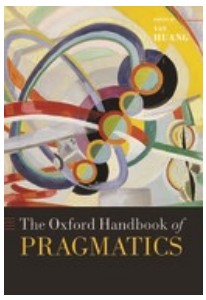

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CHAPTER

23 Conversation Analysis

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Abstract

The text that follows offers in its first section four early engagements with brief bits of ordinary conversation that launched the form of analysis known as conversation-analytic work. This is followed by five subsections that sketch five of the several domains of analysis central to conversation analysis over the last fifty or so years: turns and turn constructions; sequences of actions-through-talk; trouble in talking actions and repair of that trouble; selection of words that compose the turns that compose the sequences; the overall structural organization of talk-in-interaction whether in recurrent clusters or sustained occasions of conversation. A brief upshot brings the text to conclusion.

Keywords: conversation analysis, conversation, organization, turns, sequences, trouble, repair, word selection, overall structural organization

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23.1 Introduction

ARGUABLY, conversation analysis (CA) began with observations, claims, and analyses whose proper analytic locus is action formation/recognition.[1] Indeed, in one of its earliest published papers, 'Opening up closings' (Schegloff and Sacks 1973, but drafted in the summer of 1969), we wrote in the second paragraph (289–290, emphasis supplied):

> This project is part of a program of work undertaken several years ago to explore the possibility of achieving a naturalistic observational discipline that could deal with *the details of social action(s) rigorously, empirically, and formally.* For a variety of reasons that need not be spelled out here, our attention has focused on conversational materials; suffice it to say that this is not because of a special interest in language, or any theoretical primacy we accord conversation. Nonetheless, the character of our materials as conversational has attracted our attention to the study of conversation as an activity in its own right, and thereby to *the ways in which any actions*

> *accomplished in conversation require reference to the properties and organization of conversation for their understanding and analysis, both by participants and by professional investigators.*

What sorts of observations had engendered such a 'program of work'? Here are a few exemplars.

On Sacks' part, there was the observation that (what we would now call) repair initiation targeting a phone-answerer's self-identification could serve as a device for bypassing the turn slot in which the caller might 'owe' a reciprocal self-identification. In the mid-1960s, Sacks was participating in a research programme centred on an emergency 'hotline' for suicidal persons (or persons calling about suicidals). One focus of
p. 436 attention ↳ was the issue of getting the names of the callers—needed as evidence for the funding agency that supported the hotline. Call-takers reported that if they could not get the caller's name at the very beginning of the call, it was highly unlikely that they would get it at all (e.g. at the end of the call). One recurrent form the openings took is exemplified in (1a); the call-taker would self-identify, and that opening line made it appropriate for callers to reciprocate in the very next turn.

(1a) 

But, Sacks noted, in calls that made getting an identification problematic, there was often a claim of 'trouble on the line', as exemplified in (1b)—in many cases in calls which seemed in a later review to be acoustically quite clear.

(1b) 

Dealing with the trouble (what would much later come to be termed 'repair initiation'), then, took over the place where a reciprocal self-introduction would ordinarily occur, and subsequent overt efforts to secure the caller's identity were doomed to failure. This appeared, then, to be a practice for avoiding reciprocal self-identification.

And another example. Sacks was permitted to audio-record a series of group therapy sessions for teenagers. In one of these, a new patient named Jim has just arrived, some 45 minutes into the session, and the therapist, Dan, has introduced him to the three other male teenagers in the group (the one female has not come to this session)—Ken, Al, and Roger. After the round of introductions and greetings, the talk goes as in (2):

(2) 

On the face of it, Ken's turn is (one might say) 'restarting the talk that was in progress when Jim arrived'—that is what it is *doing*. Pressed to say more, we might say it is 'orienting the newcomer to what *had* been
p. 437 going on, and what this same turn is ↳ restarting'—that is also something it is doing … or might be doing. Sacks proposed that what we have here is 'a possible invitation'. Whereas the first two descriptions fit comfortably with what we think a restarting would be or look or sound like, or what orienting a latecomer would be, it does NOT look like what we would ordinarily think an invitation would be like. Here in a nutshell is how Sacks developed his point, in *my* rendering of it:

