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**CONVERSATIONAL ANALYSIS  
AND  
ANALYZING SOME EVERYDAY CONVERSATIONS  
BY USING THE FEATURES OF SPOKEN INTERACTIONS**

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**MASTER OF ARTS THESIS**

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**DEDICATION**  
**TO MY NEPHEW**  
**MERT ULUPINAR**



## ABSTRACT

In this study, we have tried to show the importance of the basic features of conversational analysis. We have argued that conversation analysis has made important contributions to the understanding of utterance meaning by showing how a large proportion of the situated significance of utterances can be traced to their surrounding sequential environments.

In our study, Chapter I and II presented an overview of what is typical of spoken interaction in general. Chapter III presented the six level model of analysis, further developed in Chapter IV which constituted a detailed description of the main strategies speakers use in conversation. Chapter V presented the relationship and communication between the speaker and the listener(s). Chapter VI explained the main theme of our study; that's, the 'Conversational Analysis' and the structure of conversation in general. And we analyzed a telephone conversation, and a face-to-face conversation in English and German in details in Chapter VII. At the end of this study; namely in Chapter VIII, there is a conclusion part which summarizes the whole study.

## ÖZET

Bu çalışmada, konuşma analizinin temel özelliklerinin önemini göstermeye uğraştık. Konuşma analizinin, ifadelerin anlamlarını buldukları ortam içerisinde kazanmalarına ne denli önemli bir katkıda bulunduğunu kanıtlamaya çalıştık.

Çalışmamızda, birinci ve ikinci bölüm sözlü etkileşimin genel olarak ne olduğuna bir bakış açısı kazandırmaktadır. Üçüncü bölümde konuşma analizinin temel altı safhası tanıtılmaktadır. Dördüncü bölüm katılımcıların bir konuşma içerisinde kullandıkları temel stratejileri detaylı olarak incelemektedir. Beşinci bölümde konuşmacı ve dinleyiciler arasındaki ilişki ve iletişim açıklanmaktadır. Altıncı bölümde çalışmamızın ana teması olan, konuşma analizi konusu ve konuşmanın genel yapısı örneklerle açıklanmaya çalışılmıştır. Yedinci bölümde İngilizce ve Almanca bir telefon konuşması, bir de yüz yüze konuşma detaylarıyla analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonunda, yani sekizinci bölümde bütün çalışmanın kısaca özetlendiği sonuç bölümü yer almaktadır.

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## KEY TO SYMBOLS

### PROSODIC SYMBOLS

#	tone unit boundary
↘	fall
↗	rise
=	level
↘↗	fall- rise
↗↘	rise-fall
↘↗	fall+rise
↗↘	rise+fall
.	brief silent pause
-	unit silent pause
--(-)	longer than unit
ə(m)	brief voiced pause (often spelt <i>uh</i> , <i>um</i> )
ə:(m)	long voiced pause (often spelt <i>er</i> , <i>erm</i> )
**	overlapping speech
{ }	subordinate tone unit
	enclosing phonetic symbols (eg <i>the</i> )
(( ))	enclosing subaudible elements

♣♣♣ Words spelt with capital letters carry nucleus

## OTHER SYMBOLS

*	backchannelling
>	current speaker continues
...	more is said
[ ]	move
<>	act
S	Subject
P	Predicator
O	Object
C	Complement
A	Adverbial
I	Initiate
R	Response
F	Follow-up
♣♣♣	Nota bene

# -CHAPTER I- INTRODUCTION

## ***1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY***

Discourse can be defined as a piece of language for communication: people use utterances to convey information and to lead each other toward an interpretation of meanings and intentions.

Since there is a close relationship between utterances of language and aspects of the communication process such as knowledge or intentions that bear an indirect and controversial relationship to language, this role greatly enlarges the scope of discourse analysis.

Though there are some different approaches to the study of conversation, at the risk of oversimplification, they can be divided into two categories. The first one is discourse analysis and the second one is conversation analysis. Other minor approaches also quite explicitly relate their frameworks to communication. Speech act theory, for example, locates the speech act as the basic unit of human linguistic communication. Interactional sociolinguistics aims to integrate what we know about grammar, culture, and interactive conventions into a general theory of verbal communication. The ethnography of communication seeks to discover how communication is culturally organized. Pragmatics begins with a general principle that underlies not just language use, but communication in general. Ethnomethodology is the study of 'ethnic' that's participants' own methods of production and interpretation of social interaction.

The major approaches, namely discourse analysis and conversation analysis, are centrally concerned with giving an account of how coherence and sequential organization in discourse is produced and understood. But the two approaches have distinctive and largely incompatible styles of analysis.

Discourse analysis employs both the methodology and the kinds of theoretical principles and primitive concepts typical of linguistics. It is essentially a series of attempts to extend the techniques so successful in linguistics beyond the unit of the sentence. The procedures employed are essentially the following:

- the isolation of a set of basic categories or units of discourse,
- the formulation of a set of concatenation rules stated over those categories, delimiting well-formed sequences of categories; that's, coherent discourses from ill-formed sequences; namely, incoherent discourses.

There are a number of other features that tend to go with these.

In contrast, conversation analysis is a rigorously empirical approach which avoids premature theory construction. The methods are essentially inductive: search is made for recurring patterns across many records of naturally occurring conversations, in contrast to the immediate categorization of restricted data which is the typical first step in discourse analysis work. Secondly, in place of a theoretical ontology of rules as used in syntactic description, we have an emphasis on the interactional and inferential consequences of the choice between alternative utterances.

The main strength of the discourse analysis approach is that it promises to integrate linguistic findings about intra-sentential organization with discourse structure; while the strength of the conversation analysis position is that the procedures employed have already proved themselves capable of yielding by far the most substantial insights that have yet been gained into the organization of conversation.

In this study, we will focus on the approach, conversation analysis only. First of all, the features of spoken interaction will be examined and then some conversations in English and German will be analyzed in terms of these features.

Although conversation analysis is less openly concerned with communication, it too ends up addressing issues that bear on how people produce and interpret language during interactions with one another. It seems, then, that what discourse analysts learn about utterances has to do with what we know about communication and that the products of discourse analyses can be integrated with our knowledge of communication.

So far we know much more about the rules and principles that govern the written language than about those governing the spoken language. But we all use the spoken language to interact with each other, and generally to a much greater extent than we use the written language, so it is highly important that we know how spoken interaction is structurally and strategically organized. Also, the same or similar principles are valid for a large number of languages, so studying the organization of spoken interaction in one language helps us understand the interactional principles of other languages.

When we are talking to each other we are not just pronouncing words. By saying something we are also doing something; an interrogative utterance such as ‘*Did you lock the front door?*’ can, for instance, function as a request for information or a reproach or a warning, depending on the circumstances. When we say something we also expect the addressee to respond in one way or another; by answering a question, by agreeing or disagreeing to a proposal, by acknowledging receipt of information, and so on, in other words by being an active partner. This is what spoken interaction is about.

Spoken interaction belongs to the area of discourse, which can be defined as any unit of language beyond the sentence, such as a dialogue in speech and a paragraph in writing. Discourse is either spoken or written. The main difference between the two is that spoken discourse chunks information into tone units marked off by tone unit boundaries with or without pauses, while written discourse chunks information into clauses and sentences marked off by punctuation marks. If we want to interact successfully in a society, we have to give importance to the features of spoken interaction.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Why conversations are not always successful is an important question. Some misunderstandings and misinterpretations occur in both mother tongue and target language. The success of a conversation depends not only on what speakers say but on participants’ whole approach to the interaction.

Conversation works smoothly only if A and B cooperate, and they have to do so on three levels: interaction, discourse organization, and communication. This means that they

are expected to observe the basic rules for turn-taking and to listen actively when they are not speaking. They are also expected to transmit what they want to transmit in a way that does not cause misinterpretation, and be prepared to make inferences from the context, whenever that is required.

Misunderstanding and mutual recrimination is unfortunately fairly common.

Participants often operate with different rules and expectations about the way in which the conversation should proceed- something that is particularly evident when people of different cultural backgrounds interact. But even within a culture, different 'rules of interpretation' may exist. It has been suggested, for example, that there are different rules governing the way in which men and women participate in a conversation. A common source of misunderstanding is the way both parties use head nods and *mhm* noises while the other is speaking something that women do much more frequently than men. Some analysts have suggested that the two sexes mean different things by this behaviour. When a woman does it, she is simply indicating that she is listening, and encouraging the speaker to continue, but the male interprets it to mean that she is agreeing with everything he is saying. By contrast, when a man does it, he is signalling that he does not necessarily agree, whereas the woman interprets it to mean that he is not always listening. Such interpretations are plausible, it is argued, because they explain two of the most widely reported reactions from participants in cross-sex conversations – the male reaction of 'It's impossible to say what a woman really thinks', and the female reaction of 'You never listen to a word I say'. The reason of misunderstanding or misinterpretation is that people don't know the interactional structure, the rules of interactional strategies and they don't use them in their daily life.

### ***1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY***

The aim of our study is to show how spoken interaction in general and, ultimately, different types of spoken interaction are structurally, strategically organized and explain the basic features of the interactional structure and the interactional strategies; besides, our main target is to analyze conversations by using the main features of spoken interaction, the interactional structure and strategies.

In a classroom atmosphere, teachers can teach their students to interact with each other successfully by using the features of the interactional structure and the interactional strategies. If students interact with one another according to these rules in the classroom, they apply these rules outside the classroom; namely, in a society life.

When a person knows the universal features of conversation, s/he doesn't monopolize, interrupt etc., s/he has a sense of when to speak or stay silent, when to proffer information or hold it back, when to stay aloof or become involved etc. Under these circumstances, few misunderstandings, misinterpretations and problems occur in an interaction. In order to supply an unproblematic atmosphere in our interactions, we have to comprehend the logic of the conversation analysis approach.

### ***1.4 METHOD, SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY***

The study of discourse is the study of units of language and language use consisting of more than a single sentence, but connected by some system of related topics. The study of discourse is sometimes more narrowly construed as the study of connected sequences of

sentences or sentence frames produced by a single speaker. In what follows we will construe the term discourse narrowly, and when more than one person is involved, we will speak of a conversation or more generally a talk-exchange. There are many forms of discourse and many forms of talk-exchange. Letters, jokes, stories, lectures, sermons, speeches, and so on, are all categories of discourse; arguments, interviews, business dealings, instruction, and conversations are categories of talk-exchanges and we are going to analyze talk-exchanges' categories by using the features of spoken interaction in our study.

The term 'interaction' could actually apply to a very large number of quite different social encounters. For example, a teacher talking to students in a classroom is one kind of interaction; others include a doctor talking to a patient in a clinic, individuals buying vegetables at the greengrocer's, taking part in courtroom proceedings, buying stamps at the post office, and dozens of other different experiences people have in which there is interpersonal exchange of talk. The kind of talk is likely to differ according to the different contexts of interaction.

In this study, the features of spoken language are mentioned, but the features of written language aren't referred. Besides only two types of conversations; that's, face-to-face conversations and telephone conversations will be dealt with. For convenience, we are going to choose the conversations which have two participants not three or more participants.

Normal conversations have a discernible structure. They tend to begin and end in certain ritualistic ways. The change of speakers tends to be orderly and based on principles

of turn taking. There tend to be recognizable levels of formality, informality, and familiarity in such interchanges. Moreover, the language seems to make available devices for smoothly integrating one's remarks into the flow of words. It should not be surprising that conversations reflect both social and linguistic principles; they are, after all, both social and linguistic events, and as such they vary to some extent from culture to culture. Some cultural differences in some conversations occur in our study too.

In our study, first of all we are going to explain the general features of spoken interaction, and examine a lot of different conversations by using these features. Later, we are going to analyze a telephone conversation, and a face-to-face conversation in English and German by using the main features of spoken interaction; namely, the interactional structure.

## -CHAPTER II- SPOKEN INTERACTION

### ***2.1 WHAT IS TYPICAL OF SPOKEN INTERACTION?***

In simple terms, spoken interaction; namely conversation, can be described as a joint, social activity where, for the most part, two or more people take turns at speaking.

Spoken interaction is governed by two main principles:

- ❖ speakers take turns
- ❖ speakers cooperate

The term 'interaction' could actually apply to a very large number of quite different social encounters. For example, a teacher talking to students in a classroom is one kind of interaction; others include a doctor talking to a patient in a clinic, or individuals taking part in courtroom proceedings, attending a committee, buying stamps at the post office, and dozens of other different experiences people have in which there is interpersonal exchange of talk. The kind of talk is likely to differ according to the different contexts of interaction. However, the structure of the talk, the basic pattern of 'I speak-you speak-I speak-you speak', will derive from that fundamental kind of interaction we acquire first and use most often. This is the structure of conversation.

There are many metaphors used to describe conversation structure. For some, conversation is like a dance, with the conversational partners co-ordinating their

movements smoothly. For others it's like traffic crossing an intersection, involving lots of alternating movement without any crashes. However, the most widely used analytic approach is based, not on dancing (there's no music) nor on traffic flow (there are no traffic signals), but on an analogy with the workings of a market economy.

In this market, there is a scarce commodity called the *floor* which can be defined as the right to speak. Having control of this scarce commodity at any time is called a *turn*. In any situation where control is not fixed in advance, anyone can attempt to get control. This is called *turn-taking*. Because it is a form of social action, turn-taking operates in accordance with a *local management system* that is conventionally known by members of a social group. The local management system is essentially a set of conventions for getting turns, keeping them, or giving them away. This system is needed most at those points where there is a possible change in who has the turn. Any possible change-of-turn point is called a *Transition Relevance Place*, or *TRP*. Within any social group, there will be features of talk (or absence of talk) typically associated with a TRP.

This type of analytic metaphor provides us with a basic perspective in which speakers having a conversation are viewed as taking turns at holding the floor. They accomplish change of turn smoothly because they are aware of the local management system for taking those turns at an appropriate TRP. The metaphor can be applied to those conversations where speakers cooperate and share the floor equally. It can also be used to describe those conversations where speakers seem to be in competition, fighting to keep the floor and preventing others from getting it. These patterns of conversational interaction differ substantially from one social group to another.

Typically, only one person speaks at a time and there tends to be an avoidance of silence between speaking turns.

[1] Her: Come over for some coffee later?

Him: Oh ... eh ... I'd love to ... but you see ... I ... I'm supposed to get  
this thing finished ... you know

(Yule, 1996, p.150)

If more than one participant tries to talk at the same time, one of them usually stops, as in this example, where A stops until B has finished:

[2] A: Didn't you \* know wh-\*

B: \* But he must've been there by two\*

A: Yes but you knew where he was going

(Yule, 1996, p.143)

Co-operativeness and harmony are very crucial factors for a genuine conversation, but this does not mean that the listener always waits for the speaker to finish before taking over, and speakers never disagree, object, or contradict each other. Besides, interaction is possible without a proper turntaking, that's in cases where there is a temporarily dominant speaker and the other party's contribution is reduced to so-called 'backchannels' (realized by items like *m, yes, oh, I see, really*) as a sign of attention.

Some lexical items, such as *well, sort of, and you know* help the speaker to take, hold and yield the turn and to appeal for feedback.

Generally, participants wait until one speaker indicates that s/he has finished, usually by signaling a *completion point*. Speakers can mark their turns as “complete” in a number of ways: by asking a question, or by pausing at the end of a completed syntactic structure like a phrase or a sentence. And other participants can indicate that they want to take the speaking turn, also in a number of ways. They can start to make short sounds, usually repeated, while the speaker is talking, and often use body shifts or facial expressions to signal that they have something to say.

There are some different expectations of conversational style and different strategies of participation in conversational interaction. Some of these strategies seem to be the source of what is sometimes described by participants as “rudeness” or “shyness”. If one speaker appears to cut in on another speaker, it is called rudeness; if one speaker keeps waiting for an opportunity to take a turn and none seems to occur, it is called shyness.

One strategy, which may be overused by “long-winded” speakers, or those used to “holding the floor” (like lecturers, politicians), is designed to avoid having normal completion points occur. We all use this strategy to some extent, usually in situations where we have to work out what we are trying to say while actually saying it.

Speaker turns usually contain various types of hesitation phenomena, such as silent and filled pauses (marked - ə:m in the transcriptions), verbal fillers (*well, I mean, sort of*), false starts, repetitions, and incomplete utterances in spontaneous speech. In this respect, especially in everyday conversations, the grammar is often fairly intricate, but the vocabulary is very general, not complex and not much varied. If the normal expectation is that completion points are marked by the end of a sentence and a pause, then one way to

“keep the turn” is to avoid having those two indicators occur together. If you want to hold your turn, don’t pause at the end of sentences; make your sentences run on by using connectors like *and, then, so, but*; place your pauses at points where the message is clearly incomplete; and preferably “fill” the pause with hesitation markers such as *er, em, uh, ah*. Otherwise, this situation results in overlapping turns and interruptions.

[3] A: that’s their favourite restaurant because they ... enjoy French food and  
when they were ... in France they couldn’t believe it that ... you know  
that they had ... that they had had better meals back home

The position of the pauses (marked by ...) in this example is before and after verbs rather than at the end of sentences. Namely, the speaker tries to keep her/his turn.

[4] X: well that film really was ... \*wasn’t what he was good at\*  
Y: ... \*when di-\*

X: I mean his other ... em his later films were much more ... er really more  
in the romantic style and that was more what he was ... you know ...  
em best at doing

Y: So when did he make that one

(Yule, 1996, p.144)

In this example, speaker X produces filled pauses after having almost lost the turn at his first brief hesitation.

These types of strategies shouldn’t be considered undesirable or domineering. They are present in the conversational speech of most people and they are part of what makes

conversation work. We recognize these subtle indicators as ways of organizing our turns and negotiating the complex business of social interaction via language. In fact, one of the most noticeable features of conversational discourse is that it is generally very cooperative. This observation has been formulated as a principle of conversation.

Questions and answers constitute the backbone of conversation. Conversations can be started by using questions. Questions can be used over and over again to keep it going and rekindle it when it is on the point of fading out. In narrative parts of a conversation, on the other hand, informs, ie speech acts which offer information, play the main role. The role of questions is emphasized in extract [5], the role of informs, together with most of the linguistic features that characterize spoken interaction, is illustrated in extract [6]. In this conversation, there are some brief and unit pauses (. and -). Simultaneous speech is indicated by the asterisks. Two young university secretaries are discussing study prospects in extract [5]:

[TURNS]

- [5] A: **isn't it going to be a strange and impossible task for me picking** 1  
**up linguistics** and I'm entirely. at least almost entirely ignorant of it  
at present .
- B: go to find out the right seminars to go to that's what I did when I 2  
first came
- A: the right seminars . yes . 3
- B: you know I went to some . 4
- A: cos \*lectures are rather a waste of\* time are they 5
- B: **\*what did you read English\* or not** 6
- A: yes I read English but only from Kyd onwards so that you see I 7

didn't even do any Old English or any Anglo-Saxon at all .

- B: I don't suppose you need Old English and Anglo-Saxon 8
- A: well no . but *əm* you know \*I don't have any language\* 9
- B: \**əm* well I hadn't\* done any English at all you know since O-level . 10
- A: yea . 11
- B: and I went to some second year seminars where there are only about 12  
half a dozen people \*and\* they discussed what a
- A: \*m\* \*
- B: word was \*and - \* what's a sentence
- A: \*m\* \*
- B: that's \*ev\*en more difficult .
- A: \*yeah\* yeah - \*
- B: and so on...

(Stenström, 1996, p.2)

'Questioning sequences' are used in three places in this conversation. The first, the second and the third question occur respectively in turn 1, turn 6, and turn 8. The primary role of the questions is to elicit an answer; doing so, they also keep the conversation going. The reason why turn 5 (*cos \* lectures are rather a waste\* of time are they*) does not receive an answer is probably that it is simultaneous with turn 6. B simply ignores it. The minimal response items \*m\*, \*m\*, and \*yeah\* yeah are all backchannels (indicated by \*) which let B go on speaking. They are consequently not turns. An instance of partly overlapping speech is found in turns 9 and 10, where A says \*I don't have any language\* at the same time as B says \**əm* well I hadn't\*. Hesitation markers are represented by *but əm you know*

in turn 9 and *em well* in turn 10. These markers help the current speaker hold her/his turn. In addition, *you know* has a ‘social’ function, appealing for understanding.

In extract [6], A, who is a young girl, is telling a female friend, B, about her recent holidays in Spain. She is apparently very excited:

[TURNS]

- [6] A: ... but it's so nice and relaxed down there **I mean** compared with 1  
 London - **I mean I I I** . I found myself – going into shops and  
 people smiled at you and I . **I** was quite taken aback genuinely **I**  
**\* mean I \***  
 B: \*m\* . m- . \*
- A: ə you know the feeling **you you you you you**
- B: yes \*one asks oneself if you're putting on this deadpan face you 2  
 know\*
- A: \*((several sylls))\* yes 3
- B: yes 4
- A: and these people smile and you – well you don't know how to react 5  
 at first because it's so \*strange\*
- B: \*yes\* I felt that in Scotland – yes (- laughs) 6

(Stenström, 1996, p.3)

There are a lot of repetitions in turn 1 (*I*, and *you*), and two attempts at reformulations starting by *I mean* in turn 1 (*I mean I I, I \*mean I\**). These repetitions in the conversation reflect her excitement. Like *you know*, *I mean* appeals for understanding and sympathy, and it is a useful device for adding an afterthought (turn 1). *Well* in turn 5 seems

to have a similar function. The fact that A cannot wait for B to finish is reflected in the inaudible speech, indicated by ‘((several sylls))’ in turn 3.

### **2.1.1 CONVERSATIONAL SUCCESS**

For a conversation to be successful, in most social context, the participants need to feel they are contributing something to it and are getting something out of it. For this to happen, certain conditions must apply.

Everyone must have an opportunity to speak: no one should be monopolizing or constantly interrupting. The participants need to make their roles clear, especially if there are several possibilities (e.g. “Speaking as a mother/ linguist/ Catholic...”). They need to have a sense of when to speak or stay silent; when to proffer information or hold it back; when to stay aloof or become involved. They need to develop a mutual tolerance, to allow for speaker unclarity and listener inattention: perfect expression and comprehension are rare, and the success of a dialogue largely depends on people, recognizing their communicative weaknesses, through the use of rephrasing (e.g. ‘Let me put that another way’) and clarification (e.g. ‘Are you with me?’)

There is a great deal of ritual in conversation, especially at the beginning and end, and when topics change. For example, people cannot simply leave a conversation at any random point, unless they wish to be considered socially inept or ill-mannered. They have to choose their point of departure or construct a special reason for leaving. Routines for concluding a conversation are particularly complex, and co-operation is crucial if it is not to end abruptly, or in an embarrassed silence. The parties may prepare for their departure a

long way in advance, such as by looking at their watches or giving a verbal early warning. A widespread convention is for visitors to say they must leave some time before they actually intend to depart, and for the hosts to ignore the remark. The second mention then permits both parties to act.

The topic of the conversation is also an important variable. In general it should be one with which everyone feels at ease: 'safe' topics between strangers in English situations usually include the weather, pets, children, and the local context (e.g. while waiting in a room or queue); 'unsafe' topics include religious and political beliefs and problems of health. There are some arbitrary divisions: asking what someone does for a living is generally safe, asking how much they earn is not. Cultural variations can cause problems: commenting about the cost of the furniture or the taste of a meal may be acceptable in one society but not in another.

It is difficult to generalize about what is normal, polite, or antisocial in conversational practice, as there is so much cultural variation. David Crystal (1989, p.116) states that silence varies in status. It is an embarrassment in English conversations, unless there are special reasons (such as in moments of grief). However, in some cultures (e.g. Lapps, Danes, the Western Apache) it is quite normal for participants to become silent. Often, who speaks, and how much is spoken, depends on the social status of the participants - for example, those of lower rank may be expected to stay silent if their seniors wish to speak. Even the basic convention of 'one person speaks at a time' may be broken. In Antigua, for example, the phenomenon of several people speaking at once during a whole conversation is a perfectly normal occurrence.

## **2.1.2 SPEAKERS TAKE TURNS**

That speakers take turns is the general rule for a conversation.

### **2.1.2.1 TURNS**

A *turn* is everything the current speaker says before the next speaker takes over. A speaker in possession of the turn does not just produce an utterance, s/he also makes at least one interactive move and performs at least one communicative act.

Probably the most widely recognized conversational convention is that people take turns to speak. The fact that people know when it is their turn is the most important question. Some rules must be present, otherwise conversations would be continually breaking down into a disorganized jumble of interruptions and simultaneous talk. In many formal situations, such as committee meetings and debates, there are often explicit markers showing that a speaker is about to yield the floor, and indicating who should speak next ('I think Mr Smith will know the answer to that question'). This can happen in informal situations too ('What do you think, John?'), but there the turn-taking cues are usually more subtle.

People do not simply stop talking when they are ready to yield the floor. They usually signal some way in advance that they are about to conclude. The clues may be semantic ('So anyway, ...', 'Last but not least ...'); but more commonly the speech itself can be modified to show that a turn is about to end - typically, by lowering its pitch, loudness, or speed. Body movements and patterns of eye contact are especially important.

While speaking, we look at and away from our listener in about equal proportions; but as we approach the end of a turn, we look at the listener more steadily. Similarly, when talking to a group of people, we often look more steadily at a particular person, to indicate that in our view this should be the next speaker.

Listeners are not passive in all of this. There are several ways of signalling that someone wants to talk next. Most obviously, the first person in a group actually to start speaking, after the completion of a turn, will usually be allowed to hold the floor. More subtly, we can signal that we want to speak next by an observable increase in body tension - by leaning forward, or producing an audible intake of breath. Less subtly, we can simply interrupt - a strategy which may be tolerated, if the purpose is to clarify what the speaker is saying, but which more usually leads to social sanctions.

Some turns are very short and consist of a single word, like turns 1 and 4 in the following four-turn closing section in extract [7]:

	[TURNS]
[7] B: Okay	1
A: Okay	2
B: Bye	3
A: Bye	4

(Levinson, 1997, p.325)

Some turns are very long and resemble short monologues, as in extract [8] which deals with the 'Irish question':

## [8] TURN

A: but I don't I mean. because. because in Ireland. everyone insists on remembering things right back to - æm Henry the second - I mean all those things are important this is where the British. just sort of completely can't understand them because. I mean all we're we're quaintly interested in - things that happened. two hundred years ago here I mean they are of historical. interest - but it doesn't really affect our day to day thinking - but . I mean. I don't . I mean...

(Stenström, 1996, p.4)

The use of *verbal fillers* is extensive, especially *I mean*, which indicates that the speaker is busy planning what to say as he goes along. Besides there are two main hesitation areas, at the beginning of the turn (*but I don't I mean. because. because*) and at the end but it is really in the middle of the turn (*- but. I mean. I don't. I mean*).

There are some basic features of turn-taking in any conversation:

1. Speaker change recurs, or, at least, occurs.
2. Overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time.
3. Occurrences of more than one speaker at a time are common, but brief .
4. Transitions from one turn to a next with no gap and no overlap between them are common. Together with transitions characterized by slight gap or slight overlap, they make up the vast majority of transitions.
5. Turn order is not fixed, but varies.
6. Turn size is not fixed, but varies.

7. Length of conversation is not fixed, specified in advance.
8. What parties say is not fixed, specified in advance.
9. Relative distribution of turns is not fixed, specified in advance.
10. Turn-allocation techniques are obviously used. A current speaker may select a next speaker (as when a current speaker addresses a question to another party); parties may self-select, in starting to talk.
11. Talk can be continuous or discontinuous.
12. Number of parties can change.
13. Various “turn-constructural units” are employed. Turns can be projectedly “one word long,” or, for example, they can be sentential in length.
14. Repair mechanisms for dealing with turn-taking errors and violations obviously are available for use. For example, if two parties find themselves talking at the same time, one of them will stop prematurely, thus repairing the trouble.

#### **2.1.2.2 SPEAKER SHIFTS**

One of the basic facts of conversation is that the roles of speaker and listener change, and this occurs with remarkably little overlapping speech and remarkably few silences. Sacks (Coulthard, 1985, p.59) suggests that there is an underlying rule in American English conversation – ‘at least and not more than one party talks at a time’. This is not an empirical fact, because there are obviously many instances of short pauses and short overlaps (simultaneous speeches), but rather a normative or ‘observably oriented to’ feature of conversation – in other words, it is a rule used by conversationalists themselves.

If more than or less than one party is talking it is 'noticeable' and participants set out to 'remedy' the situation and return to a state of one and only one speaker. If the problem is more than one speaker one of the participants usually yields the floor quickly:

[9] LORI: But that wz – Then you wentuh Fre:ds

ELLEN: We \*we left – we left -\*

LORI: \*No. That's the time we left Fre:ds\*

(Coulthard,1985, p.60)

while if the problem is silence other speakers begin speaking, or indicate their intention to speak by noises like 'er' or 'mm'. In other words turns to speak typically occur successively without overlaps or gaps between them. Overlapping is dealt with by one speaker ending his turn quickly, gaps between turns by another speaker beginning his turn or simply indicating that his turn has begun and incorporating the silence into it.

A second feature of conversation is that speaker change recurs, and this presents problems for the participants about how they can achieve change of speaker while maintaining a situation in which at least, but not more than, one speaker speaks at a time.

A current speaker can exercise three degrees of control over the next turn. Firstly, He can select which participant will speak next, either by naming him or by alluding to him with a descriptive phrase, 'the Right Honorable Member for Bexley South'. If the current speaker selects the next speaker, he usually also selects the type of next utterance by producing the first part of an adjacency pair, for example a question or a greeting which constrains the selected speaker to produce an appropriate answer or return greeting.

[10] DOCTOR: Hello, Mrs Jones

PATIENT: Hello, Doctor

DOCTOR: Hello, Catherine

CHILD: Hello

(Coulthard,1985, p.60)

In this extract, the doctor selects the next speakers by saying their names in his turn.

These options are in an ordered relationship – the first over-rides the second and the second over-rides the third. If the current speaker selects the next speaker he alone should talk next; when an unselected speaker takes a turn already assigned to a selected one, the right of the selected speaker to speak next is usually preserved:

[11] A (to C): Tell us about yourself so we can find something bad about you.

B: Yeah hurry up.

(Coulthard,1985, p.61)

Speakers wait for each other to stop talking before starting to speak in the ideal case. The result is a *smooth speaker shift*; that's the speaker B lets the speaker A finish before taking the turn and vice versa. But if one party takes over without waiting for the other to stop talking, the result is an *unsmooth speaker shift*; namely speaker B does not let speaker A finish before taking the turn and vice versa. If what one speaker says overlaps with part of what the other says, s/he is simply *cut off*; that's to say, the speaker A stops short when the speaker B starts to speak and vice versa.

In the example below, speaker B has apparently lost the thread, as indicated by the verbal fillers (*I mean, sort of, rather*). A, on the other hand, is eager to present his opinion and simply butts in. At this point, the take-over is fairly simple. The following extract is about the Irish question:

[12] B: I mean - - - the British are at a loss in a sense to understand problems like this because it doesn't fit - it doesn't fit into any of the criteria - that . ə:m - they understand being I mean sort of \*rather a ((dull lot of ...))\*

A: \*well I just feel you know personally I think you all\* well know my feelings about this I just . feel that the whole business about partition was terribly terribly unjust

(Stenström, 1996, p.5)

### 2.1.2.3 BACKCHANNELS & OVERLAPS

All utterances are not in proper turns and *backchannels* are not. Since backchannels do not involve a speaker shift, they distinguish from turns. On the contrary, they acknowledge what the current speaker says and generally encourage her/him to go on. We can clarify the term 'backchannel' that there are also linguistic means of not taking the turn when one has the opportunity, or simply of making it clear to the speaker that we are attending to the message. These are usually referred to as backchannel responses, and consist of vocalizations such as "*mm, ah-ha*", and short words and phrases such as "*yeah, no, right, sure*". Backchannel realizations vary interestingly from culture to culture (some

languages have backchannel vocalizations that sound odd in English, such as “*eh-eh*”, or highly nasalized sounds).

