we find that it is the product of several "organizations" which operate concurrently and intersect in the utterance, thereby giving it a highly specific, indeed unique, character. At this point, a term like "organizations" may seem a bit obscure, but what I mean is actually pretty straightforward. Basically there is an organized set of practices involved in first getting and, secondly, constructing a turn, another such organized set of practices involved in producing a sequence of actions, another set of practices involved in the initiation and execution of repair and so on. Harvey Sacks who, along with Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, invented the approach to social interaction now called "conversation analysis", sometimes used the metaphor of machines or machinery to describe this.

> In a way, our aim is . . . to get into a position to transform, in what I figure is almost a literal, physical sense, our view of what happened here as some interaction that could be treated as the thing we're studying, to interactions being spewed out by machinery, the machinery being what we're trying to find; where, in order to find it we've got to get a whole bunch of its products. (Sacks 1995, v. 2:169)

The machinery metaphor is quite revealing. What we get from it is a picture of speakers and hearers more or less totally caught up in and by the socially organized activities in which they are engaged. This is a highly decentralized or distributed view of human action that places the emphasis not on the internal cognitive representations of individuals or on their "external" attributes (doctor, woman, etc.) but

on the structures of activity within which they are embedded.

It will be useful to keep this metaphor of machineries in mind as we move into the analyses of this chapter. Our inclination as ordinary members of society and as language users is to think of talk in a much more individualistic, indeed, atomistic way. Here's a fairly pervasive view of the way that talk works: The words that I produce express thoughts which exist inside my mind or brain. These thoughts-put-into-words are sent, via speech, to a hearer who uses the words to reconstruct the original thoughts. Those thoughts or ideas are thus transferred, by means of language, from a speaker to a hearer. Although this is not the place to discuss this commonplace view of language and communication I mention it here so as to draw a contrast with the view Sacks proposes when he speaks of "machineries".[1]

If we think about this little fragment in these terms, that is, as the product of multiple, simultaneously operative and relevant organizations of practice, or "machineries" for short, we can get a lot of analytic leverage on what may at first seem somewhat opaque.

Let's start by noting that there is an organization relating to occasions or encounters taken as wholes. For a given occasion, there are specific places within it at which point particular actions are relevantly done. An obvious example is that greetings are properly done at the beginning of an encounter rather than at its conclusion. Similarly, introductions between participants who do not know one another are relevant at the outset of an exchange. If I meet a friend on the street and do not fairly immediately introduce her to the person with whom I'm walking, I may well apologize for this – saying something like "Oh, I'm so sorry this is Jeff" – where the apology is specifically responsive to the fact that the introduction has not been

done earlier. When an action is done outside of its proper place in conversation it is typically marked as such (with “misplacement markers” like “by the way . . .” and so on). Now I think most people will agree that one of the things people regularly do when their guests leave is to discuss “how it went”. Notice then that Ann’s utterance can be heard as initiating just such a discussion. It does this by making a first move in such a discussion, specifically by positively evaluating or assessing the event. Of course, an utterance like this not only assesses (or evaluates) what has just taken place; it also, in doing so, marks its completion. This utterance does that in part by explicitly characterizing the event as past with “was”. So, to begin with, we can see this utterance as coming in a particular place within the overall structural organization of an occasion – at its completion.

Let’s now consider this fragment in terms of turns-at-talk. This first thing to notice is that there is something about “That was fun” that makes it recognizable as a possibly complete turn, whereas the same is not true for “that was”, or “that”, or “that was fu” etc. In English, turns can be constructed out of a sharply restricted set of grammatically defined units – words, phrases, clauses and sentences. In the example we are looking at the turn is composed of just one such “sentential” unit (even with “ish” added) but in other examples we will see turns composed of multiple units. In characterizing the turn as “possibly” complete we are not hedging our bets but rather attempting to describe the talk from the point of view of the participants. Jeff may anticipate that the turn will end with “fun” but he can’t be sure that it will; as it turns out this is both a possible completion and the actual completion of the turn, but as we’ll see it’s quite possible to have a *possible* completion which is not the *actual* completion (indeed, the addition of “-

ish” here extends the turn, retrospectively casting the turn as *not* complete at the end of “fun”).

Now, the possible completion of a turn makes transition to a next speaker relevant in a way it is not during the course of that unit’s production. So we call such places “transition relevance places” and we’ll see, in chapter 3, that speaker transition is organized by reference to such places. The point is, of course, that when Ann finishes her utterance – “That was fun” – she may relevantly expect Jeff to say something by virtue of the way turn-taking in conversation is organized. So we have two more organizations – the organized sets of practices involved in both the construction and the distribution of turns – implicated in the production of this fragment of conversation.