- a newcomer arrives at an already ongoing interaction;
- the pre-present parties can either welcome and absorb the newcomer or exclude or marginalize him/her (both in posture and in the talk);
- in the talk, the pre-present parties may abandon the pre-arrival topic in favour of something recipient-designed for the newcomer; or they can continue the talk-in-progress with no special regard to the newcomer; or they can formulate the talk in a fashion designed to convey that it is ill-suited to

the newcomer, or in a fashion designed to convey that it is of potential interest and access to the newcomer, thereby in effect inviting him/her to join in;

- here the new arrival is known or thought to be new to psychotherapy and therefore is uncertain of how he will be understood; by formulating the talk in which they were engaged as 'an automobile discussion' (which in the lingo of the day was quite different from 'talking about cars'; it was about being 'a hot-rodder'), Ken in effect is reassuring him that (if he *is* a hot-rodder), he can talk here as he talks elsewhere and be at ease; hence an invitation;

- as it happens, Ken is the 'poor little rich boy' in the group, an isolate relative to the other two guys, and he can be understood as here looking for an ally;

- that something like this is understood by the others to be going on can be seen in what they do to this turn-so-far by *extending* it in what Sacks termed a collaborative construction: Roger characterizes the talk in which they are engaged as discussing psychological motives—just what the newcomer may be anxious about; and Al extends this anxiety into the very safe haven that Ken had suggested when he finishes the now-collaborative utterance by applying it to drag racing on the streets.

By recalling this very early piece of analysis, I want to alert readers to a later tack in our discussion which will be: (i) *dis*couraging our undertaking from starting with category terms for actions that particular cases 'transparently' exemplify, (ii) *en*couraging our asking about any given target turn or turn-constructional unit (henceforth 'TCU') or component of a TCU what IT is doing HERE, at this juncture of this interaction (which must itself therefore be characterized), and (iii) actually, what it is POSSIBLY doing here. These are three of the topics I mean to touch on as prolegomena to analysing action(s). (As for starting points in Sacks' work, there are, of course, two thick volumes of his *Lectures on Conversation*, containing many others
p. 438 subsequently.) ↳

On my part there was the treatment of the first utterance in telephone calls to the police (as in (3))—as 'self-identifications'.

(3) Schegloff 1968: 1079
01 Dis:→ Police Desk

But then I heard myself referring to them as 'answering the phone' in that way, and I realized that while 'self-identifications' was not wrong, it was not quite right either; if they were answering, what were they answering? And that led to seeing that while 'Police Desk' may have been the first utterance, it was *not* the first action in these conversations; the first actions were the 'summonses' conveyed by the mechanically expressed telephone rings, and self-identification was just *one* way of 'answering' them. Another way of answering—overwhelmingly common in the USA at that time outside organizational contexts—was 'hello', which, it turned out, was in these circumstances NOT the 'greeting term' it is commonly taken to be. Whatever they might be called, what they were actually *doing* was *not* a greeting, but instead was a response to a summons.

Or, to mention one last starting point: there was the demonstration that what appeared to be a question, indeed one of the forms that we now term an 'other-initiation of repair' (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977), would more correctly be analysed as a display of alignment with its recipient. This exchange in (4) is taken from a radio call-in programme in New York City in the 1960s. The caller ('Cal') is a high-school student who is complaining to the Host ('Hst') about his History teacher, with whom he had a difference of opinion about the Vietnam War—a 'difference' which had escalated to a disagreement about the proper function of government.

(4)

p. 439 The Caller initially understands the Host's intervention at line 12 to be in search of a fuller account of the teacher's position (and potentially beginning to align with him—the teacher); but when the Host interrupts to do it again but with a different 'topic inquiry' at line 14, the Caller recognizes that these questions are designed to be *challenges* to the (just articulated) teacher's position, and thereby alignments with the Caller.

What these four pieces of work shared as hints on how to proceed were several features, of which I'll mention just four:

1. An 'obvious' vernacular (or even traditional academic) understanding was either demonstrably incorrect, or, at the very least, partial;
2. A proper understanding of what the object of analysis was doing involved attention not only to its composition or construction, but also to its position or location, which itself required analysis to locate and formulate the terms of *its* relevant characterization;
3. Such analysis required coming to terms with the various considerations to which parties to the interaction were demonstrably oriented, involving at least position in the conversation, the course of action in which any next turn would figure and to which it would be taken to respond, the turn as the home for spates of talk which could be either understood or misunderstood, respected or violated, and so forth. And
4. That a lot of work would be required to get at least a sketch of the several organizations of conduct that appeared to constitute the host environment for the actions we had tried to understand.