If two participants are speaking at the same time, that’s simultaneously, it’s called *overlap*. Overlap is another feature of turn-taking, namely, speakers predict one another’s utterances and often complete them for them, or overlap with them as they complete. Natural conversations can often seem chaotic because of backchannel, utterance-completions and overlaps, as in the extract [13]. A and B are discussing domestic pets:

[13] A: Well, of course, people who go to the vet’s \*are\*

B: \*Mm\*.

A: interested in the cats and do\*gs, ain’t they?

B: \*Yeah, but the people that first  
Have pets kit-pets er don’t \*realize\* what’s \*involved, do they?

A: \*care\* \*Well it sorts them  
out, you know, those that don’t \*care that’s \*it so ... but

B: \*Mm \*Mm

A: if you wanna, you know, somebody that’s keen \*on having a \*pet

B: \*Mm \*Mm

A: and want it in \*good order.

B: \*Done ... done properly, that’s right, yeah.

(McCarthy, 2002, p.127)

There are a lot of backchannels, generally vocalizations, (*Mm, Yeah*) and overlaps (*Well it sorts them, Done ... done properly, that’s right, yeah*) in extract [13].

Since backchannels are inserted in the course of the current talk, they often cause partial overlaps (> in the transcriptions indicates that the same speaker goes on):

[14] A: well look if in that case I'd like to do it. I mean I really want to do \*it\*

I'm not being

B: \*yes\*

>A: funny \*or anything\*

B: \*no no\*

B's *yes*, overlapping with A's *it*, expresses agreement with *I really want to*, and B's *no no*, which overlaps with A's *or anything* expresses agreement with *I'm not being funny or anything*.

The listener, of course, pays more attention to the message than to the syntax, with the result that backchannels often interfere with the syntactic continuity of the utterance. Such interferences are generally overlooked by the current speaker:

[15] A: . . . I just felt you know

B: \*yes yes quite yes\*

>A: \*I didn't want to be\* pressurized like that any more

(Stenström, 1996, p.6)

Silent feedback that's gestures, head nods, eye glances, and facial expressions may replace verbal feedback, and laughter is another, very frequent feedback signal.

#### **2.1.2.4 WHAT IS DONE IN A TURN?**

In turn-taking system, one participant, A, talks, stops; another, B, starts, talks, stops; and so we obtain an A-B-A-B-A-B distribution of talk across two participants.

What we say in a turn may start a conversation, it may keep it going or terminate it. By saying something we make the other party respond in one way or the other - or there would be no conversation. For example, a question requires an answer, to mention the obvious case. Moreover, whatever we say means something, and it means something 'in that particular context'. In other words, the turn is part of the structural organization of the conversation, and what is said is part of the interactional and pragmatic strategies adopted by the speaker to make the listener understand what s/he intends.

First there are the surprising facts that less than 5 per cent of the speech stream is delivered in overlap, yet gaps between one person speaking and another starting are frequently measurable in just a few micro-seconds and they average amounts measured in a few tenths of a second.

A second puzzle is that, whatever the mechanism responsible, it must be capable of operating in quite different circumstances: the number of parties may vary from two to twenty or more; persons may enter and exit the pool of participants; turns at speaking can vary from minimal utterances to many minutes of continuous talk; and if there are more than two parties then provision is made for all parties to speak without there being any specified order or 'queue' of speakers.

As we said before; recurrent features of conversants' speech at points where the floor is yielded to another participant is called Transition Relevance Places, that's to say, TRPs. Operating on the turn-units are the following rules, where C is current speaker, N is next speaker, and TRP is the recognizable end of a turn-constructural unit:

**Rule 1- applies initially at the first TRP of any turn**

- (a) If C selects N in current turn, then C must stop speaking, and N must speak next, transition occurring at the first TRP after N-selection.
- (b) If C does not select N, then any (other) party may self-select, first speaker gaining rights to the next turn, that's, whoever speaks first gets the floor.
- (c) If C has not selected N, and no other party self-selects under option (b), then C may (but need not) continue. (i.e. claim rights to a further turn-constructural unit)

**Rule 2- applies at all subsequent TRPs**

When Rule 1 (c) has been applied by C, then at the next TRP Rules 1 (a)-(c) apply, and recursively at the next TRP, until speaker change is effected.

Famous ethnomethodologists, Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, (Green, 1989, p.151) claimed that these rules predict that speakers are able to distinguish among (a) the brief *gaps* that occur when the right to speak is transferred according to the first or second rule, (b) the longer gaps that occur when the third rule is invoked, (c) *pauses* that occur in a

party's speech which are not at a TRP, and (d) attributable *silences* that occur when a selected party fails to speak. Such a party might have nothing to say, or might be too embarrassed to speak, or might intend his silence to convey (implicate) an attitude such as disapproval, displeasure, or disassociation.

#### **2.1.2.5 CONVERSATIONAL STYLE**

Many of the features which characterize the turn-taking system of conversation are invested with meaning by their users. Even within a broadly defined community of speakers, there is often sufficient variation to cause potential misunderstanding. For example, some individuals expect that participation in a conversation will be very active, that speaking rate will be relatively fast, with almost no pausing between turns, and with some overlap or even completion of the other's turn. This is one *conversational style*. It has been called a *high involvement style*. It differs substantially from another style in which speakers use a slower rate, expect longer pauses between turns, do not overlap, and avoid interruption or completion of the other's turn. This non-interrupting, non-imposing style has been called a *high considerateness style*.

When a speaker who typically uses the first style gets into a conversation with a speaker who normally uses the second style, the talk tends to become one-sided. The active participation style will tend to overwhelm the other style. Neither speaker will necessarily recognize that it is the conversational styles that are slightly different. Instead, the more rapid-fire speaker may think the slower-paced speaker just doesn't have much to say, is shy, and perhaps boring or even stupid. In return, he or she is likely to be viewed as noisy,

pushy, domineering, selfish, and even tiresome. Features of conversational style will often be interpreted as personality traits.

### ***2.1.3 A TURN IS NOT JUST A CONTINUOUS FLOW OF SPEECH***

We write in sentences, but we don't speak only in sentences. While speaking, we can use sentences, clauses, phrases, vocabularies and sometimes sounds. What we can safely say, is that when we speak we divide the flow of words into some kind of units.

These units are;

- ❖ Pause units
- ❖ Tone units
- ❖ Information units

#### ***2.1.3.1 PAUSE UNITS***

Pauses reflect how we structure a message, where we hesitate, where we separate semantic-syntactic chunks and where we breathe.

There are two types of pause;

- ❖ Silent Pauses
- ❖ Filled Pauses

The number and duration of pauses used by a speaker will obviously vary according to his rate of speech. Both pauses vary in length. The standard length, unit,

varies according to the rhythm of each individual speaker. In other words, pause length is relative.

There are four types of silent pauses;

- ❖ Brief Silent Pauses (.)
- ❖ Unit Silent Pauses (-)
- ❖ Double Silent Pauses (- -)
- ❖ Treble Silent Pauses (- - -)

There are two types of filled pauses ;

- ❖ Brief Filled Pauses (əm)
- ❖ Unit Filled Pauses (ə:m)

[16] a. but (0.8)

b. as (0.3) is well known (1.1)

c. it (0.2) very frequently happens that you you'll get a (0.3) co-occurrence of (0.2) an item with (1.0)

d. a recognised grammatical class (1.0)

e. e:m (0.4) say a class of possessives or a class of (0.7)

f. e:m negatives of one sort or another (0.6)

g. so that it is (0.4) e:m (1.1)

h. we cannot restrict lexical patterning (0.6)

i. entirely to items as items (1.1)

j. e:m (0.6)

k. whatever that may mean in itself may mean (1.2)

(numbers indicate pause lengths in seconds)

(Brown-Yule, 1989, p.161)

This extract from a post-graduate seminar presents a sample of speech very near the beginning of the seminar before the speaker has 'got into his stride'. It is a perfectly familiar phenomenon and one which produces particularly 'dis-fluent' speech. The brief silent pauses (0.2-0.3) are barely perceptible, but unit silent pauses (0.4-0.9) and double silent pauses (1.0-1.9) are noticeable. But we aren't aware of any treble silent pauses (3.2-16.0). There are four occurrences of pauses immediately adjacent to 'e:m', unit filled pause, a conventional 'planning marker'. Pauses regularly occur following sentence boundaries ('d', 'e', 'h' and 'k')

Silent and filled pauses are used for partly the same, partly different purposes. Obviously, only silent pauses serve as *breathing* pauses. Both silent and filled pauses, often combined, are used for *hesitation* and for *strategic* purposes (eg taking, holding and yielding the turn).

The problem with pause units is that hesitations are fairly unpredictable. Speakers hesitate not only at the beginning of a turn before making up their minds, but also in other places in the turn.

#### [17] Hesitation pauses

A: and what will it be .

B: əm - ə: an aperitival small whisky about that size.

(Stenström, 1996, p.8)

### [18] Strategic pauses

A: so that's the picture

B: ə:m - now this irons that I that I thought might be . worth looking at if  
Carol . agreed...

(Stenström, 1996, p.8)

In both cases, the pause combinations come at the beginning of a turn. In the first case, what B says is a reaction to what A said; B is offered a drink and cannot make up his mind right away. In the second case, B starts talking about a new topic, using the pause as a take-off. Some hesitation may of course be involved even here.

#### 2.1.3.2 TONE UNITS

We speak with a certain rhythm, with the result that we automatically divide utterances into word groups, or *tone units*. The largest syntactic unit corresponding to a tone unit is generally the clause (simple sentence). Moreover, the tone unit corresponds directly to an *information unit*.

Each tone unit has one 'pitch-prominent' syllable carrying the nuclear tone (the direction of which is marked by a little arrow) and the main information load. There is only one function of pitch prominence, 'the main burden of the pitch movement', and that is to mark the focus of new information within the tone group. They are also exploited by speakers to mark the beginning of a speaker's turn, the beginning of a new topic, special emphasis, and contrast, as well as information which the speaker presents as new.

Capital letters are used in the transcription examples for the word containing the pitch-prominent syllable. Tone units are marked off by tone unit boundaries ('#'), which are often accompanied by a pause.

Tones are: fall (↘), rise(↗), level (=), fall-rise (↘↗), rise-fall (↗↘), fall + rise (↘↗),  
rise + fall (↗↘)

Consider the recital by a four-year-old of a fairy story which is very well known to her:

- [19] a. in a FAR away LAND# --  
b. there LIVED a BAD NAUGHty FAIRy# ---  
c. and a HANDsome PRINCE# --  
d. and a LOVEly PRINcess# ---  
e. and she was a REALy WICKed fairy# ---

(Brown-Yule, 1989, p.165)

The child chunks her story into information units which are realized as tone groups. In tone groups *a-d*, the last lexical item receives a tonic syllable, which marks this as the focus of new information. In tone group *e*, the tonic syllable does not fall on the last lexical item, *fairy*, since the 'fairy' is already given in the preceding co-text and is treated as given by the speaker. The tonic syllable (it is characterised as having the maximal unit of pitch on it or it is called as 'nuclear syllable', 'sentence stress') falls on the last lexical item which indicates 'new' information, on *WICKed*. Besides we have capitalized the

phonologically prominent syllables and tone units are marked off by tone unit boundaries in this representation.

	[TURNS]
[20] A: and D'YOU . teach # -	1
B: NO# I DON'T# because I'm not ENGLISH at all#	2
A: I SEE#	3

(Stenström, 1996, p.8)

Turns 1 and 3 contain only one tone unit. Turn 2 contains three tone units, the first consisting of one word (*NO*), the second consisting of two words (*I DON'T*) and the third consisting of six words (*because I'm not ENGLISH at all*). In this extract, all the tone units, except *NO#* in turn 2, correspond to a clause. Tone units consist minimally of a nucleus: *NO#*, the maximal configuration is: *because I'm not ENGLISH at all#*; 'because' is prehead, 'I'm not' is head, 'ENGLISH' is nucleus and 'at all' is tail.

Some turns contain so-called *subordinate tone units* (marked off by { } ). Subordinate tone unit boundaries mark the beginning and end of subordinate tone units. Complementary additions, afterthoughts and comments like *as you know* and *it seems to me*, and so on, tend to occur in a subordinate tone unit.

[21] A: you SEE# we we . are members of the faculty of ARTS {of the UNIVERSITY#}#

(Stenström, 1996, p.9)

In extract [21], there are two tone units ('you S=EE', 'we we . we are members of the faculty of ARTS') and there is only one subordinate tone unit ('of the UNIVERSITY') since it is an extra information.

The average length of a tone unit is four to five words but it can be as long as fifteen words or more. The length depends on how fast the speaker talks, that's, the faster s/he talks the larger the number of words per tone unit.

### 2.1.3.3 INFORMATION UNITS

The prosodic division of turns into tone units is not completely arbitrary; it is a consequence of organization of information into *information units*, where the information focus is marked by intonation, ie *nuclear tone*.

In [22], each turn contains only one tone unit and consequently only one information unit:

[22] BEN: They gotta- a garage sale#

LORI: Where#

BEN: On third avenue#

(Schenkein, 1978, p.30)

In [23], the turn consists of seven tone units, ie seven information units. This is an extract from a transcription, where the speaker organises his information into phonological chunks, tone groups, which are co-extensive with both clauses and phrases:

[23] A: I had one of those nice old tropical houses# I was very lucky# it was about thirty years old# on stone pillars# with a long staircase up# and folding doors# back on to a verandah#

(Brown-Yule, 1989, p.157)

Halliday (Brown-Yule, 1989, p.157) indicates that ‘the tone group is a phonological unit that functions as realisation of information structure. It is not co-extensive with the sentence or the clause or any other unit of sentence structure; but it is co-extensive, within limits determined by the rhythm, with the information unit’. This insistence on tying the information unit directly to the form of phonological realisation yields some odd-looking information units as in [24].

[24] A: ... not only THAT but you# didn’t know# where to start# LOOKing for the# other and a# GAIN as I# say ... (Brown-Yule, 1989, p.159)

Exactly how a message is organized is up to the individual speaker. In extract [25], the information is conveyed stepwise and the emphasis is achieved not only through nuclear placement but also silent pauses:

[25] A: The name **AKKAD** is a vey, has a very long **STORY**# it **GOES** back to at least 2,000 **YEARS**# it was a **STATE** between Syria, Iraq, and Jordan# they **CALLED** it the the **AKADA**#... and this is where my **NAME** been, ah, **DERIVEN** from# you know# ... I’m bluffing# but this is a small **STORY** about **NAME**#

(McCarthy, 2002, p.126)

The nuclear word, ie the information focus, is usually at the end of the tone unit.

#### **2.1.4 SPEAKERS TALK ABOUT SOMETHING**

The term ‘conversation’ is widely used in a non-technical sense, and some discourse analysts use this term to describe any kind of oral interaction. Because people interact linguistically in such a wide range of social situations, on such a variety of topics, and with such an unpredictable set of participants, it has proved very difficult to determine the extent to which conversational behaviour is systematic, and to generalize about it.

Conversations generally consist of three main parts:

- ❖ Opening
- ❖ Message
- ❖ Closing

There is generally an *opening* where the parties greet each other, ask about each other’s health and maybe exchange a couple of polite phrases.

Speakers talk about something and a conversation is about something. This is referred to as the *message* of the conversation. The message is generally not embarked upon at once, however, nor does the conversation end abruptly as soon as the message has been dealt with.

There is a *closing* where the parties ‘settle the affairs’ and say goodbye.

We can easily see three parts of conversation, opening, message and closing, in the following brief telephone conversation; a departmental secretary, B, calls a male academic,

A:

[26] A: HELLO#

B: Mr HURD# it's professor CLARK's secretary# \*from

Paramilitary\* COLLEGE#

A: \*oh YES#\*

Opening

professor Clark asked if you were . going to collect some

SCRIPTS{TONIGHT#}# \* SOUND\* scripts# .

B: \*YES#\* MHM#

A: if you'd collect them from Mr GORDON# \*who will be  
going to\* the PLA meeting#

B: \*Mr GORDON#\* - YES# =M#

A: RIGHT#

B: Y=ES#

Message

\* . thanks\* very MUCH#

A: \*(- giggles)\* OK# . B=YE#

B: B=YE#

Closing

(Stenström, 1996, p.12)

Mr Hurd hears the signal, picks up the telephone and answers (*HELLO*). That Professor Clark's secretary at the other end introduces herself addressing him by his name is called 'opening part'. A brief introduction makes way for a request, the real purpose of

the call. The request is accepted, but to make sure that everything is in order, the secretary asks Mr Hurd to reconfirm the agreement (*RIGHT - Y=ES*), this is a message part. That the call is terminated by a thanking exchange (*thanks very MUCH- OK*) and a farewell exchange (*B=YE - B=YE*) is called a closing part.

In some conversations, the message consists of one single *topic*, in others of several different topics. Topics, in their turn, usually split up into *subtopics*. Topics could be defined, on the formal level, as stretches of talk bounded by certain topic and/or transactional markers, such as lexical ones (*by the way, to change the subject*), or phonological ones (changes in pitch). Or we could take a semantic framework, and try to express the content of different segments of talk according to single-word or phrasal titles (e.g. 'holidays', 'buying a house'), or else we could use interactive criteria and say that something is only a topic if more than one speaker makes an utterance relevant to it. We could equally take an overall pragmatic approach and say that topics are strings of utterances perceived as relevant to one another by participants in talk. Or we could take a purely surface cohesional view, and say that topics end where chains of lexical cohesion peter out.

Topics can be the reason for talk or they can arise because people are already talking. The former situation is exemplified in this extract, where A has put on some new clothes for a special occasion and B and C are casting an eye over his appearance, at A's request:

[27] (A comes in holding his jacket.)

B: That looks very nice, put it on and let's have a look at you.

A: I don't like the two buttons, I didn't know it had two buttons, I thought



view, based on relevance criteria, and simply say 'whether A's coat is all right' is the topic. We could give it a semantic-field 'headline' such as 'trying on clothes', since all the utterances are relevant to that and the main lexical items belong to that semantic field, or we could make it more functional and call it 'convincing A that his clothes are nice', since the functions of most of the discourse acts are concerned with that end, and all three parties are collaborating on that subject. On the other hand, for A himself, it is clear that 'three-button versus two-button jackets' is an important 'topic', but if we consider it interactively, it gets short shrift from the others, especially from C, who interrupts and cuts dead A's attempt to revive the topic. We therefore conclude that 'three or two buttons' is a *sub-topic*, or merely a *speaker's topic* that never quite makes it to become a full *conversational topic*.

Extract [27] was occasioned by particular events, and talk was an essential ingredient in achieving a specific goal, but in most casual conversations, we find topics being raised for a variety of reasons, often just to keep the talk going, simply because people are together and 'chatting'. It is on such occasions that we see most clearly how topics start, grow, shift, merge into one another and come to a close.

Sometimes a topic is temporarily broken off by a *digression*, ie the introduction of a (completely) different topic, but much more common is the so-called *topic drift*, which is the result of an almost imperceptible shift from one related topic to the next.

In extract [28], a group of four people are having a New Year drink together, and A has been recounting the story of how his luggage got sent to the wrong airport on a recent skiing holiday:



A: Well, in these places, you breakfast at eight, well, half past eight, ...  
(etc.)

(McCarthy, 2002, p.133)

Within a very short space of time the conversation has moved from losing luggage at an airport to skiing, to weight-watching and exercise, to meal-times at hotels; that's, this situation is called topic-drift. But it remains coherent within the overall framework of 'A's recent holiday'.

#### **2.1.4.1 CONVERSATION MANOEUVRES**

There are some conversational manoeuvres for openings, ongoing checks, changing topics, and endings. Crystal (1989, p.118) states that conversational turn-taking is often marked by clear signals of direction.

##### ***-Openings-***

- Guess what...
- Sorry to trouble you...
- Lovely day!
- Got a match?
- Can I help you?
- Good morning.
- Excuse me...
- Did you hear the one about...

- Can you spare a minute?
- Halt! Who goes there?

***-Ongoing Checks-***

***By the speaker:***

- Do you see?
- Can you guess what he said?
- Are you with me?
- Do I make myself clear?
- Don't you think?
- Let me put it another way...
- Don't get me wrong...
- What I'm trying to say is

***By the listener:***

- You mean...
- Have I got you right?
- Mhm.
- I don't get you.
- Let's get that straight...

***-Changing topic-***

***Introducing a new topic:***

- That reminds me...

- Incidentally...
- That's a good question.
- By the way...
- Speaking of John...
- Where was I?

*Concluding a topic:*

- So it goes.
- That's life.
- Makes you think, doesn't it.
- Let's wait and see.

*-Ending-*

- Sorry, but I have to go now.
- Nice talking to you.
- Well, must get back to work.
- Gosh, is that the time?
- I mustn't keep you.

**2.1.5 WHAT SPEAKERS TALK ABOUT HANGS TOGETHER**

What makes a conversation hang together is first of all the interactional framework, which determines the overall conversational structure in terms of opening, message and closing. As we saw in the examples, openings and closings are more or less purely interactive parts of a conversation, where not much is being talked about, while the topic of

conversation belongs to the message section, which is not only interactively but also coherently and cohesively linked.

### 2.1.5.1 COHERENCE AND COHESION

A reasonable connection or relation between ideas, arguments, statements etc. is called 'coherence'. A discourse is said to be coherent if what the speakers say fits in and makes sense to the speakers in the actual context. A close relationship, based on grammar or meaning, between two parts of a sentence or a larger piece of writing is called 'cohesion'. Generally, coherent utterances are also cohesively linked, lexically, grammatically, prosodically, and interactionally, with the immediate discourse. Cohesive links can be either *overt* or *covert* and we will see in the following extract. Two colleagues are discussing a somewhat controversial way of teaching:

	LINES
[29] A: have you ever heard Professor MCCALL	1
↗ LECTURE# - he's ((round)) at TOPAS I	2
↘ THINK#	3
B: *((NŌ#))*	4
A: *I* only ever went ŌNCE# . it was	5
ENOUGH# -	6
B: M# - -	7
A: oh DĒAR# BRĪDGET will tell you THĀT#	8
she was at the same LĒCTURE#	9
B: M# - - what's he LIKE#	10
A: oh he was TĒRRIBLE#	11

B: (- giggles)	12
A: T <small>→</small> ERRIBLE# - so ABSTR <small>→</small> USE# - he does	13
S <small>→</small> OUND changes# and all TH <small>→</small> AT# sort of	14
thing# you KN <small>→</small> OW#	15
B: (- - - laughs)	16
A: so ABSTR <small>→</small> USE# he he you can't read his	17
writing on the BL <small>→</small> ACKBOARD# he uses a	18
BL <small>→</small> ACKBOARD# . and writes illegible	19
TH <small>→</small> INGS on it# *you KN <small>→</small> OW#* -	20
B: *M#*	21
A: which is a GREAT help# - and then he says	22
course if you don't UNDERST <small>→</small> AND this# -	23
this subject's not for YOU# . (. laughs) you	24
KN <small>→</small> OW#	25
B: (- laughs)	26

(Stenström, 1996, p.14)

The number of arrows shows that the *lexical* and *grammatical* cohesive relationships are strong both within and between the turns, mainly in the form of *co-reference*, realized by:

- pronominal reference (eg *he* in lines 10, 11 etc referring back to *Professor MCCALL* and *THAT* in line 8 referring to what A said in lines 4 and 5);
- lexical repetition (L→ECTURE - L→ECTURE, ABSTR→USE - ABSTR→USE and BL→ACKBOARD - BL→ACKBOARD);

- ellipsis (in lines 5 and 17, where ‘there’ and ‘he was’ can be inferred from the immediately preceding context.

In the first two cases (pronominal reference and lexical repetition) the cohesive links are overt; in the third case (ellipsis) they are covert. In line 23, where the pronoun *this* in (*if you don't UNDERSTAND this*) refers to the situational context, ('what I am talking about') the reference is *exophoric*, because what is being referred to mentions something outside the context. The most obvious example of *interactive* linking is realized by the question-response pairs in lines 1-4 and 10-11; another example is the *you KNOW*-laughter sequences in lines 15-16 and 25-26. *M* in line 21, on the other hand, occurs at the same time as *you KNOW* in line 20. *Prosodic* linking is illustrated, for instance, in lines 1-4, where the rising pitch on *LECTURE* invites B to respond and the rise on the response *NO* encourages A to go on, which he does ending his utterance with a falling, completing, tone.

The absence of cohesive links does not prevent a conversation from being coherent, however. Conversational partners usually manage to interpret utterances as coherent by filling in the missing links, ie by making *inferences* on the basis of the immediate context, previous experience, knowledge of the world, and not least on the basis of the knowledge that they share with the other speaker. Thus, if an utterance makes sense 'in that particular situation', it is coherent, with or without cohesive links. One example where inference can be observed is [30]:

[30] A: That's the telephone

B: I'm in the bath

A: O.K.

(Yule, 1996, p.142)

There are certainly no cohesive ties within this fragment of discourse, but each of these people manage to make sense of what the other says. They use the information contained in the sentences expressed, but there must be something else involved in the interpretation. We can characterize the brief conversation in this way: She makes a request of him to perform action, he states reason why he cannot comply with request, she undertakes to perform action. Such a representation yields a description of conversational discourse as a form of social interaction. A similar analysis could be applied to a series of gestures. There is a domestic evening scene. A husband and his wife are watching television. A indicates by pointing and tapping his ear that he can hear the telephone, B points to the cat asleep on her lap, A shrugs and gets up.

There are rules of interpretation which relate what is said to what is done and it is on the basis of such social, but not linguistic, rules that we interpret some conversational sequences as coherent and others as non-coherent. In extract [31], there is a non-coherent conversational sequence. A doctor is talking to a schizophrenic patient:

[31] A: What's your name?

B: Well, let's say you might have thought you had something from before,  
but you haven't got it any more.

A: I'm going to call you Dean.

(Brown-Yule, 1989, p.226)

The recognition of coherence or incoherence in conversational sequences is not based on a relationship between utterances, but 'between the actions performed with those utterances'.

**[32] A: What time is it?**

**B: Well, the postman's been already.**

**(Brown-Yule, 1989, p.226)**

This example is used to show that the assumption of rationality on B's part leads us to assume that he is providing an answer to the question asked, and so on to the conclusion that the time is past 11 a.m., for example.

The example [33] illustrates a coherent piece of conversational discourse which exhibits no cohesive links between the two sentences involved.

**[33] A: Can you go to Edinburgh tomorrow?**

**B: B.E.A. pilots are on strike.**

**(Brown-Yule, 1989, p.227)**

B's reply is to be taken as a negative answer to the question, because the strike will prevent the speaker flying to Edinburgh. This is clearly one interpretation of the speaker's intended meaning but we could also suggest others; for example, that the speaker intends a 'don't know' response because he is not yet sure whether he will try some alternative transport.

#### **2.1.5.2 INTERACTIONAL SIGNALS AND DISCOURSE MARKERS**

When we talk, we use certain very frequent items to start, carry on, and terminate the conversation. Some of these items constitute turns of their own or link turns together.

These will be referred to as *interactional signals*. Others are used as organizers and turnholders within the turn, or as boundary markers. These will be referred to as *discourse markers*. Discourse markers are a linguistic device that speakers use to signal how the upcoming unit of speech relates to the current discourse state. (Stenström, 1996, p.16)

They are used to mark the information status in an utterance and how it relates to the previous discourse state. For instance, when someone is about to disagree with information in the discourse state, they might introduce the utterance with “well”. In human-human task-oriented dialogs, discourse markers abound. Spontaneous speech of the turns are generally introduced with a discourse marker. Because discourse markers are so prominent in task-oriented dialogs, they could be a valuable source of information for understanding the utterances that they introduce.

[34a] IVER: Well, hey, do you remember your first job? The first job you had?

IVEE: The first job. I think my first job, one of my first, I must've been about ten years old. I used to stock the shelves in a grocery store. I used to work eight hours on a Saturday for two dollars. Hh.

IVER: Oh, what slave labor.

IVEE: Yeh. Well, I think as I got older, I was a janitor in a cleaners. Not any- well, /Uh huh/ I cleaned up and made hangers up for the- put the plastic on the hangers and the cardboard on the hangers and the paper around the hangers you put in your suit jackets.

IVER: Then, that's when- you were a kid, \*right?\*

IVEE: \*Yeh\*. That's true.

IVER: And, so, did you work when you were in high school?

IVEE: Well, I was a short order cook in a hoagie shop.

IVER: **Oh, really?** Jesus, you've had a checkered career, haven't you?

IVEE: **Hh. / Hh./** I was- I was a busboy at a country club while I was in school. I was a dishwasher, **/Uh huh/** for a pancake house. They had dishwasher then you were a busboy. **/Yeh./** Half the night you wash dishes, the other half you cleaned the tables up.

IVER: Did you like bein' a short order cook at a hoagie- factory?

(Schiffrin, 2002, p.311)

All the items in bold belong to one of these categories. Without them the dialogue would have looked as follows:

**[34b]** IVER: Do you remember your first job? The first job you had?

IVEE: The first job. My first job, one of my first, I must've been about ten years old. I used to stock the shelves in a grocery store. I used to work eight hours on a Saturday for two dollars.

IVER: What slave labor.

IVEE: As I got older, I was a janitor in a cleaners. Not any- I cleaned up and made hangers up for the- put the plastic on the hangers and the cardboard on the hangers and the paper around the hangers you put in your suit jackets.

IVER: That's when- you were a kid, right?

IVEE: That's true.

IVER: And, so, did you work when you were in high school?

IVEE: I was a short order cook in a hoagie shop.

IVER: Jesus, you've had a checkered career, haven't you?

IVEE: I was- I was a busboy at a country club while I was in school. I was a dishwasher for a pancake house. They had dishwasher then you were a busboy. Half the night you wash dishes, the other half you cleaned the tables up.

IVER: Did you like bein' a short order cook at a hoagic- factory?

(Schiffirin, 2002, p.311)

What is left makes perfect sense, but the conversation is much less lively and less 'personal' without items signalling receipt of agreement, involvement and surprise. Besides there is an absence of simultaneous talk.

Single word acknowledgments, such as "okay", "right", "mm-hm", "yeah", "yeh", "yes", "alright", "no", and "yep"; interjections with discourse purpose, such as "oh", "well", "hm", "mm", and "like" are used as interactional signals.

Co-ordinating conjuncts, such as "and", "so", "but", "oh", and "because"; adverbials, such as "then", "now", "actually", "first", and "anyway" are used as discourse markers.

### **2.1.5.3 ADJACENCY PAIRS**

A conversation is a string of at least two turns. Some turns are more closely related than others and Sacks (Levinson, 1997, p.303) isolates a class of sequences of turns called *adjacency pairs* which have the following features:

- adjacent
- produced by different speakers
- ordered as a first part and a second part
- typed, so that a particular first part requires a particular second (or range of second parts) – e.g. offers require acceptances or rejections, greetings require greetings, and so on.

and there is rule governing the use of adjacency pairs, namely:

- Having produced a first part of some pair, current speaker must stop speaking, and next speaker must produce at that point a second part to the same pair.

(Levinson, 1997, p.303)

There is a class of first pair parts which includes ‘questions’, ‘greetings’, ‘challenges’, ‘offers’, ‘requests’, ‘complaints’, ‘invitations’, ‘announcements’; for some first pair parts the second pair part is reciprocal (Greeting-Greeting), for some there is only one appropriate second (Question-Answer), for some more than one (Complaint – Apology / Justification). If they are not, we are likely to interpret this somehow; as rudeness perhaps, or deafness, or lack of attention.

