BOOK REVIEW

An Introduction to Interaction: Understanding Talk in Formal and Informal Settings
Ángela Cora García
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This textbook is a comprehensive guide for (mainly, but not only) linguistics, sociology, communication and even business students on the theories and research methodologies of conversation analysis. Based on ethnomethodology, a theoretical perspective of sociology which appeared in the 1960s and which explored how people create social order, social structure and situated action (Garfinkel 1967) through the direct observation of human behaviour, conversation analysis emerged in the 1980s as an approach to the study of talk in interaction. Sacks (1984), a graduate student who worked with Garfinkel, thought of talk as the ideal source of data to study human action, as it could be tape-recorded and carefully and repeatedly examined. The conversation analysis methodology was soon found useful for the study of a wide range of conversations (formal, informal, institutional, etc.) held for a great deal of different purposes and in diverse contexts (business, education, media, legal settings, etc.).

In the first chapter of this manual the author, Angela Cora Garcia, explains in a motivating way why talk should be studied and the many benefits students would obtain from it, such as strengthening listening skills and communicative competence, learning how to carry out qualitative research and developing critical thinking and analytical skills. Following this textbook, students are expected to understand the procedures used to organise talk in interaction, how talk is organised and what types of problems tend to emerge in interaction. Although due to its clear structure and easy-to-read writing style it could be used autonomously by students, this textbook is also intended to be used in class. An "Instructor's Manual" is offered, which contains material for class

presentation, additional examples and an appendix with additional resources, such as access to video recordings together with their transcripts.

The book is divided into seven parts. The first includes four chapters about the theory, methodology and characteristics of data used for conversation analysis. Its first chapter is a convincing introduction about the importance of the study of talk in interaction through conversation analysis. It opens with a catchy exercise consisting of an excerpt from an interaction between four people having a conversation and a few reflective questions for the readers. After having explained the usefulness of carrying out conversation analysis, the readers is introduced to the structure of the manual and explained how it should be used. The following chapters within this part consist of an introduction to the origins of conversation analysis, that is, ethnomethodology (Chapter 2), and its methodological approach or "how to study interaction from a conversation analytic approach" (Chapter 3). The latter chapter explores such methodological issues as the collection of naturally occurring data, the size of the sample (collections of data or case studies), or ethics and the importance of obtaining permissions for tape recording. The author also warns about a common burden researchers have to cope with when observing talk in interaction, i.e. as conversation analysts deal with naturally occurring discourse, they have to be aware of the "observer's paradox" (Labov 1972), or the influence of the researcher on the speakers, who may change their conversational behaviour when they feel they are being observed.

The last chapter of this part deals with a key issue about the preparation of data: transcription practices. Whether data is gathered using audio or video recorders, researchers have to transcribe the recordings including a variety of details. Based on the transcription conventions developed by Jefferson in the 1970s, the author shows how to transcribe hesitations, pronunciation, laughter, breaths or simultaneous speech.

Part II, consisting of nine chapters, tackles the main characteristics of the organisation of talk in interaction using examples from ordinary conversations in everyday life or institutional interactions. Thus, the turn-taking system is explained throughout Chapter 5, where, following Sacks et al. (1974), the turn constructional and the turn allocational components are described. Sequences of turns are examined throughout Chapter 6, where the concept of adjacency pair is developed, and Chapter 7, where the

characteristic sequential organisation of conversations is explored to discover how participants perform exchanges which are longer than two turns. Thus, two-turn action sequences can be expanded by means of side sequences, insertion sequences or pre-sequences up to the point of building series or chains of adjacency pairs.

Chapters 8 and 9 are devoted to openings and closings, respectively. In order to explain these two mechanisms, the author uses examples from studies on telephone conversations, such as the already classical ones conducted by Schegloff (1979, 1986) or Whalen and Zimmerman (1987). The following chapter deals with error avoidance and repair, both of one's own and of others' discourse, whereas Chapter 11 explains how speakers create, close, change or refocus topics. In this way we learn that topical continuity and coherence depend on the range of techniques participants use to maintain them rather than on the subject matter of the conversation.

The research carried out by Goodwin (1984) on story-telling is the tool used by the author in Chapter 12 to explain how aspects of nonverbal language (facial expressions, hand gestures and gaze direction, amongst others) accompany talk to complete communication. Embodied actions give information about the structure (rather than about the content) of the talk, and make it easier for the audience to follow stories. Part II finishes with a chapter about how speakers refer to others. Membership categorisation analysis is applied to three different settings (telephone calls, legal procedures and the workplace) to show how participants categorise themselves and others.

Whereas the chapters in Part II are focused on particular organisational principles of talk in interaction, the thirteen remaining chapters explore conversations in institutional settings. On reading them, the student can grasp the particular nature of these encounters in terms of how orchestrated routines, work-related tasks or institutional roles are performed through talk. Part III comprises three chapters about telephone calls (emergency calls to the Police, emergency service calls and the influence of technological transformation on talk by telephone), and another one about air traffic communication. Thus, Chapters 14 and 15 summarise research by authors such as Zimmerman (1984), Whalen and Zimmerman (1987) and Schegloff (1968, 1979), amongst others, to explain "how service call takers and callers work together to accomplish the work of the call in a timely and efficient manner", whereas Chapter 16

explains how interactions on the phone have changed due to technological innovations such as caller identification.

The following section (Part IV) deals with talk in medical settings and includes one chapter about the delivery of bad news and another one about the Primary Care consultation. This latter chapter examines the structure of the medical consultation, focusing particularly on the interview physicians carry out on patients to elaborate the diagnosis, on the one hand, and the phase of treatment recommendation on the other. Talk in legal settings such as trials, hearings and other proceedings, police interrogation and pre-trial interviews of victims, or mediation sessions is explored in the following section (Part V). Throughout these pages students can notice how interrogation techniques vary when the interviewee does not cooperate with the interviewer, that is, when the participants in the interaction do not pursue the same objective but are instead on opposing sides of a dispute.

The last two sections explore talk in broadcast media (Chapters 23 and 24 deal with television news interviews and call-in talk shows on radio and television, respectively) and talk in business settings (customer service in Chapter 25 and meetings, interviews and performance appraisals in Chapter 26). Issues such as the performance of roles and identities, power asymmetry and the use of negotiation and persuasion are developed throughout these pages.

Each of the chapters of this textbook is written in an understandable way using a clear and simple style. Students are asked questions at different moments so that they can reflect before contents are presented, can focus better on key aspects of the topics at hand or can compare the examples given in the book with conversations they have in real life. The chapters include summaries of key points and exercises for students. The last chapter actually wraps up as it presents the same examples of conversations which appeared in the first chapter, but this time written using detailed transcripts instead of simplified ones. By the time they reach the last chapter of this textbook students are expected to be able to analyse these detailed transcripts and apply the basic findings of conversation analytical research to them and to other conversations.

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