A fair amount of time has been—and is still being—spent on this last requirement, and I think we have reasonable initial understandings of how turns at talk are constructed and understood, and how opportunities to construct them get distributed among parties to various settings of talk-in-interaction; how troubles in speaking, hearing, and understanding the talk are dealt with; how sequences of these turns are organized to effect recognizable courses of action; how these sequences aggregate to compose occasions of interaction—sometimes bounded and limited from the outset and requiring pretty much continuously sustained talking, sometimes being less so and composed by what we called 'continuing states of incipient talk', and finally, and to a very uneven degree, how the components of these turns that constitute these sequences in these occasions of interaction get selected, combined, and deployed to embody the actions that had launched us on this expedition in the first place. So now that we have some understanding of the resources out of which 'doings' are fashioned, we return to the actions that got us into this in the first place, only to realize that the terms have now changed—that we need to make explicit the bearing of what we think we have learned on going to work on action and actions, that is, not single or singular actions but simultaneously multiple actions.

p. 440

23.2 Generic Problems for Talk-in-Interaction and Practised Solutions for them

Although it is almost certainly the case that many important organizational problems of talk-in-interaction and their solutions are as yet unknown, let alone understood, it appears that the following ones will have a continuing claim on researchers' attention.

23.2.1 The 'turn-taking' problem

Who should talk or move/act next and when should they do so? How does this affect the construction and understanding of the turns or acts themselves?

So far it seems to be the case that wherever investigators have looked carefully, talk-in-interaction is organized to be done one speaker at a time.[2] Achieving and maintaining such a state of talk may prompt the invocation of conventionalized arrangements like a Chair to allocate the turns, or mapping the order of turn allocation onto ordered features of the candidate participants such as relative status (Albert 1964). But the first of these marks the setting as institutionally or ceremonially distinct from 'ordinary talk', and the latter engenders a range of problems that make it virtually unsustainable as a general organization of interaction. What is most fundamentally at stake in 'turn-taking' is not politeness or civility, but the very possibility of coordinated courses of action between the participants (allowing, for example, for initiative and response) —very high stakes indeed.

Even with just two participants, achieving one at a time poses a problem of coordination if the talk is to be without recurrent substantial silences and overlaps: how to coordinate the ending of one speaker and the starting up by another. If there are more than two 'ratified participants' (Goffman 1963), there is the additional issue of having *at least one* of the current non-speakers, and *not more than one* of the current
p. 441 non-speakers, start up on completion of the current speaker's turn. One can imagine quite ↳ a variety of putative solutions to these problems of coordination, but none of them can be reconciled with the data of actual, naturally occurring ordinary conversation (Schegloff 2000).

The 'Simplest systematics for turn-taking' paper (Sacks et al. 1974) sketches an organization of practices that, on the whole, seems to work. It describes units and practices for constructing turns at talk, practices for allocating turns at talk, and a set of practices which integrates the two. So far, this account has appeared to work across quite a wide range of settings, languages, and cultures, and departures from interactional formats familiar to Western industrialized nations appear to involve what might be termed 'differences in the values of variables', rather than differences in the underlying organization of practices.

To give one example briefly, there may be differences between cultures or subcultures in what the unmarked value of a silence between the end of one turn and the start of a next should be. Leaving less than the normative 'beat' of silence or more than that can engender inferences among parties to the conversation; starting a next turn 'early' or starting a next turn 'late' are ways of doing things in interaction, and conversation between people from different cultural settings can find themselves misfiring with one another. For example, one difference often remarked on by urban, metropolitan people about rural or indigenous people is that the latter seem to be dull-witted and somewhat hostile; comments range from Marx on the 'idiocy of the rural classes' to Ron and Suzanne Scollon's work (1981) on the relation between migrants from the 'lower 48' states in the US and the indigenous peoples of Alaska. Having asked them a question, the urbanites—or should I say urbane-ites—find themselves not getting a timely reply and sense resistance, non-understanding, non-forthcomingness, etc. Often they break what they perceive as 'the silence' that greeted their question with a follow-up question, which may be taken by their interlocutor to exemplify the high-pressure aggressiveness of 'city slickers'. But what differs between them is not that their turn-taking practices are different or differently organized, but the way they 'reckon' the invisible, normative beat between one turn and the next.