Adjacency pairs are the basic structural units in conversation. They are used for opening and closing conversations,

[35] Anna: Hello.

Bill: Hi.

[36] Anna: See you!

Bill: Bye.

(Yule, 2002, p.77)

and are very important during conversations both for operating the turn-taking system by enabling a speaker to select next action and next speaker, and also for enabling the next speaker to avoid both gap and overlap.

[37] A: time for TEA# \*would\* you LIKE some#

B: \*YES#\* YES#

(Stenström, 1996, p.17)

In extract [37], request-accept type of adjacency pairs is illustrated.

[38] A: What time is it?

B: About eight-thirty.

(Yule, 2002, p.77)

A thanking- response type of adjacency pairs is shown in extract [38].

The most typical adjacency pairs are the following:

**ADJACENCY PAIRS**

apology < --- > smoother

greeting < --- > greeting

invitation < --- > accept / decline

question < --- > answer

request < --- > accept / turn down

Not all first parts immediately receive their second parts, however. It often happens that a question-answer sequence will be delayed while another question-answer sequence intervenes. The sequence will then take the form of Q1-Q2-A2-A1, with the middle pair (Q2-A2) being called an *insertion sequence*. Although there appears to be a question (Q2) in response to a question (Q1), the assumption is that once the second part (A2) of the insertion sequence is provided, the second part (A1) of the initial question (Q1) will follow. This pattern is illustrated in [39]:

[39] A: Did you enjoy the meal? ((Q1))

B: (Did you?) ((Q2))

A: Yes.) ((A2))

B: So did I. ((A1))

(Cook, 1989, p.54)

An insertion sequence is one adjacency pair within another. Although the expressions used may be question-answer sequences, other forms of social action are also accomplished within this pattern.

As shown in [40], there is a pair which consists of making a request – accepting the request (Q1-A1), with an insertion sequence of a question – answer pair (Q2-A2) which seems to function as a condition on the acceptance (A1) being provided.

[40] Jean: Could you mail this letter for me? (Q1 = Request)

Fred: Does it have a stamp on it? (Q2)

Jean: Yeah. (A2)

Fred: Okay

(A1 = Acceptance)

(Yule, 2002, p.78)

The delay in acceptance in example [40], created by the insertion sequence, is one type of indication that not all first parts necessarily receive the kind of second parts the speaker might anticipate. Delay in response symbolically marks potential unavailability of the immediate expected answer.

The topic of an insertion sequence is intimately related to that of the main sequence in which it occurs. Sometimes, however, speakers simply switch from one topic to another unrelated one, and then back again. In this latter case the insertion is known as a *side sequence*. In the following, for example, the speakers alternate between the main topic of the aerobics and the lesser topic of the missing watch in extract [41]:

[41] A: I'm dying to know – where's my watch by the way?

B: What?

A: What Gillian's aerobics sessions are like HA HA HA HA

B: What aerobics sessions? It's here.

A: Gillian does aerobics sessions every evening. LEADS them. Thanks.

Can you imagine.

(Cook, 1989, p.54)

Side sequence is the term which is sometimes used for clarification. The general drift of a conversation is halted at an unpredictable point by a request for clarification and

then the conversation picks up again where it left off. The following example is children preparing for a game of 'tag':

[42] STEVEN: one, two, three, (pause) four, five, six, (pause) eleven, eight, nine, ten.

SUSAN: Eleven? – eight, nine, ten.

STEVEN: Eleven, eight, nine, ten.

NANCY: Eleven?

STEVEN: Seven, eight, nine, ten.

SUSAN: That's beter.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.75)

Whereupon the game resumes. The side sequence sometimes begins with a questioning repeat – an interrogative item indicating that there is a problem in what has just been said, 'and its work is to generate further talk directed to remedying the problem'.

Participants in conversation draw attention to, or prepare the ground for, the kind of turn they are going to take next. The utterances which do this are known as *pre-sequences*. They are rather like the markers teachers use to signal transitions in lessons: 'Right!', or 'OK', 'let's get started!'. In conversation, there are many kinds of pre-sequences. The following invented dialogue, for example, begins with a pre-request:

[43] → C: Do you have hot chocolate?

S: mmhmm

→ C: can I have hot chocolate with whipped cream?

S: Sure ((leaves to get))

(Levinson, 1997, p.347)

Adjacency pairs represent social actions, and not all social actions are equal when they occur as second parts of some pairs. Basically, a first part that contains a request or an offer is typically made in the expectation that the second part will be an acceptance. An acceptance is structurally more likely than a refusal. This structural likelihood is called *preference*. The term is used to indicate a socially determined structural pattern and does not refer to any individual's mental or emotional desires.

Preference structure divides second parts into *preferred* and *dispreferred* social acts. The preferred is the structurally expected next act and the dispreferred is the structurally unexpected next act.

FIRST PART	SECOND PART	
	PREFERRED	DISPREFERRED
• Assessment	Agree	Disagree
• Invitation	Accept	Refuse
• Offer	Accept	Decline
• Proposal	Agree	Disagree
• Request	Accept	Refuse
• Blame	Denial	Admission
• Question	Expected Answer	Unexpected Answer

In considering requests or offers as first parts, acceptance is the preferred and refusal is the dispreferred second part.

**[44a]** A: Can you help me? (First Part)

B: Sure. (Second Part)

**[44b]** A: Want some coffee? (First Part)

B: Yes, please. (Second Part)

**[44c]** A: Isn't that really great? (First Part)

B: Yes, it is. (Second Part)

**[44d]** A: Maybe we could go for a walk? (First Part)

B: That'd be great. (Second Part)

(Yule, 2002, p.79)

In examples, the responses in each second part all represent preferreds. Thus, acceptance or agreement is the preferred second part response to a question [44a], an offer [44b], an assessment [44c], or a proposal [44d].

To get a sense of how expected these preferred second parts are in the examples in [44], imagine each of the first parts being met with silence. We might say that in any adjacency pair, silence in the second part is always an indication of a dispreferred response. Indeed, silence often leads the first speaker to revise the first part in order to get a second part that is not silence from the other speaker. This may be clearer via an example, such as

[45], where Jack's silence in response to Sandy's comment prompts Sandy to restate her assessment. Jack then agrees (a preferred) with Sandy's assessment.

[45] Sandy: But I'm sure they'll have good food there.

(1.6 seconds)

Sandy: Hmm – I guess the food isn't great.

Jack: Nah – people mostly go for the music.

(Yule, 2002, p.80)

Jack's silence occurs where he would have had to produce a disagreement (i.e. a dispreferred response) regarding Sandy's assessment. Non-response communicates that the speaker is not in apposition to provide the preferred response.

Hesitations and prefaces are also found in dispreferred second parts to invitations, as shown in extract [46].

[46] Becky: Come over for some coffee later.

Wally: Oh – eh – I'd love to – but you see – I – I'm supposed to get this finished – you know.

(Yule, 2002, p.81)

After a preface ('Oh') and a hesitation ('eh'), the second speaker in [46] produces a kind of token acceptance ('I'd love to') to show appreciation of the invitation. Then, the other's understanding is invoked ('you see') and an account is presented ('I'm supposed to get this finished') to explain what prevents the speaker from accepting the invitation. There is also

a meaning conveyed here that the speaker's circumstances are beyond his control because of an obligation ('I'm supposed to') and, once again, the inviter's understanding ('you know') is invoked.

These patterns are presenting the dispreference structure;

HOW TO DO A DISPREFERRED	EXAMPLES
a. delay/hesitate	pause; er; em; ah
b. preface	well; oh
c. express doubt	I'm not sure; I don't know
d. token Yes	that's great; I'd love to
e. apology	I'm sorry; what a pity
f. mention obligation	I must do X; I'm expected in Y
g. appeal for understanding	you see; you know
h. make it non-personal	everybody else; out there
i. give an account	too much work; no time left
j. use mitigators	really; mostly; sort of; kinda
k. hedge the negative	I guess not; not possible

### 2.1.6 CONVERSATION IS TEAMWORK

Conversation works smoothly only if A and B *cooperate*, and they have to do so on three levels: interaction, discourse organization, and communication. This means that they are expected to observe the basic rules for turntaking and to 'listen actively' when they are not speaking. They are also expected to transmit what they want to transmit in a way that

does not cause misinterpretation, and be prepared to make inferences from the context, whenever that is required.

### **2.1.6.1 THE CO-OPERATIVE PRINCIPLE (CONVERSATIONAL MAXIMS)**

The success of a conversation depends not only on what speakers say but on their whole approach to the interaction. People adopt a 'cooperative principle' when they communicate: they try to get along with each other by following certain conversational 'maxims' that underlie the efficient use of language. According to the philosopher Grice (Crystal, 1989, p.117), conversation should work without problems if speakers follow the maxims which constitute his well-known *cooperative principle*.

Four basic maxims have been proposed:

- ❖ The *maxim of quality* states that speakers' contributions to a conversation ought to be true. They should not say what they believe to be false, nor should they say anything for which they lack adequate evidence.
- ❖ The *maxim of quantity* states that the contribution should be as informative as is required for the purposes of the conversation. One should say neither too little nor too much.
- ❖ The *maxim of relevance* states that contributions should clearly relate to the purpose of the exchange.
- ❖ The *maxim of manner* states that the contribution should be perspicuous - in particular, that it should be orderly and brief, avoiding obscurity and ambiguity.

Other maxims have also been proposed, such as 'Be polite', 'Behave consistently'.

The principle of relevance is currently attracting most attention, as it has been proposed as a fundamental explanatory principle for a theory of human communication.

Listeners will normally assume that speakers are following these criteria. Speakers may of course break (or 'flout', 'violate') these maxims - for example, they may lie, be sarcastic, try to be different, or clever – but conversation proceeds on the assumption that they are not doing so. Listeners may then draw inferences from what speakers have said (the literal meaning of the utterance) concerning what they have not said; that's, one of the maxims is violated, the result is that the utterance acquires a new meaning in addition to the literal meaning. This new meaning, which can be inferred from the contextual situation, is referred to as *conversational implicature / implications*.

One example is [47]:

[47] A: actually you'll probably get a <sup>↗</sup>CAR won't you {as soon as you <sup>↗</sup>GET there#}#

B: can't <sup>↗↘</sup>DRIVE#

(Stenström, 1996, p.18)

B's response violates the relevance maxim and possibly the manner maxim. *can't* <sup>↗↘</sup>DRIVE is definitely not a direct answer to the question; it is neither 'yes' nor 'no'. B means what she says, but she also means something more. What she means without saying it is her intended implicature, which is likely to be 'probably not' (since I can't drive). In most cases A's intended implicature agrees with B's perceived implicature, ie B's interpretation.

Clearly, A can never be certain that B will interpret what s/he says in the way in which it was intended. But in a cooperative, especially face-to-face situation, this is not a serious problem. The fact that there is a misunderstanding will be obvious pretty soon and can be remedied on the spot.

[48] A: I need a drink.

B: Try The Bell.

(Crystal, 1989, p.117)

If B is adhering to the cooperative principle, several implicatures arise out of this dialogue: for example, The Bell must be a place that sells drinks; it must be open (as far as B knows); it must be nearby. If B is not being co-operative (e.g. if he knows that The Bell is closed, or is the name of a greengrocer's), he is flouting the maxims of quality and relevance.

Deliberate flouting of this kind is uncommon, and only occurs in such special cases as sarcasm, joking, or deliberate unpleasantness. More likely is the inadvertent flouting of conversational maxims - as would happen if B genuinely did not know that The Bell was closed, and accidentally sent A on a wild goose chase. In everyday conversation, misunderstandings often take place as speakers make assumptions about what their listeners know, or need to know, that turn out to be wrong. At such points, the conversation can break down and may need to be 'repaired', with the participants questioning, clarifying, and cross-checking. The repairs are quickly made in the following extract, through the use of such pointers as 'I told you' and 'sorry'.

[49] A: Have you got the time?

B: No, I told you, I lost my watch.

A: Oh, sorry, I forgot.

(Crystal, 1989, p.117)

But it is quite common for participants not to realize that there has been a breakdown, and to continue conversing at cross purposes.

Certain utterances are conventionalized expressions of, for instance, invitations, offers, and requests. There is no doubt what the speaker intends, although the form of the utterance does not necessarily reveal its function. The following is uttered during a tea break:

[50] A: . . . have you got some MILK for ME#

(Stenström, 1996, p.19)

It is certainly not intended to be taken as a yes/no-question but as a request.

Utterances of this type are sometimes called *conventional implicatures* (but generally known as '*conventionalized indirect speech acts*').

### 2.1.6.2 MISUNDERSTANDINGS

An important aim of discourse analysis is to find out why conversations are not always successful. Misunderstanding and mutual recrimination is unfortunately fairly

common. Participants often operate with different rules and expectations about the way in which the conversation should proceed - something that is particularly evident when people of different cultural backgrounds interact. But even within a culture, different 'rules of interpretation' may exist.

It has been suggested, for example, that there are different rules governing the way in which men and women participate in a conversation. A common source of misunderstanding is the way both parties use head nods and *mhm* noises while the other is speaking something that women do much more frequently than men. Some analysts have suggested that the two sexes mean different things by this behaviour. When a woman does it, she is simply indicating that she is listening, and encouraging the speaker to continue, but the male interprets it to mean that she is agreeing with everything he is saying. By contrast, when a man does it, he is signalling that he does not necessarily agree, whereas the woman interprets it to mean that he is not always listening. Such interpretations are plausible, it is argued, because they explain two of the most widely reported reactions from participants in cross-sex conversations – the male reaction of 'It's impossible to say what a woman really thinks', and the female reaction of 'You never listen to a word I say'.

## **-CHAPTER III- DISCOURSE FUNCTION**

### ***3.1 FACTORS INFLUENCING DISCOURSE FUNCTION***

The term 'discourse function' refers to what an item does in the discourse from a pragmatic point of view.

#### ***3.1.1 POSITION AND FUNCTION***

Discourse function is related to the position in the turn and the position in a sequence of turns.

##### ***3.1.1.1 POSITION IN THE TURN***

Single words and word combinations have a different function depending on whether they occur at the very beginning of a turn, as the second item within the turn or at the very end.

#### **[1] Beginning the turn:**

R: Why don't we all have lunch?

C: **OK**, so that would be in St. Jude's would it?

R: Yes.

(Levinson, 1997, p.316)

'**OK**' at the beginning of the turn expresses agreement.

**[2] Second position:**

A: I'll see you at HOME# .

B: YES# OK# It's about seven THIRTY# ISN'T it#

**'OK'** in second position emphasizes the agreement expressed by 'YES'

**[3] Within the turn:**

A: ... and now SUDDENLY# that half is GONE# - - OK# it's FREEZING#  
but it's FRIGHTENING#

(Stenström, 1996, p.21)

**'OK'** within the turn introduces a concluding remark.

**[4] End of turn:**

A: Anyway look, I have to be off, OK?

B: Yes.

(Coulthard, 1992, p.152)

**'OK'** at the end of the turn asks for confirmation.

### **3.1.1.2 POSITION IN A SEQUENCE OF TURNS**

Turns have a different function depending on whether they come first, second, or third, etc in a sequence of turns. They may, for instance open, continue and terminate a sequence (It's called 'exchange'):

[5] J: Twelve pounds I think wasn't it.

D: Can you believe it?

L: Twelve pounds on the Weight Watchers' scale.

URNS

OPEN

CONTINUE

TERMINATE

(Stenström, 1996, p.22)

Words and word combinations are also used for different purposes depending on whether they occur in the first or second turn, etc, in a sequence:

[6] Turn 1

B: **Well**, I studied theology and qualified as a priest.

A: Oh!

B: But after I saw this job, this job as a priest is nothing for me, I ...

A: Did you not like it?

B: It was much too stressing.

(McCarthy, 2002, p.125)

[7] Turn 2

A: I have a fourteen year old son.

B: **Well**, that's all right.

A: I also have a dog.

B: Oh, I'm sorry.

(Levinson, 1997, p.292)

'Well' in turn 1 marks the opening of a new phase. 'Well' in turn 2 initiates a response.

### 3.1.2 FORM AND FUNCTION

Discourse function is related to utterance vs discourse and lexical clues.

#### 3.1.2.1 UTTERANCE VS DISCOURSE ACT

We interpret the meanings of sentences in terms of what the speaker of those sentences intended to convey. In very general terms, we can usually recognize the type of 'act' performed by a speaker in uttering a sentence. The use of the term *speech act* covers 'actions' such as 'requesting', 'commanding', 'questioning' and 'informing'. It is typically the case that we use the following linguistic forms with the following 'functions'. There is a tendency for the three basic sentence types to correspond to the three basic communicative functions (or discourse acts):

EXAMPLES	SENTENCE FORM	SENTENCE TYPE	COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTION
You ate the food	S V C	Declarative	Statement
Did you eat the food?	V S C	Interrogative	Question
Eat the food (please)	V O	Imperative	Command

When a form such as *Did he ...?*, *Are they ...?*, *Can you ...?* is used to ask a question, it is described as a *direct speech act*. For example, when a speaker doesn't know something and asks the hearer to provide the information, s/he will typically produce a direct speech act of the following type:

[8] A: Can you ride a bicycle?

(Yule, 1996, p.133)

[9] A: Can you speak a little louder?

(Brown-Yule, 1989, p.232)

In example [9], we wouldn't usually understand the utterance as a question about our ability to do something. In fact, we would not treat this as a question at all. We would treat it as a request and perform the action requested. Yet, this request has been presented in the syntactic form usually associated with a question. Such an example is described as an *indirect speech act*; that's, whenever one of the forms in the set above is used to perform a function other than the listed beside it, the result is an indirect speech act.

Depending on the situation, a declarative sentence (even with a falling tone) can, for instance, very well function as a question:

[10] A: this is money for the buying of BÖÖKS#

B: YÈS#

(Stenström, 1996, p.23)

The declarative form '*this is money for ...*' is equivalent to the question function '*this the money for ...*'.

It is possible to have humorous effects as a result of one person failing to recognize another person's indirect speech act. A visitor to a city, carrying his luggage, looking lost, stops a passer-by:

[11] Visitor: Excuse me, do you know where the Ambassador Hotel is?

Passer-by: Oh sure, I know where it is. (and walks away)

(Yule, 1996, p.133)

In this scene, the visitor uses a form which is normally associated with a question (Do you know ...?) and the passer-by answers that question literally (I know ...). Instead of responding to the request, the passer-by replies to the question, treating an indirect speech act as if it is direct.

In speech act analysis, we study the effect of utterances on the behaviour of speaker and hearer, using a threefold distinction. First, we recognize the bare fact that a communicative act takes place; the *locutionary act*. Secondly, we look at the act that is performed as a result of the speaker making an utterance – the cases where ‘saying=doing’, such as betting, promising, welcoming, and warning: these, known as *illocutionary acts*, are the core of any theory of speech acts. Thirdly, we look at the particular effect the speaker’s utterance has on the listener, who may feel amused, persuaded, warned, etc., as a consequence; the bringing about of such effects is known as a *perlocutionary act*. It is important to appreciate that the illocutionary force of an utterance and its perlocutionary effect may not coincide. If I warn you against a particular course of action, you may or may not heed my warning.

There are thousands of possible illocutionary acts, and several attempts have been made to classify them into a small number of types. Such classifications are difficult, because verb meanings are often not easy to distinguish, and speakers’ intentions are not always clear. One influential approach sets up five basic types. (Crystal, 1989, p.121)

- **Representatives:** The speaker is committed, in varying degrees, to the truth of a proposition, e.g. *affirm, believe, conclude, deny, report*.
- **Directives:** The speaker tries to get the hearer to do something, e.g. *ask, challenge, command, insist, request*.
- **Commissives:** The speaker is committed, in varying degrees, to a certain course of action, e.g. *guarantee, pledge, promise, swear, vow*.
- **Expressives:** The speaker expresses an attitude about a state of affairs, e.g. *apologize, deplore, congratulate, thank, welcome*.
- **Declarations:** The speaker alters the external status or condition of an object or situation solely by making the utterance, e.g. *I resign, I baptize, You're fired, War is hereby declared*.

### 3.1.2.2 LEXICAL CLUES

In cases where the syntactic form does not agree with the communicative function the speaker's intention is generally revealed either by lexical or by prosodic clues (especially pitch direction) or both. The use of lexical clues is easy to demonstrate in 'declarative questions':

[12] A: and then you'll probably have enough *MONEY*# to do some \*travelling  
 ↘ ↗  
 AROUND#\*

B: \*well . YÈS\*#

(Stenström, 1996, p.23)

[13] A: so if there's a hardware store we could call in and get one on the way  
back.

B: do you think there is one?

A: yes.

B: OK then.

A: that would be nice wouldn't it?

B: yes it would.

A: I mean the job not the hardware shop.

B: yes I realize what do you keep telling me for. (Cook, 1989, p.57)

[12] has three question indicators: '*probably*', rising and falling-rising tones and the fact that A states something about a 'B-event', ie something that only B is supposed to know. In [13], '*I mean the job not the hardware shop*' indicates question function, because it means '*do you understand the meaning of my sentence?*'. The most obvious lexical clue is the 'tag' which is appended to a statement to make it a question. For example '*that would be nice, wouldn't it?*' is the example of tag.

[14] A: but you'd have telephones around

B: mm – oh yes ... I've had the telephone since nineteen thirty eight  
(hmm) oh they were on a long while I think before that

A: 'cause there was a man in ...

(Brown-Yule, 1989, p.227)

[15] A: What's the time, because I've got to go out at eight?

(Brown-Yule, 1989, p.227)

'*Because*' is used for introducing a particular subject into a conversation, as in [14], and it is used to introduce the reason for asking a question, as in [15].

There are numerous other lexical question markers. Similarly, other categories of discourse act have their own lexical markers. *Please*, for instance, is used to mark a request, while *but* marks an objection, and so on. If there are no explicit indicators, the speaker's intention is generally made clear by the context. Finally, there are the conventional ways of expressing e.g. offers and invitations and requests by using an interrogative utterance.

### 3.1.3 PROSODY AND FUNCTION

Discourse function is related to tonicity and pitch direction.

#### 3.1.3.1 TONICITY

*Tonicity* refers to the placement of tone in a tone unit. The same item in the same position but in different turns may or may not carry a nuclear tone. Let's compare *now* and *NOW*:

[16a] A: <sup>↘ ↗</sup>now if you could only get THAT on to tape# that would be very  
<sup>↘</sup>INTERESTING#. (Stenström, 1996, p.24)

[16b] A: N<sup>↘</sup>OW# . what was I going to D<sup>↘</sup>O# seize a CIG<sup>↘</sup>ARLETTE# -

(Stenström, 1996, p.24)

Both serve as turn-initiators. But the fact that *now* is unmarked by prosody, whereas *NOW* is prosodically marked (uttered in a separate tone unit and followed by a pause), turns *NOW* into a *frame* marking a new stage in the discourse while *now* seems to serve as a mere *starter*.

### 3.1.3.2 PITCH DIRECTION

The direction of the *pitch* (tone) often plays a decisive role. There is only one function of pitch prominence, 'the main burden of the pitch movement', and that is to mark the focus of new information within the tone group.

[17a] B: ə:m shall we say . would twelve o'clock be OKAY#

↘↗  
A: LOVELY#

↗  
B: RIGHT#

↘  
A: YES#

[17b] A: shall we keep those brackets as they <sup>↘</sup>ARE#

B: YES#

A: <sup>↘</sup>RIGHT#

(Stenström, 1996, p.25)

<sup>↘</sup>RIG<sup>↘</sup>HT in extract [17a] (with a rising tone) asks for confirmation, <sup>↘</sup>RIG<sup>↘</sup>HT in extract [17b] (with a falling tone) confirms.

As the unmarked intonation contour for declarative utterances (with statement function) is falling, while that of interrogatives with inverted word order (and question function) is rising, it follows that a declarative utterance with a rising tone is readily interpreted as a question:

[18] B: there's a CASSETTE {GÖES with that#}# .

A: YE<sup>↗</sup>AH#

(Stenström, 1996, p.25)

Without the rising tone, what B says would have been taken as a statement providing information rather than as a question asking for confirmation.

### 3.1.4 CONTEXT AND FUNCTION

Discourse function is related to the meaning, the context, the speech situation, the topic, the speaker relations and the shared knowledge.

#### 3.1.4.1 MEANINGS

As we have already seen, an utterance can have more than one 'meaning':

- Literal meaning
- Pragmatic meaning

*Literal (semantic) meaning* is word-by-word meaning which is in direct relation with the grammatical and lexical characteristics of a sentence, that's the literal meaning is

the sum of the lexical and the syntactic meanings of the utterance in isolation. On the other hand, *pragmatic meaning* is the study of utterance meaning, which comprises all secondary sides of meaning, particularly those connected to context, namely the pragmatic meaning varies with the situational context in which the utterance occurs.

Literal meaning and pragmatic function may of course agree; ie the speaker may intend exactly what s/he says. If they disagree, on the other hand, it is quite possible to misinterpret what somebody says, going by what was actually said instead of what was apparently meant.

[19] A: The door is over there.

(Akmajian- Demers- Farmer- Harnish, 1997, p.363)

In example [19], if you want to indicate the location of a door, this is literal meaning; but if you have been arguing with a person, you can say this sentence. It means that you want somebody to leave the room and it is pragmatic meaning.

[20] A: Have you got any cash on you?

(Leech, 1983, p.331)

In example [20], the literal meaning is about the hearer's monetary status, that's the meaning is only 'have you got any money?'; but in pragmatic meaning, the speaker implies that s/he is in need of money, namely, the meaning is that 'can you lend me some money? I don't have much on me.'

### 3.1.4.2 THE CONTEXT

Context is very important factor in the interpretation of sentences.

Utterances in conversation are not isolated phenomena but depend on the entire context for their interpretation. Exactly what the speaker means by saying something must be interpreted not only in relation to what the previous speaker just said, the *immediate context*, but also in relation to the *wider context*, which includes the speech situation, the topic, the speakers and their relationship to each other, and the knowledge they share about the world.

There are a lot of features of context;

- Addresor (the speaker who produces the utterance)
- Addressee (the hearer who is the recipient of the utterance)
- Topic (what is being talked about)
- Setting (where the event is situated in place and time)
- Channel (how is contact between the participants in the event)
- Code (what language, or dialect or style of language is being used)
- Message-form (what form is intended – chat, debate)
- Event (the nature of the communicative event – a sermon or prayer may be part of the larger event, a church service)
- Key (which involves evaluation – was it a good sermon etc.)
- Purpose (what the participants intended should come about as a result of the communicative event)

Consider two invented scenarios in which an identical utterance is produced by two distinct speakers in different contexts:

[21a] *speaker*: a young mother, *hearer*: her mother-in-law, *place*: park, by a duckpond, *time*: sunny afternoon in September 1962. They are watching the young mother's two-year-old son chasing ducks and the mother-in-law has just remarked that her son, the child's father, was rather backward at this age. The young mother says:

I do think *Adam's* quick

[21b] *speaker*: a student, *hearers*: a set of students, *place*: sitting round a coffee table in the refectory, *time*: evening in March 1980. John, one of the group, has just told a joke. Everyone laughs except Adam. Then Adam laughs. One of the students says:

I do think *Adam's* quick

(Brown-Yule, 1989, p.36)

In both cases, the speaker says of Adam that he is quick. It is clear, however, that the utterances in the contexts of situation in which they are cited, would be taken to convey very different messages. In [21a], 'quick', may be interpreted, in the context of backward, as meaning something like 'quick in developing'. In [21b], quick must be interpreted as meaning something like 'quick to understand / react / see the joke'.

### 3.1.4.3 THE SPEECH SITUATION

The speech situation can vary in a number of ways. It can be formal or informal; it can involve talking about everyday matters or highly technical matters; it can involve speakers who are near friends or speakers who have never seen each other; it can be of a private or a public nature, and so on. All this affects the interaction.

[22] A: So can you please come over here again right now?

B: Well, I have to go to Edinburgh today, sir.

A: Hmm. How about this Thursday? (Levinson, 1997, p.48)

[23] B: Hi, John.

A: How're you doing?

B: Say, what're you doing!

A: Well, we're going out. Why? (Levinson, 1997, p.39)

The dialogue [22] is more formal than the dialogue [23]. In extract [22], A is acknowledged by B to have a higher social status than B, because B addresses A as a 'sir'. In extract [23], A and B are close friends. We can easily understand this from B's saluting, so this dialogue is more informal.

### 3.1.4.4 THE TOPIC

Topic is a subject that people talk about. Everyday topics are easy to talk about. No sophisticated vocabulary is needed, and no deep knowledge is required. Topics related to a

professional field, on the other hand, not only require adequate knowledge but generally also a certain jargon.

[24] E: I went to Yosemite National Park

F: did you

E: yeah – it's beautiful there right through the year

F: I have relations in California and that's their favourite Park because they enjoy camping a lot

E: oh yeah

F: they go round camping

E: I must admit I hate camping

(Brown-Yule, 1989, p.84)

[25] B: . . . I mean I think that' s \*the MAIN thing\*#

A: \*((to see))\* the state of the ART REALLY# they've just had what they call international hydrological DECADE # . you know in nineteen SIXTY- FIVE# {they STARTED it#}# with a . special EFFORT on a:m# RESEARCH and . all these THINGS# . and this was if you like a progress REPORT# at the END of that period# to S=AY#

C: =M#

A: what if anything they'd ACHIEVED# - -

C: YEAH# -

A: you see some of us are |a:| INVOLVED# . from a PRACTICAL point of view# particularly in . FLOOD control# and . IRRIGATION {to a lesser EXTENT#}# - so it's interesting to KNOW# what the state of

the art IS# . and where we go from HERE# - and what practical USE  
it is# ANYWAY#

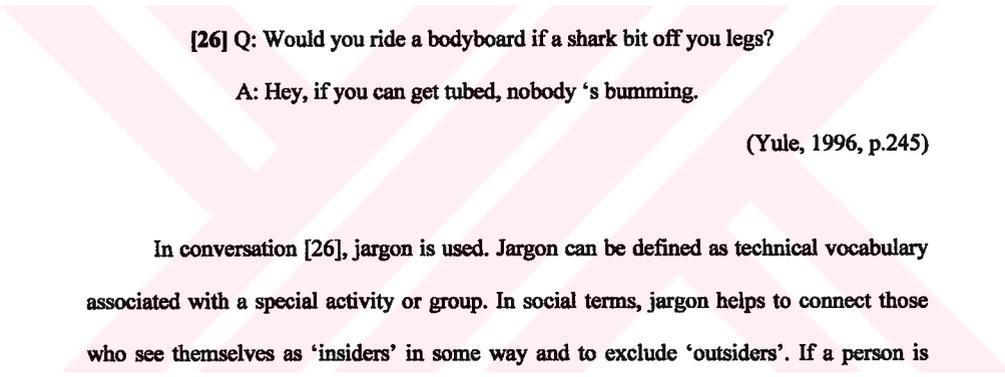
(Stenström, 1996, p.27)

The vocabulary in [24] is extremely general, and technical terms appear only in [25]. The extract [24] is much more of a dialogue than [25], where A speaks most of the time. As regards level of formality, [24] is definitely a 'chat', whereas [25] is more lecture-like.

[26] Q: Would you ride a bodyboard if a shark bit off you legs?

A: Hey, if you can get tubed, nobody 's bumming.

(Yule, 1996, p.245)

In conversation [26], jargon is used. Jargon can be defined as technical vocabulary associated with a special activity or group. In social terms, jargon helps to connect those who see themselves as 'insiders' in some way and to exclude 'outsiders'. If a person is familiar with surfing talk, s/he'll know that the answer to an interview question is 'yes, of course!'.  