We noticed that the completion of “That was fun” is a place for Jeff to speak. If he had spoken there what might he have said? Although the range of things that Jeff *could* have said is surely infinite, some things are obviously more relevant and hence more likely than others. One obvious possibility is “yeah, it was” or just “yeah”. Either such utterance would be a “response” to “That was fun” and would show itself to be a response by virtue of its composition. A response like this would then give us a paired set of actions – two utterances tied together in an essential way as first action and its response. In chapter 4 we will see that actions are typically organized into sequences of action and that the most basic such sequence is one composed of just two utterances – a first pair part and a second pair part – which form together an “adjacency pair”. The utterances which compose an adjacency pair are organized by a relation of “conditional relevance” such that the occurrence of a first member of the pair makes the second relevant, so that if it is not produced it may be found, by the participants, to be missing (where any number

of things did not happen but were nevertheless not "missing" in the same way).

"Yeah, it was" is more than just a response; it is a specific kind of response: an agreement. We will see that responses to assessments and other sequence-initiating actions (what we will call "first pair parts" like questions, requests, invitations and so on) can be divided into preferred and dispreferred types. We must postpone a detailed discussion of this issue until later (chapter 5). For now I will simply assert that, after an assessment such as "that was fun," agreement is the preferred response. Any other kind of response in this context may be understood, by the participants, not just for *what it is* but for *what it is not*, that is, as something specifically alternative to agreement with the initial assessment. Where agreement is relevant, a kind of "with me or against me" principle operates such that anything other than agreement is tantamount to *dis*agreement. We will see that even delay in responding to an assessment like "That was fun" can suggest that what is being withheld – what is *not* being said – is disagreement.

In fact, this example provides some evidence for that claim. So here, when Ann's assessment meets first with delay and subsequently with "mm", Ann is prompted to modify her original assessment to make it easier for Jeff to agree with if, indeed, he did not agree with its original formulation. So the organization of assessment sequences and the general patterns of preference can tip Ann off here. From Jeff's delay in responding and from the character of the response he eventually does produce, Ann can infer that he does not agree with her original assessment. She can then modify it in such a way that disagreement is avoided. So we have two more organizations implicated in this fragment of talk – the organization of actions (like assessments and agreements) into sequences and the general patterns of preference (here for agreement).

Ann has produced an utterance, and brought it to completion. Jeff's response is delayed and when it is eventually produced it is noncommittal: does Jeff agree or not with the assessment "That was fun"? At this point Ann does not produce an entirely new utterance; rather she modifies what she has already said. As noted already, this appears to be prompted by a lack of appropriate uptake by Jeff. We can see this addition of "-ish" to Ann's utterance as a form of self-repair. With this she not only modifies what she has said, she responds to problems with her original utterance which Jeff's delay in responding implies. As we will see in chapter 7, there is a preference in conversation for troubles, problems of speaking, errors and so on to be fixed or remedied by *the speaker of the trouble* rather some other participant. In this example we see that, though Jeff does not fully agree with the assessment "fun" and might perhaps be more willing to describe the visit as "fun-ish", he does not correct Ann. Rather, he delays his response, and in this way allows Ann a chance to repair, modify or correct her own talk. There is another way in which repair is involved here. One of the things a turn's recipient can always do at the possible completion of some bit of talk addressed to them is to initiate repair with something like "what?" or "it was what?" or "that was what?" or, again, "that *was* fun?" or "that was *fun*?" etc. Because this is an ever-present possibility, the fact that it is *not* done can be taken to imply that the talk was understood. So by the fact that Jeff does not initiate repair of Ann's turn, Ann may infer that Jeff (believes he) understood what she has said and that a lack of understanding therefore does not explain his delay in responding. So we have another organization of practices – the organization of repair – implicated in this short fragment of conversation.

Although there is much more we could say about this fragment the larger point should by now be clear: Any

utterance can be seen as the unique product of a number of intersecting machineries or organizations of practice. This is an alternative then to the common-sense, “individualist” view, that sees the utterance as the product of a single, isolated individual speaker. It is also an alternative to the “externalist” view which sees the utterance as the product of intersecting, *external* forces such as the speaker’s (or the recipient’s) gender, ethnic background, age, class or whatever else.

So far we have seen that this exchange involves practices for taking and constructing turns, building sequences of actions, repairing troubles and for speaking in ways fitted to the occasion. There is one more organization of practices that should be mentioned here – those involved in selecting the particular words used to construct the turn. Now you might think that people don’t select words at all; they just use the words that are appropriate for what they are talking about – they simply “call a spade a spade”. The problem with this view is that for anything that one talks about, multiple ways are available to describe or refer to it. We can ask, for instance, why Ann says “that” in “that was fun” instead of “Having Evan, Jenny and Reg” or “The last twenty-four hours” or whatever else. This brings us to a central principle of conversation which Sacks and his colleagues termed “recipient design”: “the multitude of respects in which the 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 co-participants” (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974: 727). This is an obvious yet absolutely crucial point, that speakers design their talk in such a way as to make it appropriate and relevant for the persons they are addressing. Recipient design encompasses a vast range of phenomena – everything from the banal fact that a speaker will increase the volume of her talk to address a recipient at