I have, of course, just pointed at the organization of turn-taking; an account of what that organization is, and how it works, will have to be sought out in the by-now substantial literature addressed to those matters (cf. especially Lerner 2003).

23.2.2 The 'sequence-organizational' problem

How are successive turns or actions formed up to be 'coherent' with the prior one (or *some* prior one) and constitute a 'course of action', and what is the nature of that coherence?

The most common way researchers have addressed actual spates of talk has been to ask what it is about, and how movement from one 'topic' to another occurs, and what it reveals about the intentions and meanings
p. 442 being conveyed by the speaker ↳ or the several participants. Talking about things—'doing topic talk'—is surely one observable feature of talk-in-interaction. But having framed it as something participants *do* should trigger the further observation that that is only one of the things people do in talk-in-interaction. We would do well to open inquiry to the *full range of things that people do* in their talking in interaction—asking, requesting, inviting, offering, complaining, reporting, answering, agreeing, disagreeing, accepting, rejecting, assessing, etc. Indeed, doing topic talk is itself largely composed of such doings—telling, agreeing, disagreeing, assessing, rejecting, etc. Proceeding in this way treats action and courses of action as the more general tack, and doing topic talk as one of its varieties.

If we ask how actions and courses of action get organized in talk-in-interaction, it turns out that there are a few kernel forms of organization that appear to supply the formal framework within which the context-specific actual actions and trajectories of action are shaped. By far the most common and consequential is the one we call 'adjacency-pair-based' (Schegloff and Sacks 1973; Sacks 1995: II.521–569; Schegloff 2007). The simplest and minimal form of a sequence is two turns long: the first *initiating* some kind of action trajectory—such as requesting, complaining, announcing, and the like, and the second responding to that action in either a compliant or aligning way (granting, remedying, assessing, and the like, respectively) or in a disaligning or non-compliant way (rejecting, disagreeing, claiming prior knowledge, and the like, respectively).

Around and inside such 'simple' pairs of actions, quite elaborate expansions can be fashioned by the participants. There are, for example, expansions *before* the first part of such a pair, such as 'pre-announcements' ('Didju hear who's coming?'), 'pre-invitations' ('Are you doing anything this weekend?'), and the like. Or, to cite actual data of a pre-invitation:

(5)

And of a pre-announcement:

(6)

p. 443 Notice that these themselves make a response relevant, and so themselves constitute an adjacency pair, and can therefore themselves be expanded (for example, 'Hey Steve', 'Yeah?', 'Didju hear who pulled out of the conference?', 'No, who?').

And there can be expansions after the first action/turn in an adjacency pair and before the responding second part—an inserted sequence. For example:

(7)

Again, notice that if a first-pair part is followed not by an action/turn which could be its second-pair part, then what occurs in its place is itself a first-pair part and requires a response, so it too is an adjacency pair and it too can get expanded.

And after the response to the initiating action/turn there can be further talk that clearly is extending that trajectory of action. Sometimes that can be a single turn which does not make a response to it relevant next, as at lines 3 and 8 in the following specimen, which has two such sequences.

(8)

But it can also be something that *does* make a response to it relevant next; so it too is itself an adjacency pair and can take the kinds of expansions I have been sketching here.

(9) 

p. 444 Note here that the question/answer sequence at lines 1–2 is expanded after the answer by another at lines 3–4 (addressing a hearing/understanding problem), and that the latter is expanded by a single turn expansion, first at line 5 (where it is caught in overlap) and then again at line 6.

I hope that it is clear that what started as a simple two-turn/action sequence can be a framework which 'carries' an extensive stretch of talk.[3] There are some deep connections between what are nonetheless largely autonomous organizations of practice—the organization of turn-taking and the organization of action sequences. Just as interaction cannot do without practices for allocating opportunities to participate and practices for constraining the size of those opportunities—i.e. an organization of turn-taking—so it cannot do without an organization of practices for using those opportunities to fashion coherent and sustained trajectories or courses of action–sequence organization.