### **3.1.4.5 SPEAKER RELATIONS**

There is enormous variation in what people say and do in different circumstances. The sources of that variation have a number of criteria. For example, we would have to specify the roles of speaker and hearer, or hearers, and their relationships, whether they

were friends, strangers, young, old, of equal or unequal status, and many other factors. All of these factors will have an influence on what is said and how it is said.

The way we talk depends not only on what we are talking about but probably even more on who we are talking to. Therefore, the level of formality does not have to change as a result of the choice of topic. Even a scientific topic can be discussed in a relaxed way, here reflected in the use of *you know* and *sort of*:

[27] A: ... they're better REMOVED# . YOU know# - there're a very small PERCENTAGE# that may become MALIGNANT# - become . YOU know# neo neoplastic sort of GROWTHS# . CANCERS# - ə:m S=OME# become INFECTED# - and some YOU know# get that sort of HORNY thing# have you ever seen those HORNY things# sticking OUT# . . .

(Stenström, 1996, p.27)

It is no exaggeration to say that we do not talk in the same way to our closest friend as to a complete stranger, that teenager talk is different from adult talk, that students do not talk in the same way to their teachers as to their fellow students, and so on. And not only is the language different, so is generally the choice of topics.

#### **3.1.4.6 SHARED KNOWLEDGE**

The knowledge we possess as users of a language concerning social interaction via language is just one part of our general socio-cultural knowledge. This general knowledge

about the world underpins our interpretation not only of discourse, but of virtually every aspect of our experience.

Shared knowledge is the knowledge that speakers have in common. Without a certain amount of shared knowledge, communication would hardly be possible. The type of shared knowledge required in an everyday chat is, of course, far less specific than the type required in a conversation about a specialized subject.

What is and what is not shared knowledge may be crucial for the interpretation of utterances whose form does not reveal their function.

[28] D: I forgot to tell you the two best things that happen' to me today.

R: Oh, super. What were they?

D: I got a B on my math test ... and I got an athletic award.

(Levinson, 1997, p.349)

The response 'oh' reveals that this declarative sentence is interpreted as informs, which is only natural; that's there is no shared knowledge between participants.

[29] D: Oh. You know, Yuri did a terrible thing

R: Hhh! I know.

D: You know? She committed suicide.

(Levinson, 1997, p.351)

In this example, there is shared knowledge between the speakers; namely, they have got a common schema. A schema is a general term for a conventional knowledge structure

which exists in memory. We have many schemata which are used in the interpretation of what we experience and what we hear. For example, if we hear someone describe what happened one day in the supermarket, we don't have to be told what is normally found in a supermarket. We already have a 'supermarket schema' (food displayed on shelves, arranged in aisles, baskets and other conventional features).



**-CHAPTER IV-**  
**THE DISCOURSE HIERARCHY**

**4.1 INTERACTIONAL STRUCTURE / THE DISCOURSE HIERARCHY**

Spoken interaction can be described in terms of six hierarchical levels, each consisting of one or more units from the level above:

1. The *ACT* is the smallest interactive unit, and it signals what the speaker intends, what s/he wants to communicate. Angular bracket (< >) will be used for <acts> throughout this study.
2. The *MOVE* is what the speaker does in a turn in order to start, carry on and finish an exchange, ie the way s/he interacts; it consists of one or more acts. Square bracket ([ ]) will be used for [moves] throughout this study.
3. The *TURN* is everything the current speaker says before the next speaker takes over; it consists of one or more moves.
4. The *EXCHANGE* is the smallest interactive unit consisting, minimally, of two turns produced by two different speakers.
5. The *TRANSACTION* consists of one or more exchanges dealing with one single topic.

6. The *INTERACTION* consists of one or more transactions which make up a conversation.

#### **4.1.1 SIX LEVELS**

Six levels; namely, acts, moves, turns, exchanges, transactions and interactions constitute the interactional structure. We will explain them in turn.

##### **4.1.1.1 ACTS**

*Acts* are the units at the lowest rank of the discourse level of language patterning, and are realized at the level of grammar and lexis. The act signals what the speaker wishes to communicate.

There are three different categories of act:

1. Primary acts
2. Secondary acts
3. Complementary acts

##### **4.1.1.1.1 PRIMARY ACTS**

*Primary acts* can realize moves on their own. The following primary acts have been identified:

- **<accept>** agrees to a **<request>**, **<suggest>**, etc.

[1] R: Why don't we all have lunch?

C: **Okay** so that would be in St Jude's would it?

R: **Yes**.

C: **Okay** so.

(Levinson, 1997, p.316)

- **<acknowledge>** signals receipt of information.

[2] Interviewer: And how old are you?

Tania: I'm twenty.

Interviewer: **Uh huh** ... how tall are you?

Tania: I'm five foot seven.

Interviewer: **Hmm** – that's not very tall.

(Cook, 1989, p.119)

- **<agree>** signals agreement with what was just said.

[3] A: they seem to know their way around.

B: **so it does seem**. . .

(Stenström, 1996, p.40)

- **<aler>** calls the addressee's attention.

[4] Ethel: I'll take Scotch, if you have it,

**Ben:** You're gonna have to quit yelling, you see.

**Ethel:** Oh, look it his ear!

**Ben:** Oh, that's right. You got – I know I noticed when he came in.

(Schenkein, 1978, p.24)

- **<answer>** responds to a **<question>** / **<request>**. **<answer>** is an umbrella term for **<comply>**, **<imply>**, **<supply>**, **<evade>** and **<disclaim>**.

**[5] A:** Come in Highland Boy. Can you hear me? Over.

**B:** Yes, I can hear you. What's the weather like up there? Over.

(Cook, 1989, p.51)

- **<apology>** expresses regret.

**[6] A:** I have a fourteen year old son.

**B:** Well, that's all right.

**A:** I also have a dog.

**B:** Oh, I'm sorry.

(Yule, 1996, p.127)

- **<call-off>** prompts a conversational closing.

**[7] B:** No, I should come {at four o'clock}.

**A:** All right.

**B:** All right.

A: See you.

(Stenström, 1996, p.40)

- **<check>** asks for clarification.

[8] C: it's quite an interesting book actually, he was a surgeon and photographer

D: a surgeon and photographer?

C: the man who took the photographs.

D: oh, I see, I see...

(Brown-Yule, 1989, p.220)

- **<closer>** ends a conversational closing.

[9] B: ... Ok, thank you very much.

A: Right.

B: Right, goodbye.

(Stenström, 1996, p.41)

- **<confirm>** responds to a request for confirmation.

[10] J: T's – it's a beautiful day out, isn't it?

L: Yeah, it's jus' gorgeous...

(Levinson, 1997, p.338)

- **<disagree>** expresses disagreement.

[11] Cindy: So chiropodists do hands I guess.

Julie: Em – well – out there – they they mostly work on people's feet.

(Yule, 2002, p.80)

- <evaluate> judges the value of what the previous speaker said.

[12] A: It was too depressing.

B. Oh, it's terrible.

(Levinson, 1997, p.338)

- <greeting> greets somebody or bids farewell.

[13] Doctor: Hello, Mrs. Jones.

Patient: Hello, Doctor.

Doctor: Hello, Catherine.

Child: Hello.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.60)

- <inform> provides information.

[14] B: Well, I studied theology and qualified as a priest.

A. Oh!

(McCarthy, 2002, p.125)

- <invite> asks if somebody 'would like to do X'.

**[15] A: Would you like to come over for a drink tomorrow?**

B: Yes, that would be nice.

(McCarthy, 2002, p.121)

- **<object>** signals a different opinion.

**[16] A: ... there's no reason why it should \*be so surprising.**

B: **\*well but they were surprised.**

(Stenström, 1996, p.41)

- **<offer>** presents something for acceptance/rejection.

**[17] A: Want some coffee?**

B: Yes, please.

(Yule, 2002, p.79)

- **<opine>** gives one's personal opinion.

**[18] Sandy: But I'm sure, they'll have good food there.**

(1.6 seconds)

Sandy: Hmm – I guess the food isn't great.

Jack: Nah – people mostly go for the music.

(Yule, 2002, p.80)

- **<query>** expresses doubt or strong surprise.

[19] A: ə:m - but does that mean, that you're not going on a ə:m {visitor's} visa.

B: yes I am.

A: you are going on \*a\* visitor's visa.

B: \*Yes\*, well you see I'm trying to get a Fulbright.

(Stenström, 1996, p.42)

- <question> asks for information, confirmation, clarification. <question> is an umbrella term for <identification question>, <polarity question> and <confirmation question>.

[20] A: D'you know where the Triboro Bridge is?

B: Yeah.

A: Well, you make a right there.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.87)

- <react> expresses attitude and strong feelings.

[21] B: did you \*really?\*

A: \*Mhm\*

B: good lord!

(Stenström, 1996, p.42)

- <reject> disagrees to a <request>, <suggest>, etc.

[22] Becky: Come over for some coffee later.

**Wally: Oh – eh – I’d love to – but you see – I – I’m supposed to get this finished – you know.**

(Yule, 2002, p.81)

- **<reply>** responds to a **<statement>**.

**[23] Fumiko: I went to Wales.**

**Maria: Oh, really?**

(McCarthy, 2002, p.123)

- **<request>** asks somebody to do something. **<request>** is an umbrella term for **<action request>** and **<permission request>**.

**[24] S: Can I have two pints of Abbot and a grapefruit and whisky?**

**H: Sure.**

(Levinson, 1997, p.362)

- **<smoother>** responds to an **<apology>**.

**[25] A: thanks for phoning.**

**B: sorry it wasn’t last night.**

**A: oh that’s all right.**

(Stenström, 1996, p.42)

- **<statement>** informs or expresses opinion.

**[26] A: I've just passed my driving test.**

B: Oh, congratulations.

A: Thanks.

(McCarthy, 2002, p.122)

- **<suggest>** puts forward an idea or a plan.

**[27] A: Why don't you come up and see me some \*times?\***

B:

**\*I would like to\***

(Coulthard, 1985, p.87)

- **<thanks>** expresses gratitude.

**[28] A: Thanks.**

B: You're welcome.

(Yule, 2002, p.77)

#### **4.1.1.1.1 FUNCTION AND FORM**

As was pointed out in Chapter 1, the speaker does not always mean what s/he literally says, and the listener cannot always identify the speaker's intention by the form of the utterance. Function is not simply a matter of surface structure but a matter of "when" and "where" something is uttered, by "whom" and for "what purpose". Misinterpretations are rare, however, since the speaker's intention generally follows from the actual speech

situation. The following structures' forms are interrogative but the functions of them are <request> and <suggest> in turn:

[29] S: Can I have two pints of Abbot and a grapefruit and whisky?

H: Sure.

(Levinson, 1997, p.362)

[30] A: Why don't you come up and see me some \*times?\*

B:

\*I would like to\*

(Coulthard, 1985, p.87)

#### 4.1.1.1.2 SECONDARY ACTS

*Secondary acts* accompany and sometimes replace primary acts. The following secondary acts have been identified:

- <clue> follows a primary act and gives a hint.

[31] A: - - - where did you hear that . **you must have coined this yourself.**

(Stenström, 1996, p.44)

- <emphasizer> underlines what was said in the primary act.

[32] A: Well, **of course**, people who go to the vet's \*are\*

B:

\*Mm.\*

A: interested in the cats and \*dogs, ain't they?

B: \*Yeah, but the people that first have pets kit –  
pets er don't realize what's involved, do they?

(McCarthy, 2002, p.127)

- <expand > gives complementary information.

[33] A: ə so you know this area quite well.

B: Yes, it was just . off Montague Street somewhere.

(Stenström, 1996, p.44)

- <justify> defends what was said in the primary act.

[34] A: What's the time, because I've got to go out at eight?

(Brown-Yule, 1989, p.227)

- <meta-comment> comments on current talk.

[35] A: Well, may I ask what goes into that paper now?

- <precursor> precedes a primary act and gives information.

[36] A: I would like to use it again tonight though . do you think you could  
ask either him or vera?

(Stenström, 1996, p.44)

- <preface> introduces a primary act.

[37] A: **but what made you decide** - did you go from university to secretarial

\*school e\*

B: \*Yes\*

A: Automatically

(Stenström, 1996, p.45)

#### 4.1.1.1.2.1 POSITION AND FUNCTION

The position of the act in the move distinguishes a secondary act from a primary act.

Consider, for instance, the function of *'that's right'* in the two versions of [38]:

[38a] (genuine)

A: Did you have a good journey?

B: Apart from a jam at Northampton.

A: Yes, **that's right**, a jam at Northampton. [<confirm><emphasizer>]

[38b] (fabricated)

A: Did you have a good journey?

B: Apart from a jam at Northampton.

A: **that's right**, yes, a jam at Northampton. [<confirm><emphasizer>]

(Crystal, 1989, p.118)

The change of places leads to a change of functions. In genuine extract [38a], the function of 'Yes' is the primary act <confirm>, the function of 'that's right' is the secondary act <emphasizer>; in fabricated extract [38b], the function of 'that's right' is the primary act <confirm>, the function of 'yes' is the secondary act <emphasizer>

#### 4.1.1.1.3 COMPLEMENTARY ACTS

*Complementary acts* accompany but rarely replace primary acts. The following complementary acts have been identified:

- <appealer> invites feedback.

[39] A: it's not really in line with your promise **you know** -

B: No.

(Stenström, 1996, p.46)

- <booster> assesses what the speaker himself says.

[40] Min: Did you see him in the video?

Wendy: Yeah – the part on the beach

Min: **Oh my god** \*he was so handsome

Wendy: \*he was just being so cool

Min: And all the waves \*crashing around him!

Wendy: \*yeah that was really wild!

(Yule, 2002, p.74)

- <empathizer> ‘involves’ the listener.

[41] L: But **you know** single beds’r awfully thin to sleep on.

S: What?

L: Single beds. \*They’re-

E:                    \*Y’mean narrow?

L: They’re awfully narrow yeah.

(Levinson, 1997, p.342)

- <filler> fills a gap in the discourse.

[42] Becky: Come over for some coffee later.

Wally: Oh – eh – I’d love to – but **you see** – I – I’m supposed to get this  
finished – **you know**.

(Yule, 2002, p.81)

- <frame> marks a boundary in the discourse.

[43] B: and we often . very frequently - talk about maximizing the profit - -  
**now** - certainly in Eastern Europe - - one has a different impression.

- <hedge> helps avoiding commitment.

[44] A: I didn’t mean to I didn’t mean to sound . **sort of** ( .laughs) prissy.

(Stenström, 1996, p.47)

- <monitor> helps putting something right.

[45] N: She was giving me all the people that were gone this year I mean this quarter you \*know

J: \*Yeah

(Levinson, 1997, p.340)

- <staller> plays for time.

[46] Cindy: So chiropodists do hands I guess.

Julie: Em – well – out there – they they mostly work on people’s feet.

(Yule, 2002, p.80)

- <starter> helps getting started.

[47] C: Well I wrote what I thought was a a – a reason\*able explanation

F:

\*I think it was a very rude

letter

(Levinson, 1997, p.299)

- <uptake> accepts what was said and leads on.

[48] Dorinne: Oh – you know, it’s just like bringing the – blood up.

Theresa: Yeah well. Things uh always work out for the \*best.

Dorinne:

\*Oh certainly.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.90)

#### 4.1.1.1.3.1 POSITION AND FUNCTION

Complementary acts are typically realized by a fairly limited set of lexical items (*you know, I mean, right, sort of, well, oh* etc), many of which can also serve as primary and secondary acts.

The exact interpretation depends not only on where they occur but also on how they are pronounced (their intonation contour). One important place is at the end of a turn, the position of the <appealer>.

Compare, for instance, the two different functions of *right* in the same turn-final position:

[49a] (genuine)

A: I'll let I'll be in TOUCH#

B: YEAH# . DO that# . OKAY# . RIGHT#

[49b] (fabricated)

A: I'll let I'll be in TOUCH#

B: YEAH# . DO that# . OKAY# . RIGHT#

(Stenström, 1996, p.48)

The falling tone on *right* in [49a] indicates that nothing more has to be said on the subject (<frame>). The rising tone in [49b] indicates that B expects A to confirm the agreement (<appealer>).

#### 4.1.1.2 MOVES

The *move* is a verbal action which carries the conversation forward. Acts combine to form moves; each act realizes one element of move structure.

##### 4.1.1.2.1 MOVE TYPES

The following moves have been identified.

- **[Summons]** calls the listener's attention.

**[50]** Ethel: Oh, look at his car!

Lori: Oh, that's right. You got – I know I noticed when he came in.

(Schenkein, 1978, p.24)

- **[Focus]** introduces the [initiate].

**[51]** A: well I'd like to know what you're SAYING# about THIS# are you SAYING# that . the doctor's RECOLLECTION# was completely WRONG# .

(Stenström, 1996, p.36)

- **[Initiate]** opens the exchange.

**[52]** Motorist: My car needs a new exhaust system.

**Mechanic: I'll be busy with this other car all day.**

(Yule, 1996, p.148)

- **[Repair]** holds up the exchange.

**[53] C: it's quite an interesting book actually, he was a surgeon and  
photographer**

**D: a surgeon and photographer?**

**C: the man who took the photographs**

**D: oh I see, I see**

(Brown-Yule, 1989, p.220)

- **[Response]** continues or terminates the exchange.

**[54] C: Do you have Marlboros?**

**S: Uh, no. We ran out.**

**C: Okay. Thanks anyway.**

**S: Sorry.**

(Levinson, 1997, p.358)

- **[Re-open]** delays the termination of the exchange.

**[55] A: ə:m shall we say . would twelve o'clock be OK#**

**B: LOVELY#**

**A: RIGHT#**

**B: YES#**

(Stenström, 1996, p.37)

- **[Follow-up]** terminates the exchange.

[56] A: ə: shall I come EARLIER# or at four o’CLOCK#

B: no I should COME {at four o’CLOCK.}#

A: all RIGHT#

(Stenström, 1996, p.37)

- **[Backchannel]** signals the listener’s attention.

[57] A: Well, of course, people who go to the vet’s \*are\*

B: \*Mm\*.

>A: interested in the cats and do\*gs, ain’t they?

B: \*Yeah, but the people that first  
have pets kit-pets er don’t \*realize\* what’s \*involved, do they?

(McCarthy, 2002, p.127)

#### 4.1.1.2.2 SIMPLE AND COMPLEX MOVES

As we have seen, many moves consist of more than one act, ie an obligatory primary act and an optional secondary and/or complementary act. Let’s compare the following examples:

[58] *One-act move*

A: Are you free tonight? [Initiate]

B: Yes. [Response] (Cook, 1989, p.56)

Moves are simple because the [initiate] and the [response] consist of one primary act each.

**[59] Two-act move**

Wayne: You and Jim really must come round to my place [Initiate]  
some evening.

Sue: Yes. [Response]  
We'd like to.

(Hurford-Heasley, 1983, p.284)

The first move is simple and the second move is complex because the [initiate] consists of a primary act and the [response] of a primary act (*Yes*) and a secondary act (*We'd like to*).

**[60] Three-act move**

A: Your alarm clock doesn't seem to work. [Initiate]

B: No, [Response]

it did.

I think I turned it off.

(Coulthard, 1992, p.142)

The first move is simple and the second move is complex because the [initiate] consists of a primary act, and the [response] consists of a primary act (*No*), a complementary act (*it did*), and a secondary act (*I think I turned it off*).

There is a general example below;

[61] A: [<have a glass of SHERRY>]# . [Initiate<offer>]

B: [<OH># [Response <uptake>

<that's NICE of you># <accept>

<as I'm not DRIVING>]# <justify>]

(Stenström, 1996, p.39)

In extract [61], A's initiating move consists of one act, a primary <offer>. B's responding move consists of three acts, a complementary <uptake>, a primary <accept> and a secondary <justify>.

#### 4.1.1.3 TURNS

The *turn* is everything A says before B takes over and vice versa. The size of turns varies from one word upward, but while it is true to say that the shorter the turn the less is done, the opposite does not have to be true, since a long turn can be just one move consisting of a single act in the same way as a short turn. Let's consider for instance the following example:

	TURN
[62] A: I don't know where the – wh – this address is.	1
B: Which part of town do you live?	2
A: I live four ten East Lowden.	3
B: Ah, yeah. Well you don't live very far from me.	4

(Coulthard, 1985, p.77)

All the utterances in [62], regardless of length, constitute turns in their own right, and they all consist of moves that carry the dialogue forward.

#### 4.1.1.3.1 SIMPLE AND COMPLEX TURNS

If only one thing is done in a turn, ie if it contains only one move, it is *simple*; if more things are done and it contains more than one move, it is *complex*.

In the extract that follows, two female colleagues are choosing pictures for their respective offices:

[63] A: Have you heard the one about the pink Martian?

B: No.

(Levinson, 1997, p.323)

Speaker A does only one thing in her/his turn; s/he asks B a question about pink Martin. B does only one thing; s/he answers A's question. In other words, A's turn consists of one move and is simple, B's turn consists of one move and is simple too.

[64] A: Uh if you'd care to come and visit a little while this morning I'll give you a cup of coffee.

B: hehh, well that's awfully sweet of you. I don't think I can make it this morning.

(Levinson, 1997, p.334)

Speaker A does one thing in her/his turn; s/he invites B for a cup of coffee; that's A's turn consists of one move and is simple. Speaker B does two things in her/his turn; first s/he appreciates A and then s/he refuses the invitation; namely B's turn consists of two moves and is complex.

However, a simple turn is not always less intricate than a complex turn. Take the following extract where a young male social worker is telling a colleague about an eleven-year-old girl who went shop-lifting:

[65] A: I mean I mean she's so little# I mean you you know# sort of one can imagine# a sort of middle-aged woman# with a coat that seemed . you know sort of# . just slightly exaggerated her form# . you know I mean she could sort of slip things in inside pockets# but . . .

(Stenström, 1996, p.35)

The turn is quite long in terms of words but simple in terms of content and function. A does only one thing, she tells a story. But this does not prevent the turn from being syntactically intricate. The reason for the intricacy is that the speaker has some difficulty in formulating the message and therefore exaggerates the use of *verbal fillers* (*I mean, you know, sort of*).

#### 4.1.1.3.2 TURNS AND NON-TURNS

Turn-taking presupposes a shift of speakers. An utterance produced while the other party goes on speaking can consequently not be regarded as a turn.

In extract [66], A and B produce the same number of utterances, but a different number of turns occur; besides there are only two speaker shifts:

	TURN
[66] A: And on Sunday, we were going for a walk an they were *in	1
B: *Mm.	*
>A: the distance walking and they stopped and waited for us to catch up and introduced us to their *daughter	
B: *Oh lovely.	*
>A: And he's quite a comic *the fellow *you know.	
B: *Is he *yeah.	*
>A: And their daughter's in Australia, and they've never been to Australia to see her*	*
B: *Oh, haven't they?*	
>A: *cos they've got a dog	
B: Oh, I see.	2
A: They are tied with the dog, she's a very highly strung dog, and they don't feel they can *leave her in kennels.	3
B: *leave her with anybody, no.	*

(McCarthy, 2002, p.141)

While A continues her/his utterance, B simply takes over the floor and A's contributions are restricted to backchannelling. Simultaneous speeches are indicated by asterisks in the example above.

#### **4.1.1.4 EXCHANGES**

The *exchange* is the minimal interactive unit and involves the negotiation of a single piece of information. Turns combine to form exchanges; each turn realizes one element of exchange structure.

##### **4.1.1.4.1 EXCHANGE TYPES**

There are two major classes of exchange and the sub-classes of these major classes:

- Single (Organizational) Exchange
  - Stating Exchange
  
- Complex (Conversational) Exchange
  - Questioning Exchange
  - Requesting / Commanding Exchange

In the single case, the exchange consists of two turns, each containing one move, an [initiate] and a [response], respectively. Single (organizational) exchange consists of stating exchanges.

In the complex case, the exchange often contains a third turn consisting of an [initiate], a [response], and an evaluating [follow-up] move. Questioning exchanges and also requesting exchanges are subclass of complex (conversational) exchange.

**[67] *Stating Exchange***

A: Have a nice day!

[Initiate]

B: Thank you.

[Respond]

(McCarthy, 2002, p.141)

**[68] *Questioning Exchange***

Teacher: Where were the arrows kept?

[Initiate]

Pupil: In a special kind of box.

[Respond]

Teacher: Yes, that's right, in a box.

[Follow-up]

(Crystal, 1989, p.118)

**[69] *Requesting / Commanding Exchange***

A: Could you help me with this?

[Initiate]

B: Sure.

[Respond]

(Yule, 2002, p.77)

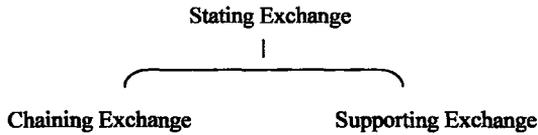
Requesting replaces commanding since <commands> occur extremely seldom in conversation. All three types of exchange may be more intricate, both as regards the length and complexity of turns and the combination of moves into exchanges. By and large, the longest turns are found in stating exchanges, while the more complex turns and move combinations are found in questioning and requesting exchanges.

**4.1.1.4.2 EXCHANGE PATTERNS**

Stating, questioning and requesting / commanding exchanges form various patterns.

#### 4.1.1.4.2.1 STATING EXCHANGES

Stating exchanges consist of either statement-reply pairs or statement-acknowledgement pairs. There are two types of stating exchanges;



The following patterns are typical of stating exchanges:

Chaining	Supporting
A: { S1 B: { R1	A: { S1 B: { *
A: { S2 B: { R2	>A: { S1 B: { * >A: { S1
♣♣♣ S = <statement>      R = <reply>      * = <acknowledge>	

In a *chaining sequence*, A initiates the first exchange and goes on to initiate the next exchange:

- [70] A: { S1 I have a fourteen year old son.  
 B: { R1 Well, that's all right.  
 A: { S2 I also have a dog.  
 B: { R2 Oh, I'm sorry.

(Levinson, 1997, p.292)

The speakers' contributions are fairly equal in length, speaker changes are frequent, and neither of the speakers has a clearly dominating role.

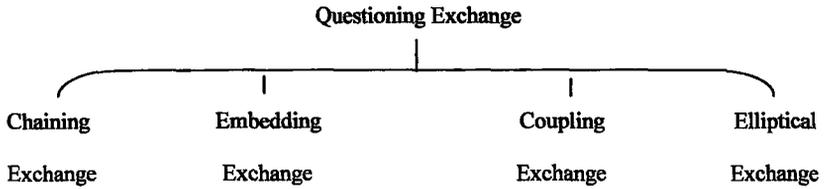
In a *supporting sequence*, one speaker dominates for some time while the other plays a subordinate role, and after some time the roles are reversed. The clearest case of speaker domination is found in storytelling where the story-teller does all the talking supported by [backchannels] from the other party/parties. Here, A tells friends about the way she acquired a sewing-machine, by writing a manual:

- [71] A: ... and I was quite HONEST about it# I said you know I . I haven't used one for YEARS# and they said . you're just the person we WANT# because ((the)) person who. HASN'T . \*{USED one#}## ((and))
- B: \*=M#\*
- >A: has to have it all DEMONSTRATED# \*.\* will understand the PROBLEMS#
- B: \*m\*
- >A: \*.\* better than an EXPERT# \*-.\* so I DID the thing# . . .
- B: \*m\* \*m\*

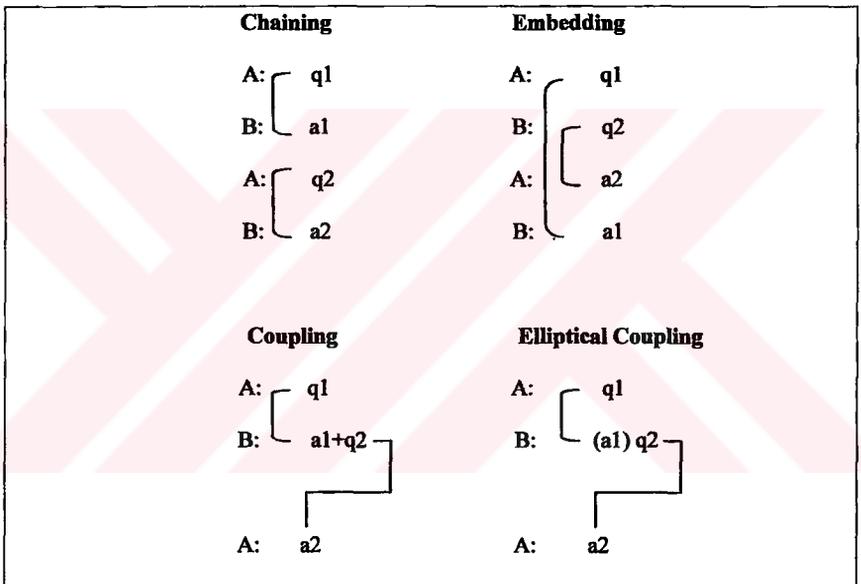
(Stenström, 1996, p.52)

#### 4.1.1.4.2.2 QUESTIONING EXCHANGES

Questioning exchanges consist of either question-answer pairs or question-question-answer-answer pairs. There are four types of questioning exchanges;



These are the most typical questioning-exchange patterns:



♣♣♣ q1=first <question>, a1=<answer> to first <question>, etc.

In a *chaining sequence*, A initiates the first exchange and goes on to initiate the next one:

[72] A: q1 What's your major Dave?  
 B: a1 English – well I haven't really decided yet.

A: { q2 So – you want to be a teacher?  
 B: { a2 No – not really – well not if I can help it.

(Yule, 2002, p.73)

In an *embedding sequence*, A's initiating move is followed by a querying subordinate exchange before B terminates the superordinate exchange:

[73] A: { q1 Do you want the early flight?  
 B: { q2 What time does it arrive?  
 A: { a2 Nine forty-five.  
 B: { a1 Yeah – that's great.

(Yule, 2002, p.78)

In a *coupling sequence*, A's initiating move is followed by a turn in which B both responds to what A just said and initiates a new exchange:

[74] C: { q1 Do you have any pecan Danish today?  
 S: { a1+q2 Yes we do. Would you like one of those?  
 C: { a2 Yes please.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.72)

In an *elliptical coupling*, B's [response] to what A said can be implicitly derived from the way B goes on to the new exchange:

[75] A: q1 well d'you know what they got  
 B: (a1) q2 WHAT  
 A: a2 they didn't get replies from . from most people

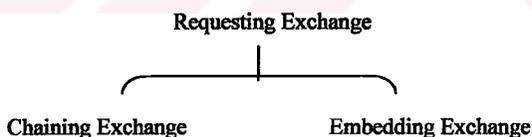
(Stenström, 1996, p.53)

There is no explicit <answer> to the first question, but there is no doubt that B means 'no' without saying it.

#### 4.1.1.4.2.3 REQUESTING EXCHANGES

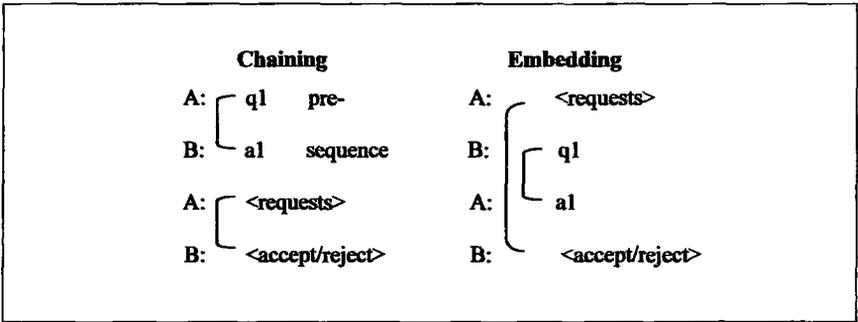
Requesting exchanges consist of either question-answer-request-accept/reject pairs or request-question-answer-accept/reject pairs.

There are two types of requesting exchanges;



Most <requests> are expressed in the interrogative form. Some are expressed by a declarative or an imperative.

The following patterns are characteristic:



The *chaining sequence* is typically introduced by a *pre-sequence* preparing the way for the <request>:

[76] A: { q1 Hi. Do you have uh size C flashlight batteries?  
 B: { a1 Yes, sir.  
 A: { <request> I'll have four, please.  
 B: { <accept> Yes.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.72)

In an *embedding sequence*, B does not comply with the <request> until a potential misunderstanding has been cleared away:

[77] A: { <request> can I speak to JIM Johnstone PLEASE#  
 B: { { q1 SENIOR#  
 A: { { a1 YES#  
 B: { <accept> YES# ---

(Stenström, 1996, p.54)

#### 4.1.1.5 TRANSACTIONS

Exchanges combine *transactions*; each exchange realizes one element of transaction structure. A transaction consists minimally of one exchange dealing with one topic, but usually of a sequence of exchanges dealing with the same topic. There are two types of transactions:

- ❖ Simple Transactions
- ❖ Complex Transactions

##### 4.1.1.5.1 SIMPLE TRANSACTIONS

Simple transactions, consisting of a single exchange, are most likely to occur in brief face-to-face encounters and especially brief telephone calls where the caller tells something short, leaves a short message, asks for information, or makes a simple <request>:

[78] TRANSACTION	Turn	Move	Exchange
C: I wondered if you could phone the vicar	1	1	}
so that we could do the final on Saturday		2	
morning or . afternoon or			
R: Yeah, you see I'll I'll phone him up and	2	3	
see if there's any time free			
C: Yeah	3	4	
R: Uh, they are normally booked Saturdays	4	5	
but I don't- it might not be			(Levinson, 1997, p.337)

The extract is from a brief telephone conversation. In this extract, the caller asks for the information about the arrangement of the final to the listener.

#### 4.1.1.5.2 COMPLEX TRANSACTIONS

Complex transactions consist of two or more exchanges. Some transactions are long. Some are both intricate and long. Consider the following extract from a telephone conversation between two colleagues. In this case the two exchanges, which are part of a somewhat longer transaction, consist of only three turns:

[79] TRANSACTION	Act	Move	Exchange
A: [<OH and# and by the WAY#>	1	}	}
<you didn't try using your READING-room TICKET# as a STUDENT card#>]	2		
B: [<NO#>-	1	2	
<COULD I have#>]	1	1	
A: [<YES#>	1	}	
<it WORKS#> -	2		
<you KNOW#>]	3		
			1
			2

(Stenström, 1996, p.32)

A tree diagram of these two exchanges would look as follows: .



#### 4.1.1.6 INTERACTIONS

Transactions combine to form the highest unit on the rank scale, the *interaction*. The interaction consists of one or more transactions which make up a conversation.

A complete interaction contains 'opening' and 'closing' transactions which define the interaction boundaries. Coulthard (1992:140) suggests that perhaps greetings and leave-takings should not be seen as part of the structure of a particular interaction, but rather as markers of the beginning and end of situations during which interactions occur.

The interaction is described as 'an unordered series of transactions', bearing in mind that this does not mean that they do not display order but that this order has not as yet been, and perhaps cannot be, characterized in linguistic terms. (Coulthard, 1992, p.141)

The following interaction contains a transaction, which consists of five exchanges, has only eight turns. At least ten turns might have been expected, since an exchange consists minimally of an initiating and a responding move. But we have to remember that a turn is not always equivalent to a move, but can consist of more than one move, which is exactly what happens in some of the exchanges in this transaction, where B goes on in the same turn after reacting to what was said.

All the exchanges except 3 and 4 are linked together by overlapping turns, the same speaker terminates one exchange and initiates another in the same turn. In turn 6, '>' shows that A is still holding his turn after the backchannelling 'M' inserted by B.

B: is there any MILK# - .	1	1	}	1
A: ((yeah there's)) this this ø POWDER((ED)) milk#	2	2		
B: AH yes# -	3	3		
what does that do in TEA#		4	}	2
does that DISSOLVE in tea#				
A: I've only just DISCOVERED that# ø a week AGO#	4	5	}	3
B: ((we)) used to have that in the WAR#	5	6		
A: I had it in COFFEE# . *EARLIER#*	6	7		
B: *M#*			}	4
>A: the thing =IS# that it's quite H=ANDY# if you run OUT of *milk#*		8		
B: *QUITE#* YEAH#	7	9		
will it *MELT* ((in tea though))# .		10		
A: *((it KEEPS))#* I SUPPOSE SO# - - It's dehydrated MILK# .	8	11	}	5

(Stenström, 1996, p.56)

**4.1.2 LEXICAL ITEMS AS INTERACTIONAL SIGNALS AND DISCOURSE MARKERS**

Some lexical items are frequent and they are used for lots of purposes in conversation. These items are like *yes*, *sure* and *gosh*, which are purely interactive; *you know*, *please*, and *Q-tags*, which appeal directly to the listener; *well*, *I mean* and *sort of*, which help the speaker to start and keep going; and *anyway* and *now*, which help the speaker to organize her/his speech.

The same lexical item can do more than one thing, depending on where it occurs in the discourse, and that it can sometimes do two things at once. Therefore, in order to interpret what an item does we should take note of its position. All the items listed below serve as acts in moves, but because of their specific properties, we will examine them in terms of *interactional signals* and *discourse markers*; namely, they are lexical items.

absolutely	hmm	no	right
actually	honestly	obviously	sort of
ah	however	of course	sure
aha	I mean	oh	Q tag
all right	indeed	OK	that's right
anyway	in fact	perhaps	yes
certainly	I see	please	yeah
God	I think	probably	you know
goodness	mhm	quite	you see
gosh	maybe	really	well

#### 4.1.2.1 FUNCTION AND POSITION

What a particular lexical item does is strongly related not only to where it occurs in a turn but also to whether it makes up a turn of its own and whether this turn comes first, second, third (or later) in the exchange. Obviously, it is not possible to classify all the lexical items into clear-cut functional categories, but some lexical items have certain functions. The lexical items listed above are typically used for the following functions:

FUNCTION	LEXICAL ITEM
<acknowledge>	mhm, right, really, oh, I see, yes, OK
<answer>	yes, no, sure, right, OK
<appealer>	you know, right, all right, OK, Q-tag
[backchannel]	I see, mhm, really, right, yes
[<call-off>]	OK
<closer>	right
<emphasizer>	that's right
<evaluate>	gosh
[follow-up]	right
<frame>	all right, anyway, now, OK, right
<reply>	I see, mhm, oh, right
[re-opener]	really
<staller>	really, well
<uptake>	oh, well, yes

[81] A: Would you like to come over for a drink tomorrow? [Initiate<offer>]

B: Yes, that would be nice. [Response<answer>]

A: Right. [Follow-up<acknowledge>]

(McCarthy, 2002, p.121)

An item that makes up a turn of its own is also a move consisting of one act. Consequently “Yes” is not only an <answer> but it constitutes the whole [response] move, and “Right” is not just an <acknowledge> act but makes up the entire [follow-up] move. Besides this extract is a complex exchange.

[82] A: ... and I will ... - go into your financial

RAMIFICATIONS# ALL RIGHT# <appealer>

B: RIGHT# [Response<agree>]

OK# I'll have it . I'll have it down <frame>

in DETAIL# exactly what we earn and HOPE to earn#

ALL RIGHT# <appealer>

A: OH# . <uptake>

well I I don't worry about THAT# <starter>

(Stenström, 1996, p.47)

This extract contains a lot of lexical items which have different functions. The beginning and end of a turn are strategic points. This is where speakers link up with each other (ALRIGHT-RIGHT, ALRIGHT-OH), so it is normal to find specific interactional signals in those positions.

If a lexical item makes up a turn of its own and this turn comes first, second, third or later in the exchange, this lexical item is called as a *gap filler*. If a lexical item occurs in a turn, this lexical item is called as a *slot filler*.

A fairly reliable way to the understanding of what interactional signals and discourse markers do is to view them as filling a gap in the exchange, and as slot fillers in the turn:

**GAP FILLERS**

EXCHANGE	
A: _____	Turn 1
B: _____	Turn 2
A: _____	Turn 3
(etc)	

**SLOT FILLERS**

TURN				
Slot 1	Slot 2	Slot 3	Slot 4	Slot 5
_____	_____	wwwwww	_____	_____
			wwwwww	_____

♣♣♣ ‘wwwww’ = lexical content other than lexical items used as interactional signals and discourse markers

Interactional signals and discourse markers can fill more than one gap in the exchange and more than one slot in the turn; besides, they can do different things in different places and in the same place.

#### 4.1.2.2 INTERACTIONAL SIGNALS

*Interactional signals* are used to start, carry on and terminate the conversation.

They play a crucial role for a smooth interaction. Interactional signals can appeal for feedback (*Right*) and give feedback (*I see*), they can respond (*Yes, that's right*), they can involve the listener in the conversation (*You know*), and so on. Interactional signals are used as both gap fillers and slot fillers.

##### 4.1.2.2.1 INTERACTIONAL SIGNALS AS GAP FILLERS

The function of the lexical item changes depending on whether it occurs in the second, third, or fourth turn of the exchange.

'*RIGHT*', which occurs in turn 2 and turn 4, is a good example for understanding the lexical items' changeable meanings according to the position in an exchange.

[83] Turn 2

A: I'll ring you Thursday night then#

B: RIGHT#

[Respond]

(Cook, 1989, p.56)

[84] Turn 4

A: so what time are you COMING this afternoon#

B: əm . [əwə] as we said about four O'CLOCK#

A: OK# YEAH# .

B: RIGHT#

[Follow-up]

(Stenström, 1996, p.61)

#### 4.1.2.2.2 INTERACTIONAL SIGNALS AS SLOT FILLERS

The function of the lexical item changes depending on the place where it occurs in a turn. Lexical items serving as interactional signals are found in slots 1, 2, and 5, namely turn beginnings and ends, but generally not in slots 3 and 4, which are typically filled by items serving as discourse markers.

In these examples, we come across '*RIGHT*' as slots fillers:

[85] Slot 1

A: You and Sheila have been doing some lectures for  
first year Microbiology

B: RIGHT# and oh my God it's the third of March or <confirm>  
whatever – yes fourth of March er we'll get them to  
you today

(Levinson, 1997, p.361)

[86] Slot 2

A: but . I'll be {THERE} directing TRAFFIC#

B: OK# RIGHT#

<emphasizer>

(Stenström, 1996, p.62)

### 4.1.2.3 DISCOURSE MARKERS

*Discourse markers* are used to organize and hold the turn and to mark boundaries in the discourse, so discourse markers are generally used as slot fillers.

Discourse markers help the speaker organize the discourse. They serve to start a conversation; they serve to introduce and mark the end of a topic; they serve to introduce a digression and mark the resumption of the old topic; and they signal the end of a conversation.

#### 4.1.2.3.1 DISCOURSE MARKERS AS SLOT FILLERS

Discourse markers are typically found in turn slot 1, turn slots 3 and 4 and occasionally 5.

[87] Slot 1

A: **RIGHT**# well let's ə: - - . let's look at the APPLICATIONS#

[88] Slots 3 and 4

A: well I WENT about quarter TO# \*(- laughs)\*

B: \*very\* SENSIBLE# - **RIGHT**# well I I probably WON'T see you#

but ə:

(Stenström, 1996, p.63)

In extract [87], '**RIGHT**' serves as <frames> which mark the beginning of a new stage in the discourse. The <frame> '**RIGHT**' in slot 3 ends the discussion, while the

<starter> *well* in slot 4 introduces a concluding comment in extract [88]; that's, the same discourse marker may have a different function in different contexts.

In sum, what interactional signals and discourse markers all have in common is that they make the conversation smoother, more lively, and more intimate. But if overused, they have a negative effect.

**-CHAPTER V-**  
**INTERACTIONAL STRATEGIES**

**5.1 INTERACTIONAL STRATEGIES**

Interactional strategies contain the turn-taking system, exchange procedures, accompanying strategies and politeness.

**5.1.1 THE TURN-TAKING SYSTEM**

The turn-taking system involves three basic strategies:

1. taking the turn
2. holding the turn
3. yielding the turn

On the face of it, these three strategies seem to form a perfectly neat and tidy system where one party speaks at a time, while the other party patiently waits for her/his turn. In reality, it is not as simple as that. The listener may fail to be as openly attentive as s/he is expected to be, with the result that the conversation peters out for lack of encouragement, s/he may butt in without waiting for the current speaker to finish, which results in overlapping turns and interruptions, or the speaker may lose the thread, which causes an unwanted silence if the listener is not prepared to fill the gap.

By and large, however, speaker and listener do pay attention to each other, and smooth speaker-shifts are far more than unsmooth ones.

### **5.1.1.1 TAKING THE TURN**

Before the speaker takes the turn, s/he should plan what s/he is going to say. If s/he plans her/his utterances, there is no problem for the speaker. But sometimes the speaker may not have done the necessary planning and is not ready to go ahead. In these circumstances, taking the turn can be tricky; that's the speaker uses fillers (filled pauses-verbal fillers) in order not to lose her/his turn. Otherwise, one of the other participants takes over the turn.

[1] C: Er well I'm supervising at quarter past

(Levinson, 1997, p.348)

In extract [1], we can easily understand that the speaker hasn't planned what s/he is going to say since s/he uses fillers (er well).

Turn beginnings can also be revealing from another point of view; the very first word may announce whether the speaker agrees to, doubts or objects to what the previous speaker said.

[2] Kid: I know where you're going.

Mom: Where?

Kid: To that (meeting...)

Mom: Yes, right.

(Levinson, 1997, p.290)



- a hesitant start
- a clean start

#### **5.1.1.1.1 A HESITANT START**

Most speakers do not give up the turn at once but take advantage of available stalling devices.

*Filled pauses* (əm, ə:m) and *verbal <fillers>* (eg *well, I mean, you know*) come in handy when the speaker takes the turn without being fully prepared. They show that s/he intends to say something but needs more time to put it into words. Therefore, they tend to cluster in the ‘global planning area’ at the very beginning of a turn, where the rough planning of the entire utterance takes place:

[5] C: ... is it – it’s all right now – you don’t want me to put it out?

R: E::r . well on the whole I wouldn’t bother because er huhuh . well I mean what – what . would it involve putting it out .

C: Hahaha hahah

(Levinson, 1997, p.335)

There are two successive hesitation strings, the first is ‘E::r . well’ and the second is ‘er . well’. And that R repeats the word ‘what’ shows her/his hesitation clearly.

The extract demonstrates very clearly that silent and filled pauses and verbal <fillers> occur in combination and that they can consequently do the same job in the conversation.

### Combinations of pauses and <fillers>

ə:m -

ə:m well / well ə:m

ə:m - - but , you know

ə:m - well I mean , you know

e::r

well I mean -

well ə:m you know / you see

well now - let me see

#### 5.1.1.1.2 A CLEAN START

Surprisingly often, speakers use an introductory device <starter> to begin the turn, although no more planning is involved, and some speakers do so more often than others.

The typical <starter> is realized by *well*:

[6] A: Well, what happened in this country in the last six weeks?

B: I really can't tell you, I haven't read any newspapers.

A: Wasn't there a big event in politics?

B. Yes, it turned out the Democrats got a new leader.

(McCarthy, 2002, p.124)

In this extract, '*well*' is a linking device, not a hesitation marker. We can easily understand it from the speaker's fluent speech.

### **5.1.1.1.2 TAKING OVER**

If the current speaker signals that s/he has completed her/his turn, one of the participants; namely, the listener takes over the turn. Sometimes, after the current speaker has finished her/his utterance, the listener states that s/he e.g. agrees, understands, objects the utterance of the previous speaker.

There are two ways of taking over:

- <Uptakes>
- Links

#### **5.1.1.1.2.1 <UPTAKES>**

By an <uptake>, which occurs in [response] and [follow-up] moves, the next speaker acknowledges receipt of what the previous speaker said and evaluates it before going on.

The <uptake> is often triggered off by an <appealer> in the previous speaker's turn, as in [7], where A has just got a telegram from a person who suffers from varicose veins:

[7] A: but I got a telegram last ə:m . [initiate]

FRIDAY# - .

SAYING# that there was trouble A FOOT#

you KNOW#

B: **YEAH#** - . trouble a LEG ANYWAY# [response]

(Stenström, 1996, p.71)

The <appealer> is realized by *you KNOW*, the <uptake> by *YEAH*.

[8] Dorinne: Oh – you know, it’s just like bringing the – blood up.

Theresa: **Yeah well**. Things uh always work out for the \*best.

Dorinne: \*Oh certainly.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.90)

There are two <uptakes>, ‘*yeah well*’ in extract [8].

[9] Visitor: Excuse me, do you know where the Ambassador Hotel is?

Passer-by: **Oh**, sure, I know where it is. (Yule, 1996, p.133)

In this extract, *oh* signals emphasis.

<Uptakes>
ah
no
oh
well
yes
yeah

### 5.1.1.1.2.2 LINKS

Links are realized by lexical items that are labelled conjunctions (*and, but, cos*) and conjuncts (*so*) in the grammar and which connect sentences and clauses. Obviously, they have an important interactive function as well:

[10] Mr. Strait: What's your major Dave?

Dave: English – well I haven't really decided yet.

Mr. Strait: **So** – you want to be a teacher?

Dave: No – not really – well not if I can help it.

[11] Min: Did you see him in the video?

Wendy: Yeah – the part on the beach

Min: Oh my god \*he was so handsome

Wendy: \*he was just being so cool

Min: **And** all the waves \*crashing around him!

Wendy: \*yeah that was really wild!

(Yule, 2002, p.74)

Links
and
but
cos
so

### 5.1.1.1.3 INTERRUPTING

The most obvious reasons for interrupting are the following: B has got the impression that A has nothing more to say; B thinks that s/he has 'got the message' and that there is no need for A to elaborate; or B wants to speak up at a particular point in the ongoing talk, before it is too late. Any of these reasons can result in competition for the turn. In this extract, A and B are discussing domestic pets, and they interrupt each other:

[12] A: Well, of course, people who go to the vet's \*are\*

B: \*Mm\*.

A: interested in the cats and do\*gs, ain't they?

B: \*Yeah, but the people that first  
Have pets kit-pets er don't \*realize\* what's \*involved, do they?

A: \*care\* \*Well it sorts them  
out, you know, those that don't \*care that's \*it so ... but

B: \*Mm \*Mm

A: if you wanna, you know, somebody that's keen \*on having a \*pet

B: \*Mm \*Mm

A: and want it in \*good order.

B: \*Done ... done properly, that's right, yeah.

(McCarthy, 2002, p.127)

Generally B's utterances overlaps A's utterances, but A takes revenge in turn 5. The result may seem confusing to the outsider, but the speakers involved have no difficulty in understanding each other, judging by the rest of the conversation.

Some discourse devices are excellent interruptors, notably:

- <alerts>
- <meta-comments>

#### 5.1.1.1.3.1 <ALERTS>

<Alerts> are intended to attract the other party's/parties' attention. Therefore, they tend to be louder than the surrounding context and are generally uttered with a higher pitch:

[13] Ethel: I'll take Scotch, if you have it,

Ben: You're gonna have to quit yelling, you see.

Ethel: Oh, look it his ear!

Ben: Oh, that's right. You got – I know I noticed when he came in.

(Schenkein, 1978, p.24)

In extract [13], '*look*' attracts the other party's attention and they start to talk about that subject.

However, <alerts> do not always have the intended effect:

[14] D: Hey we got good news.

R: I know.

(Levinson, 1997, p.355)

D has already begun announcing that he has got something to say and does not pay the slightest attention to R's effort to get a word in and s/he says that s/he knows the news.

<b>&lt;Alerts&gt;</b>
hey
listen
look

#### 5.1.1.1.3.2 <META-COMMENTS>

<Meta-comments>, so called because they actually comment on the talk itself, are polite devices, which allow the listener to come up with objections without appearing too straightforward and without offending the current speaker. In other words, they have a *face-saving* effect.

Clearly, <meta-comments> are particularly common in formal situations, such as business meetings and serious discussions.

The situation may demand that we do not just butt in:

[15] A: əm- but more important than THAT# . \*since it's really a matter of  
NOMENCLATURE#\*

B: **\*could I halt you there\***  
**could I halt you there** and answer that point FIRST# -

(Stenström, 1996, p.75)

In this extract from a radio discussion, it would not only have been extremely impolite of A not to let B in but also entirely out of place.

<b>&lt;Meta-comments&gt;</b>
can I just tell . . .
can I say something about this
could I halt you there
may I halt you
let me just . . .

#### **5.1.1.2 HOLDING THE TURN**

To hold the turn means to carry on talking. But since the planning that the speaker did at the beginning of the turn may not be sufficient for the whole turn, and since it is difficult to plan what to say and speak at the same time, s/he may have to stop talking and start replanning half-way through the turn.

Silence should of course be avoided, unless it is strategically placed; the listener might mistake it for a take-over signal. In other words, the speaker has to play for time.

#### **5.1.1.2.1 STALLING**

<Stallers> play for time. The following devices help the speaker avoid a breakdown and take-over, and these devices are called stalling devices:



[17] A: . . . and ALL this was DONE ə:# - - by - - kind of letting - ə: - - - .

{WELL}REALLY by just ə: - - sort of ə# - starting from NOTHING#

(Stenström, 1996, p.76)

The pauses (both filled and unfilled) are accompanied by '*kind of*' and '*sort of*', which usually serve as <hedges>, by the <filler> '*WELL*', which typically serves as a [response] marker, and the adverbial '*REALLY*'. What '*really*' does from a purely syntactic point of view is questionable, but from a discourse-strategic point of view it serves as a <staller>. Other items that are used in a similar way are '*actually*' and '*obviously*'. The fact that '*actually*', '*obviously*' and '*really*' occur together with 'ordinary' hesitation items makes it appropriate to refer to them as <stallers> just as much as '*well*', '*I mean*' and '*you know*' in that environment.

#### 5.1.1.2.1.2 SILENT PAUSES

A silent pause placed in a syntactically and semantically strategic place, ie a place where it is evident that the turn is not complete and that there is more to come, acts as a turn-holder.

[18] R: I don't . know, whether . I – I think I did – the right thing, jistalittle  
situation came up . and I tried to uhm . well, try to . use what I – what  
I've learned here, see if it worked .

T: Mhm

R: Now, I don't know if I did the right thing. Sunday . um – my mother  
went to my sister's again... (Levinson, 1997, p.352)

[19] C: ... I wondered if you could phone the vicar so that we could ((in-breath)) do the final on Saturday . morning or . afternoon or –

R: Yeah you see I'll I'll phone him up and see if there's any time free .

C: Yeah

R: Uh they're normally booked Saturdays but I don't – it might not be

(Levinson, 1997, p.337)

In extract [18], after lots of silent pauses in turn 1, the other participant takes over the turn in a short time; namely, frequent pauses would most certainly have caused a shift of speakers. In extract [19], there are four pauses. Since the last pause is long, other speaker takes over the turn.

#### 5.1.1.2.1.3 LEXICAL REPETITION

Lexical repetition can involve single words, clause partials or combinations:

[20] B: Hello, Manolo, how are you?

A: Erm, I'm better, I'm better from my ... felt in the Lakes.

B: Why ... why ... what did you happen?

A: Erm, we went to the Lakes for a walk with our teacher of English here and erm, we erm, climb ... climbed ... they say climbed, erm, and, erm, when we came back from the mountain I feel ... felt and broke ... a little broke of my elbow ... then I went to the hospital in the night but it take two hours and I must suspect ... expect ... erm, for

the next day ... in the morning, and (points to his sling) I have this slip, I think it's a slip, but I don't remember, as well.

B: The arm, do you ... is still hurt ... still, still hurt?

A: No, no ... not so much ... no it's hurting ... it's not hurting ... is, I think it is good because I have my arm very quiet, and it's good, I don't ... I sleep well, erm, so well, so, so, and ... I can sleep and be

(McCarthy, 2002, p.140)

Generally, speaker A, sometimes speaker B makes it very clear that he wants to go on speaking, by repeating the words ('why', 'climb', 'feel', 'broke', 'no', 'so'), clause partials ('I'm better', 'it's not hurting', 'it is good') in [20].

[21] A: that's their favourite restaurant because they ... enjoy French food and when they were ... in France they couldn't believe it that ... you know that they had ... that they had had better meals back home.

(Yule, 1996, p.144)

In [21], there are some pauses, but A finally manages to complete the sentence by using a repetition 'that they had'.

[22] R: I don't . know, whether . I – I think I did – the right thing, jistalittle situation came up . and I tried to uhm . well, try to . use what I – what I've learned here, see if it worked .

T: Mhm

R: Now, I don't know if I did the right thing. Sunday . um – my mother  
went to my sister's again...

(Levinson, 1997, p.352)

In this example, we can easily understand that the speaker R hasn't planned her/his speech, so s/he hesitates what s/he is going to say and s/he repeats some words.

[23] A: . . . an awful lot of it IS# a lot more English . than ENGLAND# - - - I  
mean they YOU know# they they they they they say {VEST  
meaning} UNDERGARMENT#

This extract is the good example of a combination. The silent pause in [26] is very long, and it may seem surprising that neither of the two listeners takes over the turn. The reason is probably that they are both eager to hear more about Australia, where neither of them has been. There is no doubt that the speaker is trying to gain time, as reflected in '*I mean*' and '*YOU know*' and the repetition of '*they*'.

#### 5.1.1.2.1.4 NEW START

To avoid getting completely lost the best solution may be to make a new start as in the example:

[24] A: but I feel SOMEHOW# . the sheer FACT# of not having to have. to  
have. this. really sort of - - it's for one thing it does NARK me# that ...

(Stenström, 1996, p.78)

Obviously, A had not made up his mind exactly what to say when he started objecting. He has a hard time trying to put his thoughts into words by means of repetition, pauses and verbal <fillers> before he finally realizes that the only way out of the troublesome situation is to start all over again.

### **5.1.1.3 YIELDING THE TURN**

There are some cases where the speaker has to give away the turn rather reluctantly, but usually, s/he yields the turn without much protesting. The speaker might even appeal to the listener for a [response].

There are three basic ways of yielding the turn:

- Prompting
- Appealing
- Giving up

#### **5.1.1.3.1 PROMPTING**

Some discourse acts prompt the other party to respond more strongly than others. That turns them automatically into turn-yielders. Such acts are, for instance, <greetings>, <questions> and <requests>:

[25] C: ((WELL# . have we DECIDED THEN))# . the grand TOUR#

B: \*YES#\*

A: \*you're staying\* HERE ARE you#

C: ə: YES# we've got to do a grand TOUR#

(Stenström, 1996, p.79)

The fact that C pays no attention to B's 'YES', which answers his own <question>, and answers A's interruptive <question> instead is one of many examples of <questions> being effective turn-takers. The reason for C's negligent behaviour is that he is compelled to respond, since a <question> always requires an <answer>.

Prompting acts
<apology>
<greeting>
<invite>
<object>
<offer>
<question>
<request>

#### 5.1.1.3.2 APPEALING

A turn-final <appealer> serves as an explicit signal to the listener that some kind of feedback would be appropriate.

The 'prompting force' of <appealers> varies from fairly weak, eg when realized by 'you know', to fairly strong, eg when realized by 'OK':

[26] Becky: Come over for some coffee later.

Wally: Oh – eh – I'd love to – but you see – I – I'm supposed to get this finished – **you know**.

Becky: Yes

(Yule, 2002, p.81)

In this extract, '*you know*' is a weak <appealer>.

The <appealer> is strongest when uttered after a silent pause, where it has a questioning effect:

[27] BG: Tell me – tell me where you live.

DF: I live in a flat . **OK?**

BG: Yes.

(Cook, 1989, p.56)

In this extract, '*OK*' is a strong <appealer>.

<Appealers>
Q tags
all right
right
OK
you know
you see

### 5.1.1.3.3 GIVING UP

Giving up involves either that the speaker realizes that s/he has no more to say or that s/he thinks it is time the listener said something. In the unproblematic cases, turns are yielded at a completion point, ie a point where prosody converges with syntactic and semantic completion and which should therefore serve as an efficient hint for the listener to take over. If s/he does not take the hint for some reason, there will be a pause, and the longer the pause, the stronger the pressure on the listener to say something.

[28] B: That looks very nice, put it on and let's have a look at you.

A: I don't like the two buttons, I didn't know it had two buttons, I thought  
it had three. (McCarthy, 2002, p.132)

In this example, A takes the hint and goes on. In other cases it is obvious that the speaker would have liked to continue:

[29] C: ... I wondered if you could phone the vicar so that we could ((in-  
breath)) do the final on Saturday . morning or . afternoon or – ə:m

R: Yeah you see I'll I'll phone him up and see if there's any time free .

C: Yeah

R: Uh they're normally booked Saturdays but I don't – it might not be

(Levinson, 1997, p.337)

Speaker A makes a final effort, signalled by 'ə:m' but has to give up, and B takes over.

In sum, the three main strategies in the turn-taking system, taking, holding and yielding the turn, would undoubtedly be much less manageable without certain 'help resources'.

Pauses and <fillers> help the speaker to play for time; <appealers> and <uptakes> help to achieve smooth turn-taking; links help to connect speaker turns; [backchannels], finally, help the current speaker along while manifesting the listener's attention.

#### **5.1.1.4 OVERLAPPING / PAUSING / BACKCHANNELLING**

Most of the time, conversation consists of two, or more, participants taking turns, and only one participant speaking at any time. Smooth transitions from one speaker to the next seem to be valued. Transitions with a long silence between turns or with substantial *overlap* (i.e. both speakers trying to speak at the same time) are felt to be awkward. When two people attempt to have a conversation and discover that there is no 'flow', or smooth rhythm to their transitions, much more is being communicated than is said. There is a sense of distance, an absence of familiarity or ease, as in the interaction shown in [30] between a student and his friend's father during their first meeting.

**[30]** Mr. Strait: What's your major Dave?

Dave: English - well I haven't really decided yet.

(3 seconds)

Mr. Strait: So - you want to be a teacher?

Dave: No - not really - well not if I can help it.

(2.5 seconds)

Mr. Strait: Wha - \*Where do you - go ahead

Dave: \*I mean it's a - oh sorry I em-

As shown in [30], unit silent pauses (marked with a dash) are simply hesitations, but longer pauses become silences. The silences in [30] are not attributable to either speaker because each has completed a turn. If one speaker actually turns over the floor, which can be defined as the right to speak, to another and the other does not speak, then the silence is attributed to the second speaker and becomes significant. It's an *attributable silence*. As shown in [31], the non-response of Dave is treated, by his girlfriend, as possibly communicating something.

[31] Jan: Dave I'm going to the store.

(2 seconds)

Jan: Dave?

(2 seconds)

Jan: Dave - is something wrong?

Dave: What? What's wrong?

Jan: Never mind.

(Yule, 2002, p.73)

Silence at a TRP (any possible change-of-turn point is called a *Transition Relevance Place*, or *TRP*) is not as problematic for the local management system as overlap. If the expectation is that only one person speaks at a time, then overlap can be a serious problem. Returning to example [30], the final two lines illustrate overlaps, conventionally marked by an asteriks (\* \*) at the beginning of the overlapping talk.

Typically, the first overlap occurs as both speakers attempt to initiate talk. In accordance with the local management system, one speaker will stop to allow the other to have the floor. However, for two speakers who are having difficulty getting into a shared conversational rhythm, the stop-start-overlap-stop pattern may be repeated.

The type of overlap shown in [30] is simply part of a difficult first conversation with an unfamiliar person. There are other kinds of overlap and they are interpreted differently. For many (often younger) speakers, overlapped talk appears to function like an expression of solidarity or closeness in expressing similar opinions or values. As shown in [32], the effect of the overlapping talk creates a feeling of two voices collaborating as one, in harmony.