23.2.3 The 'trouble' problem

How to deal with trouble in speaking, hearing, and/or understanding the talk or other conduct such that the interaction does not freeze in place, that intersubjectivity is maintained or restored, and that the turn and sequence and activity can progress to possible completion.

If the organization of talk-in-interaction supplies the basic infrastructure through which the institutions and social organization of quotidian life are implemented, it had better to be pretty reliable, and to have ways of getting righted if beset by trouble. And so it is. Talk-in-interaction is as prone as any organization is to transient problems of integration and execution; speakers cannot find the word they want, find that they have started telling about something that needs something else to be told first, hear that they articulated just the opposite word from the one they are after, find that another is talking at the same time as they are, etc. And talk-in-interaction is as vulnerable as any activity is to interference from altogether unrelated events in its environment—overflight by airplanes, an outburst of traffic noise, or other ambient noise that interferes with their recipient's ability to hear, etc.

For such inescapable contingencies there is an organization of practices for dealing with trouble or problems in speaking, hearing, and understanding the talk. It turns out that this organization—which we term an organization of repair—is extraordinarily effective at allowing the parties to locate and diagnose the trouble and, in virtually all cases, to deal with it quickly and successfully.

The organization of repair differentiates between repair initiated and carried through by the speaker of the trouble source on the one hand, and other participants in the interaction on the other. The practices of repair are focused in a sharply defined window of opportunity in which virtually all repair that is initiated is
p. 445 launched (Schegloff et al. ↳ 1977). This 'repair initiation opportunity space' begins in the same turn—indeed, in the same turn-constructional unit—in which the trouble source occurred and extends to the next turn by that speaker.[4] The consequence is that the initial opportunity to initiate repair falls to the speaker of the trouble source, and a very large proportion of repairs are addressed and resolved in the same turn, and same turn-constructional unit, in which the trouble source occurred ('same-turn repair'), or in its immediate aftermath ('transition space repair'). These largely involve troubles in speaking, but can also be directed to anticipatable problems for recipients—problems of hearing and/or understanding. The 'preferences for self-initiation of repair and self-repair' have as one of their manifestations that recipients of talk which is for them problematic regularly withhold initiating repair in next turn to allow the trouble-source speakers an additional opportunity to themselves initiate repair. If they do not do so, the next opportunity for addressing the trouble falls to recipients—ordinarily in the next turn. Finally (for our purposes), a speaker may have produced a turn at talk and had a recipient reply to it with no indication of trouble, only to find that the reply displayed what is to the prior speaker a problematic understanding of

that turn. Then, in the turn following the one which has displayed the problematic understanding, the speaker of what now turns out to have been a trouble-source turn may take the next turn to address that problematic understanding (the canonical form being 'No, I didn't mean X, I meant Y'; cf. Schegloff 1992).

As the talk develops through the repair space, there are fewer and fewer troubles or repairables that get addressed. Most are dealt with in the same or next turn, and these range from production problems (such as word selection, word retrieval, articulation, management of prosody, etc.) and reception problems (hearing and understanding of inappropriately selected usages, such as person reference terms, technical terms, complicated syntax, etc.) to issues of intersubjectivity and strategic issues of delicateness. It is hard to say which are more important: without virtually immediate resolution of the production and reception problems, the interaction can be stalled indefinitely with unpredictable consequences; without ways of spotting departures from intersubjectivity and restoring it, the shared reality of the moment is lost, again with unpredictable consequences.

It is hard to imagine a society or culture whose organization of interaction does not include a repair component, and one that works more or less like the one I have sketched. We know that details may vary in ways linked to the linguistic structure of the language spoken—either its grammatical structure (cf., for example, Fox, Hayashi, and Jasperson 1996) or its phonological inventory (cf., for example, Schegloff 1987b). But the structure of the repair space and the terms of its differentiation between same and other repair are likely not to vary. For, among its other virtues, it is the availability of the practices of repair that
p. 446 allows us to make do with the natural languages that ↳ philosophers and logicians have long shown to be so inadequate as to require the invention of artificial, formal ones. It is repair that allows our language use not only to allow, but to exploit many of the features that have been treated as its faults—ambiguity, polysemy, contradiction, etc. Designed not for automatic parsers but for sentient beings, should these usages not be transparently solvable, the practices of repair are available to get solutions (Schegloff 1989).