[32] Min: Did you see him in the video?

Wendy: Yeah - the part on the beach

Min: Oh my god \*he was so handsome\*

Wendy: \*he was just being so cool\*

Min: And all the waves \*crashing around him\*

Wendy: \*yeah that was really wild\*

(Yule, 2002, p.74)

In example [32], overlap communicates closeness.

Normally, those who wish to get the floor will wait for a possible TRP before jumping in. Of course, those holding the floor in a competitive environment will avoid providing TRPs. To do so, they must avoid an open pause at the end of a syntactic unit. As

illustrated in [33], the speaker fills each of his pauses ('um' or 'uh'), which are placed inside, not at the end of, syntactic units. (Just prior to this turn, another speaker had attempted to take the floor, so the speaker in [33] seems concerned to protect his turn.)

[33] I wasn't talking about - um his first book that was – uh really just like a start and so -uh isn't – doesn't count really.

There are many different ways of indicating that conversational partners are listening to each other. Head nods, smiles, other facial expressions and gestures are the examples, but the most common vocal indications are called *backchannel signals*, or simply *backchannels*. Some of these are present in Mary's contributions to [34].

[34] Caller: if you use your long distance service a lot then you'll

Mary: uh-uh

Caller: be interested in the discount I'm talking about because

Mary: yeah

Caller: it can only save you money to switch to a cheaper service

Mary: mmm

(Yule, 2002, p.75)

These types of signals ('uh-uh', 'yeah', 'mmm') provide feedback to the current speaker that the message is being received. They normally indicate that the listener is following, and not objecting to, what the speaker is saying. Given this normal expectation, the absence of backchannels is typically interpreted as significant. During telephone conversations, the absence of backchannels may prompt the speaker to ask if the listener is

still there. During face-to-face interaction, the absence of backchannels may be interpreted as a way of withholding agreement, leading to an inference of disagreement. In conversation, silence is significant and will be interpreted as meaningful.

Spoken interaction requires active participation by both parties in a two-party dialogue. This means that the current listener is not allowed to remain passive. Nor is s/he allowed to provide only silent feedback, such as head-nods, smiles, and eye-glances. Some kind of oral responding is expected, minimally in the form of [backchannels].

#### ***5.1.1.4.1 THE FEEDBACK GRADIENT***

[Backchannels] can reflect empathy, enthusiasm and indignation, but they can also reflect a lack of interest, indifference and impatience, although such feelings are generally expressed in a different form.

Exactly what [backchannels] do is partly a function of the lexical items chosen, partly of the intonation contour adopted.

Now we will compare the extract [35] and [36]:

[35] A: every WEEKEND# the children {sort of EXPECT} CHOCOLATE  
cake# -

B: =M#

A: and this was a BIND# . specially when I was WORKING# up till late  
\*FRIDAY anyway# and they

C: \*=M#

B: YEAH##

>A: wanted\* a fresh CHOCOLATE cake# - ə:m – but NOW# you know#  
there's a COUPLE of chocolate cakes \*in the\*

B: \*M##

>A: FREEZER# .

(Stenström, 1996, p.81)

Neither B nor C seems over-enthusiastic. Notice especially the two instances of =M, reflecting something very close to indifference.

In [36], B doesn't seem to be much affected by A's story to begin with, judging by the two instances of the minimal [response] 'M'.

[36] A: . . . and I'd got the ((PRICKLES)) all night#

B: M#

A: I couldn't keep STILL# and I - I didn't want him to TELL them# and I  
didn't had no APPETITE# for FOOD#

B: M#

A: ((I)) staggered THROUGH it# - flew back home the next DAY# .  
whisked into this HOSPITAL#

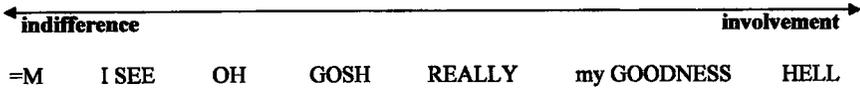
B: GOODNESS#

A: but ə that's all RIGHT# they can {CURE} MALARIA#

(Stenström, 1996, p.82)

It is not until A mentions 'HOSPITAL' that B is roused to show sympathy (GOODNESS).

[Backchannels] can be seen along a gradient, ranging from indifference to strong involvement, these are some basic examples of [backchannels]:



<b>[Backchannels]</b>			
ah	sure	good heavens	oh God
oh	quite	I see	that's nice
mhm	right	of course	that's not bad
yes	really	oh dear	that's right

**5.1.2 EXCHANGE PROCEDURES**

In exchange procedures, we shall proceed stepwise through all the possible moves in the exchange, from the opening [summons] to the terminating [follow-up].

There are five types of exchange procedures:

- Opening
- Initiating

- Repairing
- Responding
- Following-up

### 5.1.2.1 OPENING

Exchange openings differ in complexity depending on how well the speakers know each other, what they are talking about, and the aim of the conversation. And there is a fourth aspect, namely whether the conversation is private or public.

**[37] Jack: Say what are you doing?**

Judy: Well, we're going out. Why?

Jack: Oh, I was just gonna say come out and come over here and talk to the people.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.71)

In this private and informal dialogue dealing with fairly trivial everyday matters there is no need for polite or explanatory introductory moves. Jack goes straight to the point.

**[38] Reporter-Prime Minister**

A: Prime MINISTER# .

[Summons]

the tone of the speech Mr CALLAGHAN

[Focus]

made . {this WEEK#}# . struck many

PEOPLE# as . notably more ACCOMMODATING

than his FIRST# - RENEGOTIATION

speech# on April the FIRST# -

does that reflect a . shift of INTENTION#

[Initiate]

. on your government's PART#

(Stenström, 1996, p.84)

Here, the situation is different. This dialogue is public. It deals with public matters and is intended for a large audience. Therefore, it is not only much more formal than the previous dialogue but also more complex in terms of introductory procedures. It starts by an opening [summons] (*Prime MINISTER*) and is followed by a rather long [focus], before the initiating <question> is asked.

Altogether three types of introductory procedures can precede the [initiate]:

- ❖ summoning
- ❖ framing
- ❖ focusing

#### **5.1.2.1.1 SUMMONSING**

One effective way of calling a person's attention to changes in the discourse is by using an <alert>:

[39] Ethel: I'll take Scotch, if you have it,

Ben: You're gonna have to quit yelling, you see.

Ethel: Oh, look his ear!

Ben: Oh, that's right. You got – I know I noticed when he came in.

(Schenkein, 1978, p.24)

First of all, two participants are talking about a topic, then an <alert>, 'LOOK' takes the attention of the listener Ben and the subject changes, Ben comments on the new topic.

#### 5.1.2.1.2 FRAMING

Another way of calling the listener's attention, although perhaps not as effective as summoning, is framing. <Frames> are often used to signal that a message is on the way or that there will be a change of topics.

[40] N: anyway ... well anyway ... I'm going goodbye

F: but you have not finished your sentence

N: what sentence

F: you have said anyway ...

N: yes

F: anyway and what

(Cook, 1989, p.58)

[41] A: Now, I think I did the right thing.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.83)

In extract [40], 'anyway', 'well anyway' signal a new message, in example [41], 'now' calls the listeners's attention.

<b>&lt;Frames&gt;</b>
all right
anyway
now
OK
right
well
well now

### 5.1.2.1.3 FOCUSING

A third, somewhat different way of calling the listener's attention is focusing on what is to come by using one of the following devices:

- ❖ <meta-comment>
- ❖ <preface>

#### 5.1.2.1.3.1 <META-COMMENTS>

<Meta-comments> comment on current talk.

[42] A: I hardly like to SAY this# in view of your rude REMARKS# but æm  
 . could you give me another RECOMMENDATION#

(Stenström, 1996, p.86)

### 5.1.2.1.3.2 <PREFACES>

Like <meta-comments>, <prefaces> have a face-saving effect in that they prepare B for what is going to happen next.

For instance, instead of inviting B to a cinema straightaway A can first make sure that B is free, thus saving B from turning down the <invite> and A from receiving a negative <answer> in extract [43].

[43] A: Are you free tonight?

B: Yes.

A: Like to go to that film?

(Cook, 1989, p.56)

In sum, summoning is used to call the listener's attention to something new. Framing is used to mark the transition between stages in the discourse and between topics. Focusing may be required by the formality of the situation or as an introduction to a tricky subject.

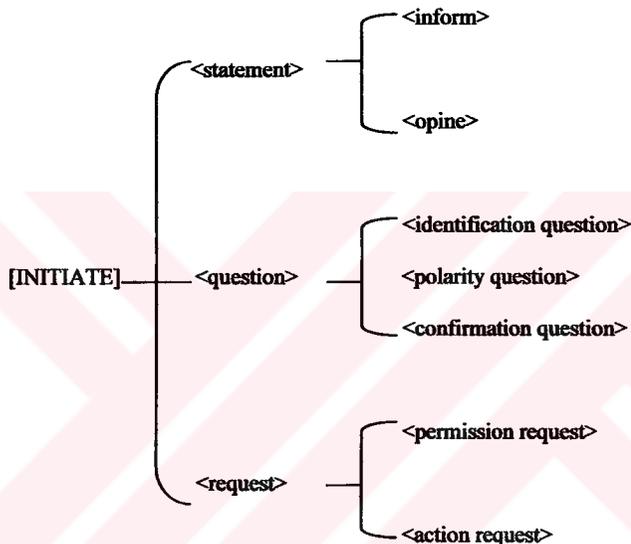
### 5.1.2.2 INITIATING

The [initiate] is the first obligatory move in the exchange.

We can initiate an exchange, for instance, by making a <statement>, asking a <question> and putting forward a <request>. <Commands> are rare in conversation, so

they will be dealt with as a kind of <request>. And we expect these acts to be replied to, answered, and accepted, respectively.

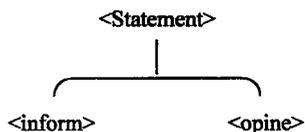
There are three basic initiating acts and their subcategories which are shown in the figure:



Stating, questioning and requesting are the basic initiating acts; offering, inviting, thanking and apologizing are the other initiating acts.

#### **5.1.2.2.1 STATING**

<Statements> supply information and expect to be acknowledged. To 'state' means 'put into words'. It is a very wide concept indeed, but the description will be restricted to two main variants:



[44] B: The name Akkad is a vey, has a very long story, it goes back to at least 2,000 years. It was a state between Syria, Iraq, and Jordan, they called it the the Akkada ... and this is where my name been, ah, deriven from, you know ... I'm bluffing, but this is a small story about name.

(McCarthy, 2002, p.126)

This one is not only long <inform>, but also an <opine>. Obviously it is a combination. Generally, the extract is purely informative, but B's opinions are evident.

#### 5.1.2.2.1.1 <INFORMS>

<Informs> present neutral information. They are typically realized by a declarative utterance.

[45] C: ... I wondered if you could phone the vicar so that we could ((in-breath)) do the final on Saturday . morning or . afternoon or –

R: Yeah you see I'll I'll phone him up and see if there's any time free .

C: Yeah

R: Uh they're normally booked Saturdays but I don't – it might not be

(Levinson, 1997, p.337)

[46] C: It was nothing, uh – **in fact** I didn't even say anything to Willy about it.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.80)

[47] A: that's their favourite restaurant because they ... enjoy French food and when they were ... in France they couldn't believe it that ... **you know** that they had ... that they had had better meals back home.

(Yule, 1996, p.144)

[48] C: D'you do a lot of skiing then?

A: I go each year, yes ... it's my only chance of getting my weight down, **you see**, and it isn't the exercise that does it, **it's the fact** that the meals are so far apart.

(McCarthy, 2002, p.133)

In these examples, '*you see*', '*in fact*', '*you know*' and '*it's the fact*' are the <inform> markers.

<Inform> markers
actually
as a matter of fact
in fact
it's the fact
the point is
you know / you see

5.1.2.2.1.2 <OPINES>

<Opines> express the speaker's personal opinion, his/her feelings and attitudes.

They are generally realized by a declarative and provided with both lexical and prosodic <opine> markers.

[49] B: I feel that a government, i- the main thing, is- the-the purpose of the government is, what is best for the country.

A: Mmhmm.

(Levinson, 1997, p.330)

[50] A: Now, I think I did the right thing.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.83)

[51] A: Uh if you'd care to come and visit a little while this morning I'll give you a cup of coffee

B: hehh Well that's awfully sweet of you, I don't think I can make it this morning. Hh uhm I'm running an ad in the paper and-and uh I have to stay near the phone.

(Levinson, 1997, p.334)

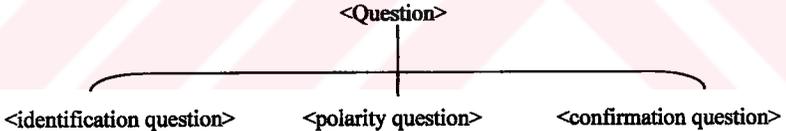
In these extracts, '*I feel*', '*I think*' and '*I don't think*' are the <opine> markers.

<b>&lt;Opine&gt; markers</b>
I feel
I think
I don't think
it seems
it's a pity that
it's surprising that

**5.1.2.2.2 QUESTIONING**

<Questions> ask for information or confirmation and expect to be answered.

<Questions> can be sub-classified according to what kind of <answer> they are asking for:



**5.1.2.2.2.1 <IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONS>**

<Identification questions> ask for an <answer> identifying a *WH*-word.

<Identification questions> are typically realized by an interrogative sentence containing a *WH*-word. Depending on which *WH*-word is used, the information required is either *specifying* or *open-ended*. *Who*, *which*, *where* and *when* ask for specification:

[52] A: **Who** was that man you were talking to?

B: That was my mother's husband.

(Hurford-Heasley, 1983, p.286)

[53] A: **How** are things?

B: The usual.

(Yule, 2002, p.77)

[54] Teacher: **What's** the capital of France?

Pupil: Paris.

Teacher: Right

(Stubbs, 1983, p.29)

[55] A: **Which** is the room next to it?

B: a - the lecture . seminar room.

(Yule, 1996, p.145)

In these extracts, '*who*', '*how*', '*what*' and '*which*' are the signs of <identification question> form.

#### 5.1.2.2.2.2 <POLARITY QUESTIONS>

<Polarity questions> ask for a *yes / no* <answer>. <Polarity questions> are typically realized by an utterance involving inverted word-order:

[56] Carol: **Are** you coming to the party tonight?

Lara: I've got an exam tomorrow.

(Yule, 1996, p.145)

[57] Passenger: **Do** you have a cigarette?

Stewardess: No, we don't. They don't provide that service any more.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.87)

[58] B: **Can** you have a shower?

A: Yes, yes, every day ...

(McCarthy, 2002, p.141)

[59] D: **Did** you hear the terrible news?

R: No. What?

D: You know your grandpa Bill's brother Dan?

R: He died.

D: Yeah.

(Levinson, 1997, p.350)

In these extracts above, '*Are*', '*Do*', '*Can*' and '*Did*' are the signs of <polarity question> form.

#### 5.1.2.2.2.3 <CONFIRMATION QUESTIONS>

<Confirmation questions> ask for a confirming <answer>.

<Confirmation questions> are typically realized by a declarative utterance and a tag (*aren't you, doesn't it*, etc), a so-called 'tag-question'. What is to be confirmed is

expressed in the declarative part, usually with a falling tone, and the request for confirmation is expressed in the tag, generally with a rising tone inviting confirmation:

[60] A: You've got his number, **haven't you?**

B: Yes I have.

(Cook, 1989, p.55)

[61] A: You did put the mayonnaise back, **didn't you?**

B: Yes.

(Green, 1989, p.155)

[62] J: It's a beautiful day out, **isn't it?**

L: Yeah, it's just gorgeous...

(Levinson, 1997, p.338)

[63] A: University Avenue is south of Church St., **right?**

B: That's right.

(Green, 1989, p.155)

In these examples above, '*haven't you*', '*didn't you*', '*isn't it*' and '*right*' are the signs of <confirmation question> form.

What we generally mean by a tag is a string consisting of an auxiliary verb and a pronoun with or without *not*, which is added to a declarative. But there are variants; *OK*, *right*, and *alright* are the most obvious candidates.

## TAGS

aux + pron + / - not: is(n't) he

does(n't) she

has(n't) it

did(n't) you

were(n't) they

etc

ALLRIGHT

OK

RIGHT

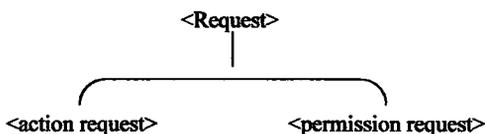
In sum, these three types of <questions> are used for;

- ❖ getting information / confirmation
- ❖ creating contact
- ❖ starting and carrying on a conversation
- ❖ asking permission to do something
- ❖ getting somebody to do something

### 5.1.2.2.3 REQUESTING

<Requests> ask B to do something or to let A do something and expect to be accepted.

There are two subcategories of request, as the definition suggests:



### 5.1.2.2.3.1 <ACTION REQUESTS>

<Action requests> ask somebody to do something.

[64] A: could you help me with this?

B: Sure

(Yule, 2002, p.77)

[65] Child: Could you .hh could you put on the light for my .hh room?

Father: Yes.

(Levinson, 1997, p.307)

### 5.1.2.2.3.2 <PERMISSION REQUESTS>

<Permission requests> ask for a go-ahead.

[66] A: can I SMOKE in here \*DAVID\*#

B: \*PLEASE# PLEASE\* old fellow#

(Stenström, 1996, p.100)

[67] A: ((to operator)) Could I have Andrew Roper's extension, please?

B: Robin Hardwick's telephone . hello

A: Andrew?

B: No, I'm awfully sorry Andrew's away all week

(Levinson, 1997, p.336)

In two extracts [64] and [65], the speakers want the listeners to do something; but the speakers get permission in two examples [66] and [67]. The fact that both categories can be answered by *yes* or *no* seems to indicate that they are basically <polarity questions>. Indeed, what decides the interpretation is only the actual situation.

#### 5.1.2.2.3.3. HOW <REQUESTS> ARE MADE

Both types of <request> are realized by declarative, interrogative and imperative utterances.

##### <Action requests>

**Declarative** I want you to get back as quickly as you can.

**Interrogative** Could you give an example?

**Imperative** Give it to him!

(Stenström, 1996, p.100)

##### <Permission requests>

**Declarative** I would like if I may to turn to two points.

**Interrogative** May I read your message?

**Imperative** Let me finish!

(Stenström, 1996, p.101)

#### 5.1.2.2.4 OTHER INITIATING ACTS

Stating, questioning and requesting are not the only initiating strategies. There are some other initiating acts:

- ❖ offering and inviting
- ❖ apologizing
- ❖ thanking

##### 5.1.2.2.4.1 OFFERING AND INVITING

<Offers> and <invites> submit something for acceptance.

Although <offers> and <invites> can be defined roughly in the same way, they are not doing exactly the same thing in the interaction.

[68] <offer>

A: **Would you like another drink?**

B: Yes, I would, thank you, but make it a small one.

(Levinson, 1997, p.290)

[69] <invite>

Her: **Come over for some coffe later?**

Him: Oh ... eh ... I'd love to ... but you see ... I ... I'm supposed to get this thing finished ... you know.

(Yule, 1996, p.150)

In [68], A offers a drink and B accepts, but in [69] she invites him for a drink, he rejects.

#### 5.1.2.2.4.1.1 HOW <OFFERS> AND <INVITES> ARE MADE

<Offers> and <invites> are realized in the same way as <requests>, namely by declarative, interrogative and imperative utterances.

##### <Offers>

<b>Declarative</b>	I'll buy you a cup of tea.
<b>Interrogative</b>	Want any sugar?
<b>Imperative</b>	Have a glass of sherry!

##### <Invites>

<b>Declarative</b>	Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of the party.
<b>Interrogative</b>	Won't you sit down?
<b>Imperative</b>	Pop in and see me!

(Stenström, 1996, p.104)

Clearly, there are situations where polite forms are important, just as there are situations where the offerer/inviter has to make sure that necessary pre-conditions hold so that a <reject> is avoided. By and large, however, the freedom of choice seems to be larger for <offers> and <invites> than for <requests>.

#### 5.1.2.2.4.2 APOLOGIZING

<Apologies> ask for forgiveness.

<Apologies> are like <action requests> in that they ask B to do something, but as far as the cost/benefit dichotomy is concerned they are different:

[70] A: Well, what happened in this country in the last six weeks?

B: I really can't tell you, I haven't read any newspapers.

A: Wasn't there a big event in politics?

B: Yes, it turned out the Democrats got a new leader.

A: Oh, I see, that's interesting, can you tell me more about it?

B: **Awfully sorry**, I heard it on the radio but I was too tired and I don't remember.

A: Doesn't matter. What about Manchester United's game?

B: **Sorry**, I'm not interested in football.

(McCarthy, 2002, p.124)

[71] A: **Excuse me**. My name's Mike Stubbs. Can you tell me the way to the station?

(Stubbs, 1983, p.17)

[72] Atha: they have at their disposal enormous assets \*and their policy

Pitman: \*look can I just come

in on that last year

Atha: yes in a moment if you may and when I've finished \*then you'll  
know what the point is

Pitman:

\*yes I'm sorry

(Coulthard, 1985, p.65)

In examples above, '*awfully sorry*', '*sorry*', '*excuse me*' and '*I'm sorry*' are the signs of <apologies>.

<Apologies>
scuse me
excuse me
forgive me
sorry
awfully sorry
I'm sorry
I'm really sorry
I'm terribly sorry
I beg your pardon
I apologize

#### 5.1.2.2.4.3 **THANKING**

<Thanks> express gratitude.

[73] A: I've passed my driving test.

B: Oh, congratulations.

A: **Thanks.**

(McCarthy, 2002, p.122)

[74] C: Do you have in stock please any L.T. one eight eight?

R: One eight eight

C: Yeah

R: Can you hold on please

C: **Thank you**

R: Yes I have got the one

C: Yes. Could I- you hold that for H.H.Q.G please

(Levinson, 1997, p.348)

[75] B: **Thanks very much**, but I'm afraid I'm booked up tomorrow night,  
what about ...

(McCarthy, 2002, p.121)

[76] A: **\*thanks very MUCH#\***

B: **\*THANK you# . \***

(Stenström, 1996, p.106)

Above all, <thanks> is a politeness device, which can be used conveniently to terminate a conversation and express gratitude. The most frequent realizations of <thanks> are *thank you*, *thanks*, and *thanks very much*, in that order.

<Thanks>
thanks
thanks a lot
thanks awfully
thanks very much
thanks very much indeed
thank you
thank you so much
thank you very much
thank you very much indeed

### 5.1.2.3 REPAIRING

*Repairing* involves clearing up before proceeding.

What A says may be inaudible, incomprehensible or hard to believe, and B may have to ask for repetition, clarification, correction or confirmation. The resulting [repair]-[response] sequence causes a momentary interruption but is necessary for the completion of the exchange and for the conversation to go on.

[Repair] sequences are embedded in and therefore subordinate to the main exchange. [Repairs] are realized by <checks> which ask for repetition or clarification of what was said in the immediately preceding turn. The main exchange cannot be completed until the <check> has been responded to.

### 5.1.2.3.1 CHECKING

<Checks> ask for repetition and clarification.

<Checks> are generally realized by such items as *sorry*, *pardon*, and *I beg your pardon*, and by interrogative words (WH-words) and utterances:

[77] L: But you know single beds are awfully thin to sleep on.

S: What?

L: Single beds. \*They are

S:                   \*You mean narrow?

L: They are awfully narrow yeah.

In this extract, S doesn't understand what L means and asks a question, later S understands what L means and corrects his word.

[78] Jack: Say what you doing?

Judy: Well, we're going out. **Why?**

Jack: Oh, I was just gonna say come out and come over here and talk to the people.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.71)

In this example, Judy asks a question for clarification.

[79] D: You wanna know who I got stoned with a few weeks ago?

Hh!

R: **Who?**

D: Mary Carter and her boy(hh) frie(hhh)nd. hh.

(Levinson, 1997, p.351)

In this extract, R doesn't know the answer and s/he wants to learn it, in order to learn the answer R repeats the question word '*who*'.

[80] A: Well, what was it then?

B: **Sorry?**

A: What was it then?

B: I don't know you know I mean ...

(Coulthard, 1992, p.139)

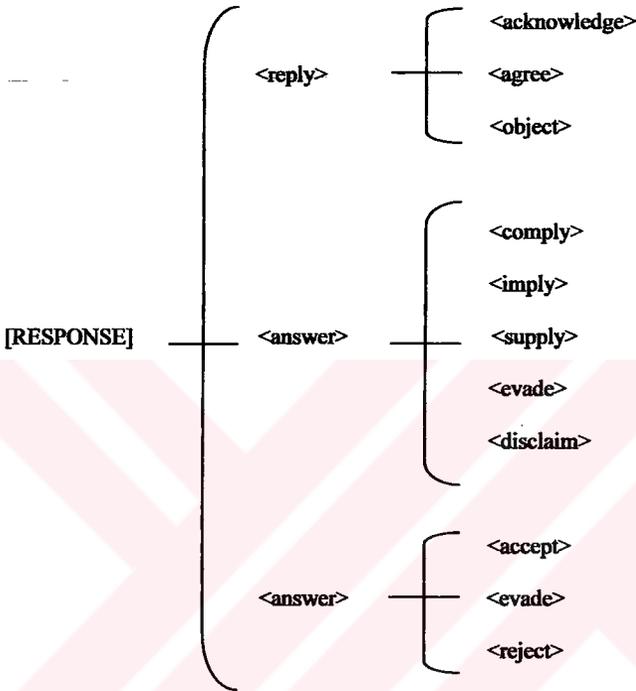
In extract [80], what A says is inaudible and B doesn't hear, understand the question so B says '*sorry*' in a question form.

<b>&lt;Checks&gt;</b>
I beg your pardon
I'm sorry, sorry
pardon
what, when, where, who, why

#### **5.1.2.4 RESPONDING**

The [response] is B's next obligatory move in the exchange after A's [initiate].

There are three basic responding acts and their subcategories which are shown in the figure:

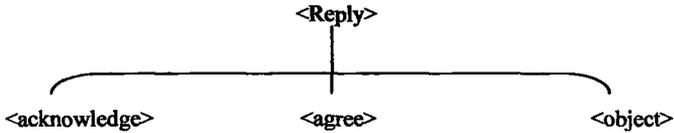


The [response] can consist of anything from a minimal receipt of information, an <acknowledge>, to a long and exhaustive <answer> to a <question>.

#### 5.1.2.4.1 RESPONDING TO <STATEMENTS>

When we make a <statement>, we expect a <reply> signalling some kind of reaction.

There are three subcategories of the <reply>:



A <reply> to a <statement> containing mere facts is likely to be different from a <reply> to a <statement> reflecting the speaker's personal opinion.

**5.1.2.4.1.1 ACKNOWLEDGING <INFORMS> AND <OPINES>**

<Acknowledges> signal that B accepts what A said as a valid contribution to the conversation. When A informs B of something, B is expected to show that s/he has received the information. The most economical way of responding is using an <acknowledge>, which is an extremely useful device, since it allows B to respond without revealing whether s/he approves or disapproves of what s/he heard. It may also reflect B's attitude to what A said, more or less strongly. B's degree of involvement, ranging from mere acceptance (or maybe concealed disapproval) to strong (or maybe faked) surprise, is reflected in the choice of lexical item and the combination of items.

[81] R: I don't . know, whether . I – I think I did – the right thing, jistalittle  
 situation came up . and I tried to uhm . well, try to . use what I – what  
 I've learned here, see if it worked .

T: Mhm

R: Now, I don't know if I did the right thing. Sunday . um – my mother  
 went to my sister's again...

(Levinson, 1997, p.352)

[82] Maria: What did you do at the weekend?

Fumiko: I went to Wales.

Maria: **Oh, really?** Where did you go?

(McCarthy, 2002, p.123)

[83] B: Well, I studied theology and qualified as a priest.

A: **Oh!**

(McCarthy, 2002, p.125)

In examples above, '*mhm*', '*oh, really*' and '*oh*' are the signs of <acknowledges>.

<Acknowledges>
ah
all right
I see
oh
OK
mhm
quite
really
right
goodness
gosh
oh dear

**5.1.2.4.1.2 AGREEING TO <INFORMS> AND <OPINES>**

<Agrees> indicate that B approves of what A means.

A just provides information, there is no need for B to do more than approve and let A go on:

**[84] A:** I'll ring you Thursday night then

**B:** all right, ring us Thursday

**A:** yes, I will

**B:** bye bye, then dear

**A:** bye

(Cook, 1989, p.56)

**[85] IVEE:** A girlfriend of mine, downtown somewhere. She m- uh got married and she moved into one. One room here and then it's one room on the second floor and one room on the top.

**IVER:** *That's right.*

(Schiffrin, 2002, p.268)

**[86] A:** Didn't you \*know wh-

**B:** \*But he must've been there by two

**A:** Yes, but you knew where he was going

(Yule, 1996, p.143)

In examples above, 'yes' and '*that's right*' are the signs of <agrees>.

<Agrees>
absolutely
all right
fine
good
OK
precisely
right
that's right
yes (no)

#### 5.1.2.4.1.3 OBJECTING TO <INFORMS> AND <OPINES>

<Objects> signal that B does not agree with A.

It would be odd, to say the least, if B agreed to everything A said. It would either give the impression that B did not have an opinion of her/his own, or that s/he either did not have anything to say or was simply not interested, with disastrous consequences for the conversation.

Objecting requires a certain level of politeness. This is why <objects> tend to be introduced by an <uptake>, for instance realized by *oh*, *well*, and *yes* (or *no* in case of a preceding negative utterance), all with a shock-absorbing effect. When it comes to *yes* (and *no*), it seems as if B agrees before s/he makes clear that s/he does not:

[87] A: I always thought they got on WELL TOGETHER# both have strong  
WILLS#

B: yes but MILORD# . əm strong-willed PEOPLE# have to TAKE# . one  
another for better or WORSE# the same as people WITHOUT strong  
{WILLS#}#

[88] A: he knew nothing of concrete and GLASS# - -

B: NO# . but he would have been QUITE good# at doing THAT I  
THINK#

(Stenström, 1996, p.113)

'Yes' in [87] could be paraphrased by 'I see what you mean', and 'no' in [88] by 'I quite agree as far as that is concerned'.

<Objects>
no
but
yes, but
no; but
well, but

#### 5.1.2.4.2 RESPONDING TO <QUESTION>

A <question> expects a proper <answer>. The following are proper <answers> to <identification questions>, <polar questions> and <confirmation questions>.

**[89] <identification question>**

Teacher: What's the capital of France?

Pupil: Paris.

Teacher: Right

(Stubbs, 1983, p.29)

**[90] <polar question>**

Passenger: Do you have a cigarette?

Stewardess: No, we don't. They don't provide that service any more.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.87)

**[91] <confirmation question>**

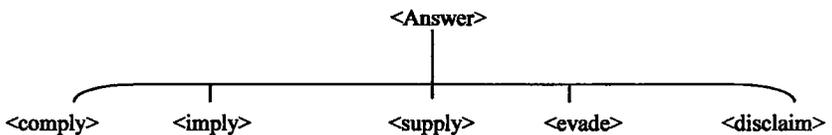
A: You did put the mayonnaise back, didn't you?

B: Yes.

(Green, 1989, p.155)

But not all <answers> are 'proper' in the sense that they really *answer* the <question>.

There are five subcategories of answering:



**5.1.2.4.2.1 COMPLYING**

The <comply> gives adequate information explicitly.

[92] <comply>

A: What time is it?

B: About eight-thirty.

(Yule, 2002, p.77)

The <comply> '*about eight thirty*' provides no more and no less than the information asked for. In other words, it answers the <question> directly.

**5.1.2.4.2.2 IMPLYING**

The <imply> gives adequate information implicitly.

[93] <imply>

A: Can you go to Edinburgh tomorrow?

B: B.E.A. pilots are on strike.

(Brown-Yule, 1989, p.227)

B's reply is to be taken as a negative answer to the question, because the strike will prevent the speaker flying to Edinburgh; it answers the <question> indirectly.

**5.1.2.4.2.3 SUPPLYING**

The <supply> gives inadequate information.

[94] <supply>

A: was he a personal FRIEND of YOURS or# .

B: əm . well. ə . he used to be my tutor

B does not really answer the <question>, since he does not make clear whether he was a personal friend as well as tutor. The information is beside the point. Such <answers> are typically introduced by 'well', often in combination with pauses, as in this example.

#### 5.1.2.4.2.4 EVADING

The <evade> avoids answering (consciously).

[95] <evade>

A: ə:m well have you any OTHER {SUGGESTIONS#}# .

B: well he didn't GIVE me any# (Stenström, 1996, p.115)

Rather than admitting that she cannot suggest anything B refers to a third party who is not present. Doing so, she avoids answering 'no'.

#### 5.1.2.4.2.5 DISCLAIMING

The <disclaim> declares that the <answer> is unknown.

[96] <disclaim>

A: Why don't you kill me?

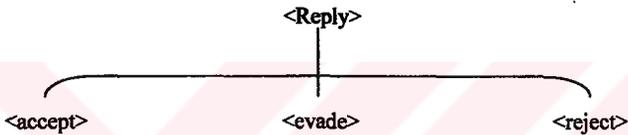
B: I don't know.

(Stubbs, 1983, p.18)

B's reply, '*I don't know*', reveals that s/he doesn't know the answer of the question.

#### 5.1.2.4.3 RESPONDING TO <REQUESTS>

There are three subcategories of <replies> to <requests>:



<Requests> are face-threatening acts for two reasons. First, they are costly to B and benefitting to A and second, they are open to rejections. Accepting, being a positive action, is no big problem. It is rejecting that often requires both tact and diplomacy.

##### 5.1.2.4.3.1 ACCEPTING

If the listener takes something that the speaker requests, it is called '*accept*'.

[97] Child: Could you .hh could you put on the light for my .hh room

Father: Yes.

(Levinson, 1997, p.307)

'Yes' would have been a fully satisfactory <answer> in this extract.

[98] S: Can I have two pints of Abbot and a grapefruit and whisky?

H: Sure.

(Levinson, 1997, p.362)

S requests something, and H accepts by saying 'sure'.

#### 5.1.2.4.3.2 EVADING

If the listener avoids answering the speaker's request directly and consciously, it is called 'evade'.

[99] A: could you SEE what's still to come Fanny# cos I think they. there are  
{TWO performances} of each ONE# - . . .

B: trouble is I don't REGULARLY have a PAPER# it doesn't get  
DELIVERED# so I sometimes BUY one and ...

(Stenström, 1996, p.116)

B wants very much to carry out what she is asked to do but is unable to for obvious reasons. She does not say so in plain words, however; she provides 'the reason why'.

#### 5.1.2.4.3.3 REJECTING

If the listener refuses to accept the speaker's request, it is called 'reject'.

[100] Passenger: Do you have a cigarette?

Stewardess: **No, we don't.** They don't provide that service any more.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.87)

The passenger requests something, but the stewardess rejects this request by justifying.

[101] A: May I have a bottle of Mich?

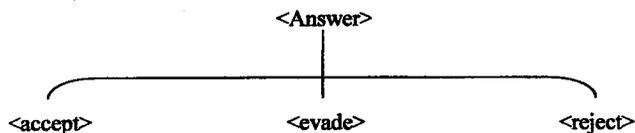
B: No.

(Levinson, 1997, p.304)

A requests something and B rejects directly.

#### 5.1.2.4.4 RESPONDING TO <OFFERS> AND <INVITES>

<Offers> and <invites> are the opposites of <requests> in-so-far as it is B and not A who benefits from the proposed action, which is more or less costly to A. Yet, the act of rejecting may be just as problematic and may require just as much tact as when it comes to rejecting <requests>.



##### 5.1.2.4.4.1 ACCEPTING

If the listener takes something that the speaker offers or invites, it is called '*accept*'.

**[102] <offer>**

A: Would you like another drink?

B: Yes, I would, thank you, but make it a small one.

(Levinson, 1997, p.290)

A offers a drink, and B accepts without thinking.

**[103] <invite>**

A: Would you like to come over for a drink tomorrow?

B: Yes, if it could be after six.

(McCarthy, 2002, p.121)

A invites B for a drink, and B accepts this invitation with a condition.

#### **5.1.2.4.4.2 EVADING**

If the listener avoids answering the speaker's offer or invitation directly and consciously, it is called 'evade'.

**[104] <invite>**

A: when are you coming to SEE us then#

B: ə:m -

A: can you get down before Dan has the BABY#

B: I think we might manage it ə:m - - it's ə you know things are a bit  
hectic but ə:m - ə: ...

(Stenström, 1996, p.119)

B hesitates and avoids answering the invitation directly.

#### 5.1.2.4.4.3 REJECTING

If the listener refuses to accept or consent the speaker's offer or invitation, it is called 'reject'.

[105] <offer>

A: what about a CIGARETTE# . \*((4 sylls))\*

B: \*I WON'T have one THANKS#

(Stenström, 1996, p.119)

Two colleagues are having a chat. The <offer> is very casual.

[106] <invite>

A: Would you like to come over for a drink tomorrow?

B: Thanks very much, but I'm afraid I'm booked up tomorrow night,  
what about...

(McCarthy, 2002, p.121)

A invites B for a drink in a polite way, so B avoids a direct *no* and restricts herself/himself to giving a 'reason why' s/he cannot come.

#### 5.1.2.4.5 RESPONDING TO <APOLOGIES>

Responding to an <apology> is mainly a matter of being polite.

[107] A: Hullo, I was wondering whether you were intending to go to Popper's talk this afternoon.

B: Not today, I'm afraid I can't really make it to this one.

A: Ah, okay.

B: You wanted me to record it, didn't you heh!

A: Yeah heheh.

B: Heheh, no, I'm sorry about that.

A: **Don't worry.** (Levinson, 1997, p.358)

In this extract A responds B's apology by saying 'Don't worry'.

[108] A: SORRY to be a BORE#

B: **you're not a bore a BIT#**

(Stenström, 1996, p.120)

This is from a telephone talk between two female colleagues. A apologizes for not being able to take part in meeting as agreed on earlier.

#### **5.1.2.4.6 RESPONDING TO <THANKS>**

The way we respond to <thanks> is reflected by what we are thanking for, who we are addressing and in what situation:

[109] A: Thanks.

B: **You're welcome.** (Yule, 2002, p.77)

'*You are welcome*' is a polite way of replying to someone who has just thanked you for something.

[110] A: many THANKS#

B: RIGHT# BYE#

(Stenström, 1996, p.121)

A female secretary has informed a university administrator of a suitable day for an appointment with her head of department. <Thanks> predominate in telephone conversations, more precisely in the closing section just before the leave-taking. The reason is that a number of telephone calls are made for the purpose of getting something done. There was a strong tendency in these calls to use '*RIGHT*' when responding to <thanks> or to simply repeat '*THANKS*'.

#### **5.1.2.5 RE-OPENING**

The [re-opener] reacts to an [initiate] or a [response] and elicits confirmation.

A comes up with a highly surprising piece of information or that B gives an unexpected <answer> to a <question>. It is highly unlikely that the [response] should consist of a simple <acknowledge>. Conversational partners tend to show surprise, disbelief, or at least interest, rather than indifference.

#### **5.1.2.5.1 RE-OPENING A SATATING EXCHANGE**

[111] A: I've only had one attack.

**B: You've only had one attack?**

A: Well, as far as I know.

(Stubbs, 1983, p.29)

The repetition does not necessarily indicate that B finds this piece of information so surprising that it needs to be confirmed.

[112] Maria: What did you do at the weekend?

Fumiko: I went to Wales.

Maria: Oh, really? Where did you go?

(McCarthy, 2002, p.123)

Maria's '*oh, really*' is used for confirmation and it helps the question '*where did you go*'.

Generally, in a stating exchange, the initiating move is followed by a responding move which terminates the exchange. The exchange pattern is [Initiate] [Response]. If the initiating move triggers off a re-opening move, on the other hand, the pattern becomes [Initiate] [Re-opener] [Response].

#### **5.1.2.5.2 RE-OPENING A QUESTIONING EXCHANGE**

[Re-openers] typically occur in questioning exchanges, following the [response]. They can, for instance, be used to double-check an agreement:

[113] A: ... would twelve o'clock be OKAY# [initiate]

B: LOVELY# [respond]

A: RIGHT# [re-open]

B: YES# (Stenström, 1996, p.123)

Or they can be used to query a piece of information:

[114] A: tell you who I met YESTERDAY# -

B: WHERE#

A: in PICCADILLY#

B: WHO#

A: Miss LOCKE#

B: did you \*REALLY#\*

A: \*MHM#\* - (Stenström, 1996, p.124)

In sum, this is the way we speak if we take the social aspect of conversation seriously, by filling in gaps as it were. In other words, we do not just silently endorse what the other speaker says but we tend to comment on it.

<b>&lt;Re-openers&gt;</b>
right / all right
OK
really
tag Qs

### 5.1.2.6 FOLLOWING UP

The [follow-up] ratifies the [response].

The study of genuine conversation shows that the [follow-up] is a frequent device in ordinary dialogues and not restricted to the classroom, as has sometimes been claimed.

In the classroom, the teacher uses the [follow-up] to indicate, for instance, whether a pupil's <answer> is right or wrong and to show his approval of a good <answer>. Outside the classroom, it is seldom a matter of right or wrong but rather a way of showing an interest and, ultimately, keeping the conversation going.

#### 5.1.2.6.1 FOLLOWING UP <QUESTIONS> AND <REQUESTS>

[Follow-up] occur typically in questioning and requesting exchanges:

##### [115] Questioning exchange

A: shall we keep those brackets as they are?

B: Yes.

A: **Right.**

(Stenström, 1996, p.125)

'*Right*' serves as a confirmation of a mutual agreement.

[116] C: Do you have the blackberry jam?

S: Yes.

C: OK.

(Levinson, 1997, p.347)

'OK' serves as a confirmation of a mutual agreement.

**[117] Requesting exchange**

A: would you like to take some LUNCH . \*young PAULINE#\*

B: \*M# . ((that would))\* be very NICE PLEASE# -

A: ə:m - YES# . WELL then# we will TAKE some# - - -

(Stenström, 1996, p.125)

A invites B for lunch and B accepts. Finally the <accept> is ratified.

**[118] A: Would you like another drink?**

B: Yes, I would, thank you, but make it a small one.

A: Right.

(Levinson, 1997, p.290)

A offers B another drink and B accepts this offer by stipulating, later the <accept> is ratified.

Summing up, unlike the [re-opener], the (follow-up) does not prompt the other party to respond. It is a kind of final ratifying comment before a new exchange is initiated. Without a [follow-up] the answerer would probably feel less satisfied.

<b>[Follow-ups]</b>
ah
all right
I see
oh
OK
really
right
tags

### ***5.1.3 ACCOMPANYING STRATEGIES***

In addition to the strategies already mentioned, conversation could not do without the following:

- ❖ socializing
- ❖ hedging
- ❖ organizing

#### ***5.1.3.1 SOCIALIZING***

The main purpose of some conversational strategies is to be 'social', namely:

- backchannelling
- empathizing

### 5.1.3.1.1 BACKCHANNELS

Not all utterances are proper turns. *Backchannels* are not. What distinguishes backchannels from turns is that they do not involve a speaker shift. On the contrary, they acknowledge what the current speaker says and generally encourage her/him to go on. But since they are inserted in the course of the current talk, they often cause partial overlaps:

[119] A: Didn't you \* know wh-\*

B: \* But he must've been there by two\*

A: Yes but you knew where he was going

(Yule, 1996, p.143)

B's 'but he must've been there by two' overlaps with A's 'know wh-' and then A continues.

[120] X: well that film really was ... \*wasn't what he was good at\*

Y: \*when di-\*

X: I mean his other ... em his later films were much more ... er really more in the romantic style and that was more what he was ... you know ... em best at doing

Y: So when did he make that one

(Yule, 1996, p.144)

In this example, speaker X produces filled pauses after having almost lost the turn at his first brief hesitation.

However, backchannels are perhaps more often inserted at syntactic and semantic 'completion points', where even a takeover would have been natural:

[121] Caller: if you use your long distance service a lot then you'll

Mary: uh-uh

Caller: be interested in the discount I'm talking about because

Mary: yeah

Caller: it can only save you money to switch to a cheaper service

Mary: mmm

(Yule, 2002, p.75)

These types of signals ('uh-uh', 'yeah', 'mmm') provide feedback to the current speaker that the listener is receiving the message.

#### 5.1.3.1.2 EMPATHIZING

By empathizing the speaker intensifies the relationship with the listener.

The fact that <empathizers>, realized by *you know* and *you see*, often prompt listener feedback, mainly in the form of [backchannels] but also stronger reactions, clearly reflects their social function. The current speaker invites the current listener to take an active part, as it were.

[122] A: because she felt this was not the moment for votes for WOMEN# or something of THAT sort you SEE#

B: **\*how SPLENDID#\***

>A: **\*((it left me quite COLD# and)) ...\***

(Stenström, 1996, p.127)

However, the speaker in [122], does not wait for B to react but goes on talking, seemingly without paying attention to B's appreciative comment.

Similarly, there are many long engaging narrative sections with a complete lack of audible feedback despite fairly frequent insertions of especially *you know*. Not even tags, which may also have a socializing effect, are always followed by listener feedback:

[123] A: And then you told Officer Bradley you'd never seen the 45 with you fingerprints on it, **didn't you?**

B: M.

(Green, 1989, p.156)

<Empathizers>
as you know
If you see what I mean
you know
you see
tags

### 5.1.3.2 HEDGING

By hedging the speaker modifies what s/he says.

Hedging helps the speaker avoid going straight to the point, avoid being blunt, avoid appearing authoritative, and avoid committing him/herself. Hedging is helpful. Maybe the speaker does not know the adequate word or expression, maybe it is convenient not to be straightforward, or maybe s/he thinks the listener is not acquainted with a certain topic or terminology and therefore does not want to place him/her in a face-threatening position.

<Hedges> are especially common in <opines>, ie when the speaker expresses an opinion or attitude to something or somebody.

[124] A: Do you think you were too young?

B: **Perhaps**, I thought, yes, **perhaps** this is ... the, the young people didn't come to the church, and there were too less young people, and too ma ... too mu ... too many old peoples, and I felt I'm too young for this job, I, in ten years **perhaps** ...

(McCarthy, 2002, p.125)

[125] C: So I was wondering would you be in you office on Monday . by any chance? **Probably** not.

R: Hmm yes

C: You would?

R: Ya

C: So if we came by could you give us ten minutes of your time?

(Levinson, 1997, p.320)

[126] A: no no no it's only about **sort of** - - three months I think#

(Stenström, 1996, p.129)

In examples above, '*perhaps*', '*probably*' and '*sort of*' are the signs of <hedges>. '*Sort of*' is equivalent to the meaning 'approximately'.

Hedging is achieved in a great number of ways, and it is sometimes difficult to pinpoint exactly what it is in a speaker's utterance that has the hedging effect. It may be one of the items referred to as interactional signals and discourse markers, or a modal verb, or a certain type of adverb, or an indirectly put utterance.

<Hedges>
actually
at least
can / may / ought to
generally
hardly
kind of
perhaps / probably
quite / rather
slightly
sort of
tag
usually

### 5.1.3.3 ORGANIZING

There are two strategies in organizing the discourse:

- ❖ Framing
- ❖ Monitoring

#### 5.1.3.3.1 FRAMING

By framing the speaker marks a boundary in the discourse.

<Frames> can initiate a turn or introduce a new topic. They can mark a change or a new stage within the speaker's turn, and so on.

[127] N: **anyway ... well anyway ...** I'm going goodbye

F: but you have not finished your sentence

N: what sentence

F: you have said anyway ...

N: yes

F: anyway and what

(Cook, 1989, p.58)

In extract [127], '*anyway*' and '*well anyway*' signal a new message; that's they are <frames>.

<Frames>
all right
anyway
now
OK
right
well
well now

#### 5.1.3.3.2 MONITORING

By monitoring the speaker can put things right; namely the speaker steers what s/he says. Sometimes the speaker needs to make a new start or rephrase what s/he was going to say in the middle of a turn, often because the listener shows that s/he cannot follow or is not convinced.

'*I mean*' and '*actually*' are the common devices of <monitors>:

[128] Jo: Well, I think we should spend it all on the camping trip. I mean, if we're gonna do something, we should do it right.

(Green, 1989, p.152)

[129] A: things went rather WRONG# **actually** I was feeling rather GROTTY last WEEK#

(Stenström, 1996, p.132)

<b>&lt;Monitors&gt;</b>
actually
I mean
well
well I mean
well you know / you see
well I mean you know / you see

#### ***5.1.4 POLITENESS***

Politeness is a principle of the interactional strategies. Politeness can be defined very simply as behaviour or language which is designed to make people feel at ease. There are several ways to think of politeness. These might involve ideas like being tactful, modest and nice to other people. The politeness principle, is formulated as a series of maxims which people assume are being followed in the utterances of others.

Leech defines politeness as forms of behaviour that establish and maintain comity. That is the ability of participants in a social interaction to engage in interaction in an atmosphere of relative harmony. Leech proposes a Politeness Principle which comprises maxims of:

- ❖ Tact
- ❖ Generosity
- ❖ Approbation
- ❖ Modesty

According to these maxims, if you lie about liking the new dress, it is tact, not deceit; if a host insists on your having a second helping, it is generosity, not pushiness; if you hold lengthy conversations about the weather, it is because you want to show friendliness, not because you are boring; if you reject a compliment, it is modesty, not confrontation. Not all of the maxims are equally important. For instance, tact influences what we say more powerfully than does generosity, while approbation is more important than modesty. Speakers may adhere to more than one maxim of politeness at the same time. Often one maxim is on the forefront of the utterance, with a second maxim being invoked by implication. If politeness is not communicated, we can assume that the politeness attitude is absent.

Lakof (Cook, 1989) formulates the maxims of politeness as follows:

- ✓ **Don't impose:** "I'm sorry. I saw you were home" is an attempt to mitigate imposition. "I'm sorry to bother you" is an apology for imposing.
- ✓ **Give options:** "Would you mind... Could you possibly... May I ask you to..." are elaborate questions which give the option of refusal.
- ✓ **Make your receiver feel good:** "You know much more about car engines than I do" is a praise to make our hearer feel good.

Another explanation of politeness is proposed by Brown and Levinson who formulate the theory of 'face' to explain the motivation for politeness behaviour. In the study of linguistic politeness, the most relevant concept is 'face'. Your face, in pragmatics,

is your public self-image; namely, the public self-image that every member (of society) wants to claim for himself. This is the emotional and social sense of self that every person has and expects everyone else to recognize. Politeness is showing awareness of another person's face. If you say something that represents a threat to another person's self-image, that's called a face-threatening act. In their model, politeness is defined as redressive action taken to counter-balance the disruptive effect of face-threatening acts (FTAs). In their theory, communication is seen as potentially dangerous and antagonistic. They explain politeness by deriving it from more fundamental notions of what it is to be a human being. In their framework, face consists of two related aspects:

- One is *positive face*, the positive consistent self-image that people have and their desire to be appreciated and approved of by at least some other people.
- The other is *negative face*, or the rights to territories, freedom of action and freedom from imposition – wanting your actions not to be constrained or inhibited by others.

The rational actions people take to preserve both kinds of face, for themselves and the people they interact with, add up to politeness. Brown and Levinson also argue that in human communication, either spoken or written, people tend to maintain one another's face continuously.

In everyday conversation, we adapt our conversation to different situations. Among friends we take liberties or say things that would seem discourteous among strangers. And we avoid over-formality with friends. In both situations we try to avoid making the hearer embarrassed or uncomfortable.

Face-threatening acts (FTAs) are acts that infringe on the hearers' need to maintain his/her self-esteem, and be respected. Politeness strategies are developed for the main purpose of dealing with these FTAs. For example, we see a can of coke in our neighbour's house. Being thirsty, we might say:

- I want some coke.
- Is it OK for me to have a coke?
- I hope it's not too forward, but would it be possible for me to have a coke?
- It's so hot. It makes you really thirsty.

Brown and Levinson sum up human politeness behaviour in four strategies, which correspond to these examples: *bald on-record*, *negative politeness*, *positive politeness*, and *off-record indirect strategy*.

- ✓ The *bald on-record strategy* does nothing to minimize threats to the hearer's 'face'.
  - An emergency: Help!
  - Task oriented: Give me those!
  - Request: Put your jacket away.
  - Alerting: Turn your lights on! (while driving)
  
- ✓ The *positive politeness strategy* shows you recognize that your hearer has a desire to be respected. It also confirms that the relationship is friendly and expresses group reciprocity.
  - Attend to the hearer: You must be hungry, it's a long time since breakfast.  
How about some lunch?

- Avoid disagreement: A: What is she, small? B: Yes, yes, she's small, smallish, um, not really small but certainly not very big. ^^
  - Assume agreement: So when are you coming to see us?
  - Hedge opinion: You really should sort of try harder.
- ✓ The *negative politeness strategy* also recognizes the hearer's face. But it also recognizes that you are in some way imposing on them.
- Be indirect: I'm looking for a pen.
  - Request forgiveness: You must forgive me but...
  - Minimize imposition: I just want to ask you if I could use your computer?
  - Pluralize the person responsible: We forgot to tell you that you needed to by your plane ticket by yesterday.
- ✓ *Off-record indirect strategies* take some of the pressure off you.
- Give hints: It's a bit cold in here.
  - Be vague: Perhaps someone should have been more responsible.
  - Be sarcastic, or joking: Yeah, he's a real Einstein (rocket scientist, Stephen Hawking, genius and so on)!

**-CHAPTER VI-**  
**SPEAKERS, LISTENERS AND COMMUNICATION**

**6.1 SPEAKERS, LISTENERS AND COMMUNICATION**

In order to understand the real atmosphere of the communication, we have to know the lexical meanings of speaker, listener and communication. Speaker is someone who makes a speech, listener is someone who listens to other people and communication is the process by which people exchange information, express, understand their thoughts and feelings or contact each other.

**6.1.1 THE NATURE OF COMMUNICATION**

How people use language to communicate with each other is a question for centuries. The commonsense view has been articulated by Locke (in Brown, 1995:6): 'Unless a man's words excite the same ideas in the hearer which he makes them stand for in speaking he does not speak intelligibly'. In the simplest version of this view, the speaker has a thought which is encoded into words and transmitted through the air by sound-waves so that it reaches the listener, who decodes the words and then has the speaker's thought. Such an account of communication would have little more to say than that it consists of speakers exchanging thoughts.

The failure to ensure the passage between minds of an identical thought has been seen as fundamentally dangerous to the basis of human knowledge and, in particular, to scientific knowledge. In order to understand an utterance by person A, which refers to an

object, person B must not only identify the same object but must think of it in a particular way - in the same way as A, since if B thinks of it in some private way we lose the notion of a public language, and without a public language which conveys meanings which are guaranteed to be interpreted identically by everyone, science is impossible.

One of the functions of a system of education, which is extended over ten or more years of adolescent life, must be to provide repeated experiences of using particular technical terms in restricted ways within particular subject areas, to ensure, as far as possible, a common usage of such terms for those who are participating in a meaningful discourse, shaping their utterances for others who, they believe, are at that moment thinking of what they are thinking of. As a result of this extended education, we may rely on a commonality of usage among educated laymen of such terms as *stanza*, *molecule*, *tributary*, *multiplication*, *treaty*, *germination*, *convection* and *clause*. But for the purposes of everyday life, where technical terminology is not at issue, the language available to each of us to describe the great variety of changing experience has hourly to be stretched in new ways, with its potential meanings subtly modified. Ziff (in Brown, 1995:8) emphasizes the importance of recognising the fact that a natural language 'does not ever have, not even at an arbitrary moment of time, a static fixed store of word-senses'. Rather, the vocabulary of a natural language is continually being recreated, and the range of senses which are available to a particular word is constantly being modified and, at the same time, the range of possible interpretations of each of those senses is itself being modified.

Apparently satisfactory communication may often take place without the listener arriving at a full interpretation of the words used. We would expect that this must be a frequent experience for young children learning the language. A 3 year-old boy listened

with apparent enjoyment and comprehension, on several occasions, to a story about ‘an enormous turnip’. Some weeks later, in a friend’s garden, he pointed to a large acanthus plant which was a good deal taller than he was, and asked *Is that an enormous turnip?* He had understood enough of the meaning of the phrase - that it was a very large plant with big leaves which grows in the garden - to make sense of the story, which did not hinge on ‘the turnip-ness’ of turnips, whatever that may be. He may or may not have understood that turnips have edible roots below the ground. What he was apparently seeking to do was to relate the meaning of this unanchored, partially understood phrase which he had retained in memory, to the real world containing this plant, whose strikingly large size had brought to mind the familiar phrase.

#### **6.1.2 VARIABLE INTERPRETATION IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS**

Once we admit the possibility that the same expression may be interpreted differently upon different occasions, there are two major issues to be confronted. The first is a familiar one: the same expression may be construed as having a different meaning in different situations of use. This variability is not regarded as fundamentally troublesome since it can be attributed to the effects of pragmatic interpretation in context. The second issue is much more threatening to secure communication. It concerns different individuals arriving at different interpretations of the same expression in the same context of use.

##### **6.1.2.1 THE EFFECT OF CONTEXT ON INTERPRETATION**

Different listeners will generally agree, within reason, on their interpretations of language under everyday conditions of use.

The prevalence of polysemy in natural language should be considered as one source of variability of meaning. However, it is often the case that divergencies of meaning of the same expression derive not so much from polysemy as from the underspecification or vagueness of word meaning which permits us to talk about a wide range of experience using the same words. There is a neat example of the same sentence used in two different contexts which invite the listener or the reader to construct quite different scenarios, hence to interpret the two sentences differently.

(a) When Daddy came home, the boys stopped their cowboy game. They put away their guns and ran out back to the car.

(b) When the police drove up, the boys called off their robbery attempt. They put away their guns and ran out back to the car.

(Brown, 1995:12)

The second sentence in each of these two texts is not strikingly ambiguous. Nor are we dealing here with obvious instances of lexical polysemy. Nonetheless most readers will suppose that 'the same sentence' means different things in these two different contexts, as you quickly find if you try to translate either token of the sentence into another language, or even try to paraphrase them in English. The referring expressions in the two different contexts cause the reader to construct somewhat different imaginary referents. In (a) the expression *they* will be understood as referring to 'boys' who are still young children, *guns* as referring to 'toy guns' and *the car* as referring to 'a car owned by Daddy' which, we infer, is the same car that 'Daddy' has just driven up to the back of the house to park. The expression *the car* in the second sentence in (a) will be interpreted as anaphoric to 'a car'

inferable from the first sentence. However, in (b), the same expressions will be used to construct a scenario which involves older 'boys' (who may actually be young men, thus colloquially characterised), real firearms and a get-away car which has been waiting outside the back of the house and will now drive away from it. This car is distinct from the car which, again we infer, 'the police drove up' in the first sentence of this text so, this time, the expression *the car* will not be interpreted anaphorically. And whereas *put away* in (a) must be taken to mean something like 'put away in a toy cupboard', in (b) it must mean something like 'put away in their pockets or holsters'. The second instance of *ran out back* might be paraphrased as *ran away* or *fled*, but such an interpretation would be quite inappropriate in the first example, where the boys are understood to be running out towards their father's car. Such examples make it easy to see why computers have problems in interpreting texts. And if human beings were similarly deprived of experience and imagination which could be brought to bear in constructing an interpretation, these problems would be shared by human interpreters. In fact, we typically arrive at different interpretations for the second sentence in each of the two texts perfectly smoothly, with no apparent difficulty.

There is a problem for us lurking here, and that is the relationship between the interpretation which we construct for a sentence presented in isolation and the interpretation of another token of the same sentence constructed within a context. If you do not know the context set up by the previous sentence, in the case of example, you can only develop an interpretation by constructing a context based on your own prototypical experience. You have to provide a context to arrive at any sort of interpretation since the 'thin' semantic meaning of a sentence, derived just from a series of vocabulary items in a syntactic structure, yields only such a sketchy and partial content that it cannot alone

provide the material for an interpretation. It is not until the ‘thin’ meaning is enriched by the provision of extra material, which you infer from the immediate context and from your previous knowledge, that you know what the utterance means.

There is a real sense in which you could not confidently undertake a translation into a foreign language which would generalise to any situation of ‘*They put away their guns and ran out back to the car*’ if the sentence is presented to you out of any context. Since you have to enrich the content of the sentence in order to understand it, you need to provide some prototypical context for its interpretation. If you choose the wrong prototypical context, for instance one that is appropriate to text (a) rather than one appropriate to text (b), and it later turns out that a text (b) context is the one required, you will have to do some radical re-thinking, and, indeed, you are likely to have to begin again to construct a different interpretation. There is a crucial relationship in real-life communication between the utterance and the context in which it occurs and what the participants are prepared to imagine, or to infer from their previous experience.

#### **6.1.2.2 SPEAKER MEANING AND SENTENCE MEANING**

A distinction is often drawn between so-called ‘sentence meaning’ and ‘speaker meaning’. Those who draw such a distinction hold that it is possible to attribute a specific interpretation to a sentence taken out of any context, an interpretation which yields ‘the real meaning’ of the sentence; for example, the meaning of a sentence like “John is a brave man” is not affected by its being uttered ironically. If a speaker utters a token of such a sentence, in a context of use, where the speaker’s utterance is interpreted as meaning something radically different from the constructed decontextualised interpretation, then a

distinction is drawn between 'the real meaning' of the sentence and the meaning apparently intended by the speaker.

Once we begin to look at language used for genuinely communicative purposes, rather than at language idling, it becomes apparent that we often (perhaps characteristically) mean far more than we explicitly express in propositionally representable terms. If we say *John is a brave man* in circumstances where John has just demonstrated that he is timid and fearful, it seems perverse for an analyst to claim that what we really mean is that 'John is not a brave man', since if that were all that we wanted to express, we could have expressed that content quite straightforwardly. There are many subtle possible interpretations which we could reasonably infer from such a bald utterance in such a context - that 'John is usually a brave man', or 'John is fundamentally a brave man', or 'John is a brave man when he's in the public eye', or 'John is not brave when he knows that nobody will be impressed'. If a scholar is committed to a belief in specific monosemy and a direct relation between the word and the world, he is surely correct in claiming that the propositional meaning of the utterance remains the same. It must be clear though, if we accept that some utterance types do not have a single correct interpretation which will hold in all contexts, every one of them is going to involve the 'sentence meaning / speaker meaning' conundrum for those who believe that language is only used to express what it explicitly states, and that it is properly used in a fixed and conventional manner.

If we adopt a view that, in saying something, we really mean to assert one proposition, this suggests that we believe that there is a single, conventionally agreed interpretation which can be assigned to each word in isolation from any context, and that

the 'real meaning' of a sentence is constructed compositionally, by putting together the set of conventionally agreed single senses which are assigned to each word. It also implies that we believe that there is a correct procedure for using language to talk about the world – that there is a proper way of constructing expressions which refer to individuals and that there is a proper way of constructing descriptions of their activities, indeed that there is a proper prototypical context which can appropriately be constructed in order to arrive at the correct interpretation of a sentence in isolation.