23.2.4 The word selection problem

How do the components that get selected as the elements of a turn get selected, and how does that selection inform and shape the understanding achieved by the turn's recipients?

Turns are composed of turn-constructional units (TCUs)—sentential, clausal, phrasal, and lexical, in English and a great many other languages.[5] But of what are turn-constructional units composed? I have waffled on this question in referring to this generic organization as 'word selection'. That is a vernacular way of putting it, or perhaps a linguistic or psycholinguistic one for some varieties of those disciplines. And sometimes it is a relevant way of putting it in conversation-analytic work. But here I want to call attention to the interactional practices which are only incidentally lexical or about words. These are practices of referring, or describing, or—perhaps most generally—practices of formulating. In talk-in-interaction, participants formulate/refer to persons (Sacks 1972a, 1972b; Sacks and Schegloff 1979; Schegloff 1996b), places (Schegloff 1972), time, actions, and so on. It turns out that understanding how talk gets to be composed the way it is ill-served by treating the usages that are employed as having been employed because they are correct. The person writing this (and that is one formulation already) is not only a sociologist; he is also (as the pronoun inescapably revealed) male, Californian, Jewish, etc. The place I am writing is not only my office, it is in Haines Hall, at UCLA, in Los Angeles, on the west side, in the USA, etc. And although I already formulated my current activity as 'writing this', it is also typing, rushing to finish before a student arrives, etc. That is, 'correctness' won't do as the grounds for populating utterances with this or that formulation, because there are always other formulations that are equally correct. What is central is relevance (not, obviously, in the sense of Sperber and Wilson 1986)—what action or actions the speaker is designing the utterance to embody.

Consider, for example, this bit of interaction. Hyla has invited Nancy (the two of them were college juniors in the early 1970s) earlier in the day to go to the theatre that night to see a performance of the play 'The
p. 447 Dark at the Top of the Stairs', and they are ↳ talking on the phone in the late afternoon about that upcoming event (among other things). After a brief exchange about when they will meet, Nancy asks:

(10)

I want to call attention here to only two bits of Hyla's responsive talk starting at line 02: the time formulation 'the week before my birthday' (line 06), and (at lines 08–09) the activity formulation 'I was looking in the Calendar section' (an ethnographic note: the 'Calendar' section of the *Los Angeles Times* is the 'culture and entertainment' section).

p. 448 First note that Hyla conducts an out-loud search for 'when it was'; (lines 04–06) she is taking care with this time formulation. There are, of course, many other ways of referring to the time in question: how many weeks ago; which week of the month; the date; etc. She chooses 'the week before my birthday'. And now (at lines 08–09) 'I was looking in the Calendar section': not 'reading the paper'; not 'looking *at* the Calendar section'; not the 'I saw' with which she had initially begun (at line 02), etc. Putting the two together, she is describing, she is '*doing*'—'I was looking for what to do on my birthday'.

There is not the room to expand on this here, other than to register the theme I mean to be putting before you. In turns at talk that make up sequences of actions, the elements of the talk are selected and deployed to accomplish actions and to do so recognizably; and recipients attend the talk to find what the speaker is *doing* by saying it in *those* words, in *that* way. Using 'words' or 'usages' or 'formulations' is a generic organization of practices for talk-in-interaction because that talk is designed to do things, things which fit with other things in the talk—most often the just preceding ones. Talk-in-interaction is about constructing actions and trajectories of actions—which is why it does not reduce to language, and why a pragmatics that does not attend to the sequential organization of actions is at risk of aridity.

23.2.5 The overall structural organization problem

How does the overall structural organization of an occasion of interaction get structured, what are those structures, and how does placement in the overall structural organization inform the construction and understanding of the talk and other conduct as turns, as sequences of actions, etc.?

Some actions are positioned not with respect to turns or sequences (though they are *done* in turns and sequences) or the repair space, but by reference to the occasion of interaction as a unit with its own organization. Greetings and 'goodbyes' are the most obvious exemplars, being positioned at the beginning and ending of interactional occasions, respectively. Less obvious, perhaps, is that greetings are just one of a number of action sequence types that may compose an opening phase of an interaction (Schegloff 1986), and 'goodbyes' are the last of a number of components that make up a closing section of an interaction. What happens in between can take either of two forms (as far as we know now)—a state of continuously sustained talk and what we can call 'a continuing state of incipient talk' (Schegloff and Sacks 1973). The latter term is meant to refer to settings in which the parties talk for a while and then lapse into silence (silence which does not prompt a closing of the interactional occasion), at any point in which the talk may start up again. Characteristic settings in contemporary industrial societies might be families or roommates in the living room in the evening, occupants of a car in a carpool or a long journey, seatmates on an airplane, diners at table, co-workers at a workbench, etc. In some societies, this may be the default organization of virtually all talk-in-interaction.

p. 449 Although greetings and 'goodbyes' are pretty much tied to their positions in the overall structural organization, other types of action may take on a distinctive character depending on where in the overall

structural organization of a conversation they occur. Some types of action are commonly withheld from occurrence early in a conversation; 'requests' are a case in point. Doing a request early in the organization of an interaction can be a way of marking its urgency, or some other feature known to be recognizable to the recipient(s). On the other hand, many kinds of 'noticings' are ordinarily meant to occur as soon as possible after detectability. Withholding them from early enactment can be taken as failing to notice them or as treating the noticeable as negatively valenced.

The generic character of the overall structural organization of the unit 'a single conversation' consists straightforwardly in its provision of the practices for launching and closing episodes of interaction with the commitments of attention that they place on their participants. If talk-in-interaction is going on, the parties will find themselves to be someplace in it by reference to this order of organization.

23.3 Upshot

If we understand 'pragmatics' to be addressed to what a bit of conduct is doing (in contrast to semantics' address to what it is 'meaning'), then it will not do to examine the bit of conduct alone—shorn of what preceded it and what it projects as possible 'next's. It will not do for serious inquiry because it is not so done by the participants in interaction. For recipients of an utterance register what it is doing by reference to what has preceded (including silence), and what it might be possibly projecting for the moments to come. Indeed, the utterance itself most often gives evidence in this respect, and has been designed to do so. The consequence is that what an utterance (or any part of it) is doing is woven into—and shaped by—the other orders of organization I have meant to call attention to here: spates of turns at talking, sequences of actions, dealing with trouble in production or reception, selection among alternative forms of reference and description, and place in the structure of the interactional occasion. So far, the stance taken up some forty years ago and reproduced in the first paragraph of this chapter appears to be robust and worthy of being taken seriously by those seriously committed to developing an empirically grounded account of humans' action in interaction. ↳

p. 450

Notes

1 In what follows, I have drawn generously on an earlier publication, Schegloff (2006).

2 Two sorts of exception should be mentioned here. One involves the claim that there is a place where talk-in-interaction is not so organized, as in Reisman's (1974) claim for 'contrapuntal conversation' in Antigua; Sidnell (2001) casts considerable doubt on Reisman's account. The other involves specifications of where *in conversation* the 'one at a time' claim does not hold, e.g. Lerner (2003) on 'choral co-production' or Duranti (1997b) on 'polyphonic discourse'; here the phenomenon being described is virtually defined as an object of interest *by its departure from the otherwise default organization of talk*. Work on 'overlapping talk' (e.g. Jefferson 1984, 1986, 2004; Schegloff 1987b, 2000, 2001) locates the topic by reference to its problematic relation to the default one-at-a-time organization.

3 For an analysis of quite an elaborate sequence—125 lines of transcript composing a single sequence—cf. Schegloff (1990).

4 In fact, the way repair is organized can have the consequence that it is sometimes initiated at a greater 'distance' from the trouble while still being within the boundaries that can here be only roughly characterized. For an account of this, cf. Schegloff (1992).

5 To conserve time and space, I have omitted the treatment of practices of turn construction as a generic organization in talk-in-interaction, though it has a key role in the organization of turn-taking, on the one hand, and the organization of sequences, on the other (cf. Schegloff 1996a). The final section of this chapter briefly addresses this decision.