#### ***6.1.2.3 VARIABLE INTERPRETATION AMONG LISTENERS***

It is widely held that the underdetermination of most word-meanings when they are considered in isolation, as in a dictionary entry, contributes a necessary flexibility to human language. Such a flexibility enables the communication of new thoughts or at least of thoughts in new relationships to other thoughts.

This assumption is commonly associated with the view that communication does not consist of a fail-safe exchange of the same thought, but is, rather, a system which requires effort on the part of the speaker in constructing a helpful message and also on the part of the hearer in working out what the speaker might have meant. This implies the possibility that one individual may arrive at a different interpretation from that intended by the speaker, or a different interpretation from that constructed by another listener. One obvious reason for current sensitivity to these issues has been a shift of interest from the almost exclusive study of discursive written genres to include consideration of spoken language, particularly the spontaneous, relatively unreflective speech of co-operative conversation.

#### **6.1.2.4 CORRECT INTERPRETATION**

The possibility of multiple interpretations of a sentence uttered in a context of use raises fundamental questions for those linguists and philosophers of language who are concerned with the implications of such a view for semantic theories based on the notion of 'truth'. Lycan (in Brown, 1995:19) states any interpretation that suits anyone's convenience is good enough, and if two interpreters' interpretations conflict, neither is correct to the exclusion of the other.

Putnam (in Brown, 1995:19) has suggested that a necessary constraint in interpretation is provided by the listener's own interests in the issue, as well as those which the listener attributes to the speaker. Davidson (in Brown, 1995:19) has argued that we are only capable of understanding language which is expressing fundamentally similar conceptual schemes to those that we ourselves share. But these proposed additional constraints on interpretation still do not solve the central problem posed by Quine, and are certainly not sufficient to guarantee that we understand a particular utterance correctly.

Once we have abandoned the belief that a correct interpretation simply means recovering the original idea of the speaker, we have to take a view on what it would mean for my interpretation to be similar enough to a correct interpretation of what the speaker intended to convey by producing that particular utterance.

Hofstadter (in Brown, 1995:20) suggests that, whatever is required for one mind to understand an utterance in the same way as another mind understands it, it cannot be neural equivalence. He proposes that we might want to suggest that corresponding symbols in the

two minds are linked, to some degree at least, in corresponding ways. However, he sees the problem of what might count as a partial functional isomorphism as 'the most difficult question to answer'. If two minds contain the same thought, it is by no means clear that the same isolable thought will receive the same interpretation or be thought about in the same way in the two minds.

#### ***6.1.2.5 ADEQUATE INTERPRETATION***

To begin with, we need to modify the notion that correct interpretation is the norm, and substitute for it a weaker notion of adequate interpretation. It will be necessary then to give an account of our common everyday experience, which is that we do, on most everyday occasions, apparently correctly understand what the speaker intended to communicate. We shall need an account of what it means to understand an utterance adequately for a particular purpose on a particular occasion, and how it is that it is possible to be reasonably sure that we have done so, stated from the point of view of the listener rather than that of the speaker. It will also be necessary to reconcile this daily experience of successful communication with the further common experience of justifiably different interpretations of the same text.

To get some sort of handle on understanding, we are going to have to distinguish carefully how we appeal to this term in different contexts of use. Much everyday language, particularly that which relates to familiar procedures in the real world - checking that someone has put the cat out, buying a bar of chocolate, co-operating in a surgical operation or in organising an academic conference - is intended by the speaker to have a specific correct interpretation in that familiar context which will generally be recognised correctly

by listeners and, if it is not, the speaker will see that something has gone wrong. In such cases, there may be a possibility of identifying and of rectifying the erroneous interpretation. It is primarily from such areas of common experience that we derive the belief that utterances have a single correct interpretation. Successful co-operative procedures lie at the core of everyday life, and it is on them that the continued successful existence of social groups crucially depends.

#### ***6.1.2.6 THE GAP BETWEEN SPEAKER AND LISTENER***

There is a gap between the speaker and the listener, because they have got different roles in a conversation. The speaker has an intended meaning in her/his mind when s/he is framing his message, and the listener has an interpreted meaning in her/his mind when s/he receives the message.

##### ***6.1.2.6.1 THE SPEAKER'S ROLE***

We cannot suppose that communication is achieved by a speaker having a thought and then putting it into the only possible set of words, ordered in the only possible way, before targeting the words at a hearer to whom only a single determinate interpretation will be possible. Rather, the speaker has to decide how to package the message in such a way that it is likely to be understood by the hearer in the context of utterance, while couching the message in a socially appropriate manner. This means taking into account what the hearer can reasonably be expected to know, as well as the nature of the social roles that the speaker and hearer are playing.

Speakers must, in general, suppose that the judgments they have made about how to express their thoughts are reasonably accurate and should be adequate for their listeners' purposes. If they get this wrong in some genres, casual conversation for instance, it may not matter if the listener has a rather confused impression of what it is that the speaker is trying to convey, since relaxed chatty gossip often has no specific outcome in the world. In other genres, where it matters that the listener correctly understands the speaker, such an outcome can have serious consequences.

#### **6.1.2.6.2 THE LISTENER'S ROLE**

One of the sources of risk in communication is that whereas speakers may think that what they have to say is sufficiently important to be paid attention to, listeners may have other priorities and may not listen in detail but only partially, or perhaps not at all. Every utterance comes with a presumption of its own optimal relevance for the listener. Despite the various caveats they offer, including the possibility of the speaker simply being a bore, this seems to be too strong a claim. If a stranger approaches a passer-by in the street and asks for *the price of a cup of tea* or asks to be told the time, both the speaker and the listener are aware that the utterance is intrusive into the listener's attention, and is in the sole interests of the speaker. We may agree that, in the speaker's judgment, the utterance must always be relevant to the speaker's own interests. However, from the listener's point of view the picture is different. We could agree that the listener will share the speaker's assumption that the utterance is relevant to the speaker's interests, but it must always be the case that the listener is conscious that what the speaker says may or may not turn out to be relevant to the listener's own interests. People who are shopping in a crowded market may be assailed by the noise of traders shouting to advertise their wares but the busy

shoppers are able to detune and ignore the detail of the spoken messages, having determined, even without having heard the content, that they are not relevant to their interests.

It is not necessary to postulate a universal guarantee of relevance to the hearer as the motivation for a hearer paying attention to what a speaker says. Such a guarantee would suggest that listeners will pay attention to every remark that anybody addresses to them.

Listeners choose whether or not they will pay attention to a message and, if they do pay attention, they may select which part of the message they will focus on. The listener always risks missing what the speaker takes to be the main point of what is said and is, in any case, bound to assimilate the interpretation of what was said into a different matrix of beliefs. Most accounts of communication assume a co-operative listener who is prepared to adopt the point of view of the speaker. Careful analysis of conversations held while carrying out co-operative tasks suggests that the goals even of fully co-operative listeners are by no means always identical to the goals of speakers at a given point in an interaction. The listener must be credited with a distinct personality and point of view in any model of communication which hopes to give an account of how speakers and hearers actually talk to each other and understand each other.

The standard assumption in the literature on aspects of communication such as reference is that the speaker is the active participant in the interaction, while the listener plays a merely passive role. The speaker is normally assumed to be the initiator of the interaction, playing the dominant role, selecting the information which would be

appropriate for the current listener for some reason determined by the speaker. This stereotype ignores those frequent occasions in everyday life when the listener, the receiver of information, was originally the prime mover in the interaction, and was responsible for requesting the current speaker to provide required information. When the customer in the travel agency who has requested information about package holidays in Venice hears the laid-back person behind the desk begin to provide information on holidays in Vienna, it is the customer, the current listener, who is likely to take the initiative in redirecting the speaker's attention. The police officer who is trying to extract details of how a traffic accident occurred from an impartial passer-by, may be impatient at the lengthy account of how the passer-by happened to be on the spot at the time, but ask searching questions about the accident, looking for specific responses. The patient who is trying to determine whether or not to have an operation on her foot, will quiz the specialist about the effects of the operation and try to extract a comprehensible answer to the question of how long after the operation it would be before she could walk comfortably again. Whenever we seek goods and services from others, we, as the agents who initiate the interaction, are likely to need to be provided with information by the speaker who possesses the relevant information. In such interactions, the co-operative speaker will of course attempt to select information relevant to the listener's stated interests but, in the end, it is the listener who determines what, of this selected material, is or is not relevant.

#### ***6.1.2.7 MINIMIZING RISK IN COMMUNICATION***

It seems obvious that some contexts and patterns of behaviour between speakers and hearers minimise the risk of misunderstanding between participants in a conversation.

In many everyday dealings, speakers choose to refer to what they are talking about with an expression which is, for them, the best current fit. In the least-risk context, the speaker knows that this expression is the one which the listener is familiar with in this context. Where the speaker wants to talk about something different and introduces a new referent into the conversation, a judgment has to be made on whether the expression used is sufficiently comprehensible in the context to secure the intended meaning for the listener, or whether it is necessary to check that the listener has understood correctly. Checking is a crucial resource for the speaker in face-to-face conversation. Similarly, the co-operative listener will often nod or produce one of a battery of 'fillers' whose function is to reassure the speaker that the hearer understands the message adequately. As anyone who has worked on interactive speech knows, one of the most striking differences between transcripts of speech and written texts is the density of signals from speaker to hearer about how to 'take' the message, and from hearer to speaker indicating whether or not the message has been adequately received and understood. It is this constant checking and reassurance which minimises the risk of misunderstanding in face-to-face spoken language. It does not of course remove it. Listeners must often suppose that they have understood what was said and only later realise that they had not. Or they may suppose that they have understood correctly and later accuse the speaker, who is simply reiterating the original point, of inconsistency. Or they may never come to realise that they did in fact fail to understand what the speaker said.

To sum up, brief utterances of a familiar type are sometimes misconstrued and, it appears, the longer the discourse, the more likely it is that it will be capable of multiple and developing interpretations. Understanding is not an all-or-nothing affair which, if successful, yields a finite representation of the speaker's thought in the listener's brain.

Rather, any interpretation, particularly the construal of a complex utterance, is capable of adaptation and modification as it is inserted into the matrix of beliefs which are themselves, in part, responsible for the formation of the interpretation in the first place. The understanding of some utterances may be said to be 'complete and correct', but the understanding of others may be partial but adequate, adequate but partially incorrect, quite incorrect, or not achieved at all.



## -CHAPTER VII- CONVERSATIONAL ANALYSIS

### *7.1 CONVERSATIONAL ANALYSIS*

In recent years, the phrase '*conversation analysis*' has come to be used as the name of a particular method of studying conversational structure, based on the techniques of the American sociological movement of the 1970s known as ethnomethodology; that's conversation analysis is often associated with ethnomethodologists: because they set out to discover what methods people use to participate in and make sense of interaction. The most famous ethnomethodologists studying on conversational analysis are Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson.

Conversational analysis, which is sometimes regarded as distinct from discourse analysis, is a branch of study which sets out to discover what order there might be in this apparent chaos. (Cook, 1989:52) The emphasis in previous sociological research had been deductive and quantitative, focusing on general questions of social structure. The new name was chosen to reflect a fresh direction of study, which would focus on the techniques or methods used by people themselves when they are actually engaged in social – and thus linguistic – interaction. The central concern was to determine how individuals experience, make sense of, and report their interactions.

In conversation analysis, the data thus consist of tape-recordings and their associated transcriptions of naturally occurring conversation, with little attention paid to the nature of the context as that might be theoretically conceived within sociolinguistics or

social psychology (e.g. whether the participants are friends or distant acquaintances, or belong to a certain social group, or whether the context is formal or informal, etc.). These are then systematically analysed to determine what properties govern the way in which a conversation proceeds. The approach emphasizes the need for empirical, inductive work, and in this it is sometimes contrasted with discourse analysis, which has often been more concerned with formal methods of analysis.

### ***7.1.1 THE FEATURES OF AN EVERYDAY CONVERSATION***

Of the many types of communicative act, most study has been devoted to conversation, seen as the most fundamental and pervasive means of conducting human affairs. People interact linguistically in such a wide range of social situations, on such a variety of topics, and with such an unpredictable set of participants, it has proved very difficult to determine the extent to which conversational behaviour is systematic, and to generalize about it; namely, there is no fixed number of participants at which conversation becomes impossible, but although a conversation can take place between five people, it cannot take place between a hundred. Besides, there is no fixed length for turns in conversation, and sometimes one participant holds the floor for some time.

There is now no doubt that such a system exists. Conversation turns out, upon analysis, to be a highly structured activity, in which people tacitly operate with a set of basic conventions. A comparison has ever been drawn with games such as chess: conversations can be thought of as having an opening, a middle, and an end game. (Crystal, 1989) The participants make their moves and often seem to follow certain rules as the dialogue proceeds. But the analogy ends there. A successful conversation is not a

game, because it is no more than a mutually satisfying linguistic exchange. Few rules are ever stated explicitly. Some exceptions are 'Don't interrupt', and 'Look at me when I talk to you'. Moreover, apart from in certain types of argument and debate, there are no winners.

Everyday conversation has some varieties:

- The language is often inexplicit, because the participants can rely on context to clarify their meaning.

[1] A: That's a nice one.

B: It sure is.

(Crystal, 1989, p.52)

We don't understand what A means exactly outside the context.

- There is no careful thematic planning governing the way a conversation proceeds; there are often changes of subject matter, and alterations in level.

[2] A: I'm dying to know – where's my watch by the way?

B: What?

A: What Gillian's aerobics sessions are like HA HA HA HA

B: What aerobics sessions? It's here.

A: Gillian does aerobics sessions every evening. LEADS them. Thanks.

Can you imagine.

(Cook, 1989, p.54)

The speakers alternate between the main topic of the aerobics and the lesser topic of the missing watch.

- A degree of non-fluency is normal, while participants spontaneously construct their sentences; one expects to hear false starts, hesitation noises, pauses, repetitions, and other errors of performance.

[3] C: ... is it – it's all right now – you don't want me to put it out?

R: E::r . well on the whole I wouldn't bother because er huhuh . well I mean what – what . would it involve putting it out .

C: Hahaha hahah

(Levinson, 1997, p.335)

There are two successive hesitation strings, the first is 'E::r . well' and the second is 'er . well'. And that R repeats the word 'what' shows her/his hesitation clearly.

- Speech is usually quite rapid, with many of the sounds of careful pronunciation being omitted or altered in the interests of preserving naturalness and fluency; a wide range of prosodic effects is heard, signaling the diverse emotions which are encountered in conversations.

[4] A: you S=EE# we we . are members of the faculty of ARTS {of the UNIVERSITY#}#

(Stenström, 1996, p.9)

There are some prosodic effects in this extract.

- The clear-cut sentence patterns known from the written language are often missing; in their place are more loosely-connected constructions, frequently requiring the application of different grammatical rules from those found in good writing or recommended by traditional grammars.

[5] C: D'you do a lot of skiing then?

A: I go each year, yes ... it's my only chance of getting my weight down, you see, and it isn't the exercise that does it, it's the fact that the meals are so far apart.

(McCarthy, 2002, p.133)

In this example, grammar rules from the written language aren't applied.

- The vocabulary of everyday speech tends to be informal and domestic, limited and inexplicit, as speakers cope with difficulties of memory, attention, and perception.

[6] C: it's quite an interesting book actually, he was a surgeon and photographer

D: a surgeon and photographer?

C: the man who took the photographs.

D: oh, I see, I see...

(Brown-Yule, 1989, p.220)

The vocabularies of this extract are informal and general, not formal or technical terms.

### ***7.1.2 THE PROCESS OF CONVERSATION***

Conversation is a continuing and social process which fundamentally involves verbal exchanges between two persons, although more than two persons may participate. Conversation links individuals by twos and larger groups in a verbal interchange which ranges potentially over an infinite variety of vocal assertions. At the same time the conversational relation is strictly bound to a conventional system of usage and to an extensive but finite shared vocabulary. In the conversational relation, organized verbal emission requires careful control of verbal and expressive behavior. Goffman (Allen&Guy, 1974, p.31) states that all participants in conversation must be concerned about the impressions which they make on the others. This behavior falls naturally in two parts, including the verbal assertions which are readily controlled, and the varied expressions and impressions which the actor creates which are difficult to control. Finally, the maintaining of a conversational relationship requires a cover of selective attention whereby both the speaker and the listener successfully concentrate on their own verbal stream and exclude generalized environmental sounds and sound sequences.

#### ***7.1.2.1 THE SOCIAL CHARACTER OF CONVERSATION***

Conversation is the primary basis of direct social relations between persons. As a process occurring in real time, conversation constitutes a reciprocal and rhythmic interchange of verbal emissions.

It is a sharing process which develops a common social experience. This shared experience necessarily implies an equivalence of viewpoint and a tendency toward

consensus. This consensus is not necessarily to be seen as agreement but as an increased understanding. Through a continuing sequence of verbal action, identical word strings are generated by the emitter and replicated more or less perfectly in the receiver's mind. Over time, the exchanges build up a mental union which we call the conversational bond.

As a bond the conversational relation manifests mental, physical, and social properties. For the establishment of a mental bond, there must be a shared language and a vocabulary in common. In conjunction with the shared vocabulary there must be mutually coherent associations among the words and a shared focus of interest. It should also be recognized that the shared vocabulary expands through mutual transfer and new modifications of usage. This means that the mental union leads to an enrichment of language skills and the development of new perceptions. The mental union may be more or less perfect, but insofar as it is genuinely achieved, a common consciousness is developed in which each participant comes to see the viewpoint of the other and to take in fully what the other is saying. This is a primary ingredient of a shared consciousness in the conversational bond. The mental bond is not a passive end-state. It is developed through action. The physical bond in the conversational relation consists in the mutual spatial orientation of the participants and the restrictions of distance which the conversational union imposes upon them. For optimum interaction in face-to-face conversation the participants need to be oriented in view and at a conventional distance. For the duration of the verbal contact the participants are confined to relatively fixed positions and to a limited range of movements. The physical anchorage in the conversational posture may be supplemented by transient bodily contact through touching, tapping, striking, or stroking with the extremities as a communicative gesture.

The conversational relation is regarded as a social bond because it involves two or more persons in a predefined relation. The relation is essentially a bridging phenomenon which for short segments of time ties pairs and larger social systems into a genuine social contact. The contact is achieved and maintained through conventional rules of interaction. It requires respect, social recognition, and mutually permissive and cooperative sharing of the available time. It is supportive of temporally extended social relations such as friendship, collegueship, and familial institutionalized relations. The interpersonal contact has contributed to the more general social relation between the participants and to their involvement in other social groupings. And in the process, their behavioral and verbal repertoires have been somewhat expanded. Verbal and gesticulatory interaction is very important in social process.

### **7.1.3 CONVERSATION AND CONTEXT**

In chapter 2, we talked about speech acts and about the ways they are used to express our aims and intentions: what we ‘do with our words’. In this chapter, we want to situate those speech acts in the environment in which most of them normally and naturally occur, namely in conversation, that is, in linguistic interchanges between two or more partners, the ‘conversationalists’.

Such an environment should not be restricted to the immediate context or, as it is often called, the *co-text*. It will not only have to go beyond the individual speech act and its expression, but even beyond what many linguists, including speech act theorists, have traditionally assumed to be the ideal and correct frame for their theory: the two-person, two-utterance interchange; namely, A says something to which B replies. In the framework of

conversation analysis (CA), the various mechanisms determining people's use of language in an extended, open conversational setting are explored: who holds the right to speak (it's called the 'floor'); what kind of rules are there for taking, yielding or holding the floor; what makes a particular point in the conversation particularly appropriate for a turn, that's, one speaker relinquishing the floor, another taking it; and so on.

Conversation analysts have deployed a wealth of insights into these matters and have elaborated an impressive arsenal of techniques for the description and explanation of the mechanisms of conversation. However, with all due respect for their findings and results, the framework in which they operate is strictly that of a co-text; or, put in another way, CA is a minimalist approach, which allows only so much hypothesizing as is strictly required to explain the phenomena at hand.

While such a parsimonious attitude to theory building undoubtedly has its merits, it also causes certain deficiencies. The restricted co-text of utterance is insufficient for our understanding of the words that are spoken, unless it includes an understanding of the actions that take place as part of, and as a result of, those words. In order to understand people's linguistic behavior, we need to know what their language use is about; that is, we must look further than the co-text of utterance and take the whole of the language scene into our view. This means that we must extend our vision from the linguistic or conversational co-text to the context, understood as: the entirety of societally relevant circumstances that surround the production of language. One of the weaknesses of a strictly CA-oriented approach is that those societal aspects of conversation have no place to go in a framework that primarily studies co-text, and which allows for the context to appear only as a function of the conversational interaction.

#### **7.1.4 FROM SPEECH ACTS TO CONVERSATION**

Speech act theory has been useful as an eye-opener, making us see that language is not just a bunch of sentences, and that linguistics is about other matters than merely giving a formal description of the sound-meaning correspondence. Speech acts are ways of doing things with our words - our words work for us in speech acts. But how these words work, and how or where these speech acts are used in conversation, is not immediately evident, and cannot at any rate be derived from a formal framework, in the way that all and only the correct sentences are supposed to be derived by a grammar.

The main reason for this lack is that there is no such thing as a correct conversation, in the same sense as the grammarians define a correct sentence. Conversation is what happens among people; when we use language together, our speech acting only makes sense in our common context. The most important thing about speech acts is their function in speech; it is not crucial what the speech acts represent officially: what counts is how the conversationalists use them. For example, the following remark is made by one conversational partner to another:

[7] Why can't you shut up?

(Mey, 2001, p.135)

On the face of it, we could assume that this was a question. And it could be perhaps; but in any normal context of conversation we would consider this a rather unpleasant kind of order.

There are simply dozens of ways of putting such an order into words. Moreover, if we look a bit more closely at what's happening, we see that the majority of those commands are not formulated as commands at all, but as remarks, statements, doubts, hints, questions etc.; and that, moreover, nearly all of them avoid using the word 'order'. Here are a few of the innumerable variants on the above theme:

- I strongly suggest you shut your mouth
- Sometimes it's a good idea to shut up
- I wonder if you really should do all that talking
- I wouldn't say more, if I were you
- Remember that proverb, 'Speech is silver, . . .'

All such utterances boil down to one big order: to close one's mouth, say nothing more, keep silent, there is among them not one 'true' speech act of ordering.

Ruiz Mayo (Mey, 2001, p.136) emphasizes that conversation is not only a human right; it is a human duty. And Levinson (Mey, 2001) states that conversation is the prototypical kind of language use and what is important in conversation is not a purported or self-imposed ideal of 'correctness', but such qualities as being entertaining, humorous, knowledgeable, witty, conspicuous.

### ***7.1.5 WHAT HAPPENS IN CONVERSATION?***

Conversation is a way of using language socially, of doing things with words together with other persons.

We can look at this use of language from two points of view. The first is that of content: then our attention will focus on what the conversation is about, on the topics discussed, and how they are brought into the conversation; whether or not these topics are overtly announced or maybe presupposed, or hidden in other ways; what kinds of topic lead to other topics and why. Here, we also focus on the topical organization of conversation and how the topics are managed, either by overt steering, or by overt manipulation, often in the form of indirect speech acting. A further point to be considered is the function of conversation in creating an ambience, a context in which the conversationalists are able to pursue their overt or hidden goals; this is often the function of the kind of conversation called 'small talk' or 'chit-chat'.

Alternatively, one can focus on the formal aspects of conversation: how conversation works, what rules are observed, how sequencing is achieved gaining and giving up the floor, turn-taking, pausing, interrupting. These aspects are often structured in a speech act-theoretical framework: pairs such as greetings and return greetings, questions and answers, summonses and compliances, advice-givings and thanks and so on are seen as conversationally coherent on account of their underlying speech acts.

#### ***7.1.5.1 HOW IS CONVERSATION ORGANIZED?***

In order to understand how conversation is organized, we should study on the beginnings of the method, conversational analysis; the basis of the conversational analysis, namely, the turn-taking system and any possible change-of-turn point; that's, transition relevant places (TRPs).

### **7.1.5.1.1 THE BEGINNINGS OF CONVERSATIONAL ANALYSIS**

In the midst of the theoretical turmoil that followed in the wake of Chomsky's linguistic revolution in the late fifties and early sixties, a group of non-professional language workers were looking at what people did with their words, when they were not busy producing sample sentences for curious linguists. These non-linguists of various observances felt that the professional linguists' custom-made examples were unnatural, since these utterances were not embedded in actually occurring talk; actual talk, by contrast, was typically found in everyday conversation.

Moreover, it was discovered that, contrary to the received bias of official linguistics, conversational talk was not in the least incoherent or irregular; the absence of a formal set of rules for generating the set of all and only correct conversational utterances was not tantamount to conversation being un-ruled, or even unruly. The rules that conversation was found to obey, however, turned out to be more like the rules that people had devised for other social activities: they were the practitioners', the local people's rules, and they resembled the rules that had been discovered by researchers in sociology and anthropology for all sorts of social interaction, much more than they resembled linguistic rules. Since the emphasis was on the methods that the members of the speech community themselves had devised for dealing with the organization of talk, the label 'ethnomethodology' was attached to these studies.

Bilmes (Mey, 2001, p.138) states that although rules are real, even for the ethnomethodologist, there is a sense in which they are a resource for the member but not for the ethnomethodologist. In other words, such rules are people rules, rather than

linguists: they belong to the members of a society, rather than to the practitioners of a science.

The main focus of attention for the conversation analysts became, from the very beginning, the organization and structuring of conversation, and not so much its correctness. To capture the structuring that people practice when carrying on a conversation, it was necessary to develop a technique that was in many respects rather different from the classical transcription techniques of linguistics.

Laughter is usually not considered a linguistic phenomenon; however, in conversation, laughter often plays an extremely important role, either as a means of marking off a sequence telling one's conversational partner that one has got the point of a joke, or as a signal of embarrassment, or as a weak kind of apology, or as whatever else fits the context of a particular conversation. Since in linguistics, there were no accepted ways of transcribing laughter, the ethnomethodologists naturally had to create their own transcription systems and devices. For them, transcribing conversation was not a matter of rendering all phonetic nuances in the most faithful way, in order to describe and classify the phonemes of a language and their variants, but rather, a technique that should be able to help us identify the ways in which people establish the rules of talk, using linguistic means.

#### ***7.1.5.1.2 TURNS AND TURN-TAKING***

According to Harvey Sacks (Mey, 2001, p.139), the founder of the conversation analytic method, the basic unit of the conversation is the 'turn', that is, a shift in the direction of the speaking flow which is characteristic of normal conversation. Furthermore,

in normal, civilized, Western-type conversation, conversationalists do not speak all at the same time: they wait for their turn, also in this sense of the word. As Sacks (Mey, 2001) puts it, “A central feature of conversation is that exactly one person - at least one and no more than one - talks at a time”. Yielding the right to speak, or the floor to the next speaker constitutes a turn. But how people go about allocating turns to each other or themselves is a question. This is where the so-called ‘turn-taking mechanisms’ come into the picture.

Turns occur normally at certain well-defined junctures in conversation; such points are called ‘transition relevant places’ (TRPs). A TRP can be exploited by the speaker holding the floor. This may be done directly, for the purpose of allotting the right to speak to another conversationalist of his or her choice. For example, “*Now, we’d like to hear Jim’s view on this*”. This is what Sacks called the first general rule of next-speaker selection: ‘current speaker selects next speaker’. Alternatively, the current speaker may proceed more indirectly, by throwing the floor wide open to whoever feels like getting into the fray. For example, “*Any other opinions or further comments on this matter?*”.

The second general rule of next-speaker selection is when a next speaker selects himself. Obviously, in this case one may want to obviate the possibility that a speaker just goes on self-selecting; the question is then when somebody else can decide that they’re going to start talking. This is where the concept of transition relevant places becomes important.

As to TRPs, we have on the one hand, the natural breaks occurring in every conversation: a speaker has to pause for breath, or runs out of things to say, or simply declares his or her contribution to be finished: all those points in the conversation are

places where a natural transition, a relay of the right to speak to the next speaker, may occur. On the other hand, there are the formal rules of next-speaker selection that regulate the turn-taking.

A speaker may just ignore an upcoming TRP and hurry past it. Many old-time conversational practitioners such as politicians have the habit of ignoring a natural break that would have occurred at the end of a sentence; instead, they create an unnatural break. Such a break is not recognized as a TRP by the other participants, and thus allows the speaker to continue full speed across the next upcoming, real TRP. Others employ the technique of masking a TRP by emitting turn-threatening noises such as ‘Aaahhm’ at potential transition points, thus warning other speakers of their intention to continue past the TRP as soon as they have regained their breath.

Another mechanism regulating the completion of a speaker’s turn is in force during, e.g., story-telling: the current speaker announces that he or she has a story to tell, and that the other speakers are expected to wait until the current speaker has completed his or her entire complex turn or turn completion unit. Possible occurring TRPs are also ignored here, but this time by understood common agreement: ‘Let the lady/man have her/ his say’

All such mechanisms of selection are among the most important moving parts of the turn-management system, the conversational machinery owned and operated by the actual and potential floor-holders and floor-getters.

On the other hand, the non-floor-holders in a conversational situation are not mere silent bystanders. First of all, their contribution to the conversation is an important element.

Depending on differences of culture and language practices, the phenomena that are often gathered by the common denominatar of back-channeling may vary in shape and frequency, but they are always of great importance for the flow of conversation. The back-channeler provides support for rhe speaker in the form of short utterances ('I see', 'Right', and so on), or of various, more or less articulate noises (regular phonetic ones as well as others).

Bystanders can also intervene in the conversation directly, for example by taking the floor preferably at a TRP, so as not to be accused of inerrupting the speaker. This kind of turn-taking is probably the most familiar among speakers of any language, as there are strong cultural taboos in many communities against usurping the right to speak, not only in a formal, official or religious context, but also in everyday conversational practice. 'Wait for your turn' is advice that is instilled as a maxim in children from a very young age in American society; nevertheless, the rule may not be entirely universal. In other cultures, the anathema of interrupting is not felt so strongly, and consequently not inculcated so forcefully.

#### ***7.1.5.1.3 PREVIEWING TRPs***

Managing the conversation has a lot to do with one's ability to foresee what's going to happen around the next bend in the conversational path, the next turn. The content-related aspect of this management is called 'predictability'.

Predictability has a lot to do with what Sacks (Mey, 2001, p.141) has called the 'adjacency relationship', which is a bit like the cement holding chunks of conversation

together, despite their being spread out over time. Here's an ethnic joke demonstrating adjacency under rather adverse conditions:

Two silent Finns go on a hunting trip. Early in the morning, one of them says: 'Nice day today' - to which the other doesn't reply. After a couple of hours, they go separate ways. Towards evening, when the two friends meet with other hunters in the sauna at the lodge, the addressee is heard to mutter: 'People talk way too much around here'.

(Mey, 2001, p.141)

In this exchange, the normal routine would be to have the second conversational partner reply something like 'Yes', or 'Right' or 'A bit chilly', or whatever else is expected in such a situation. Regular adjacency would imply for the second part of a pair not to be separated from the first; certainly it would not normally allow a second pair to be entirely absent. Normal adjacency as in the classical case of the 'greeting' would require a more or less instantaneous response; a minimal pair would be 'Hi', 'Hi', which, despite its brevity, is some kind of conversation. Other typical so-called adjacency pairs are question/answer, request/offer or request/denial, order/compliance etc.: given one part of the pair, the other is normally predictable.

The expectancy included in the adjacency relationship operates also in other environments. Here, we can meet more or less clearly predictable turn signals in the form of changes in the speed of delivery; this is why we often are able to predict the end of somebody's speech at a public occasion, or of intonation and word-choice patterns, as in certain stylized types of conversation and other discourse. Conversational 'closers', for

example on the telephone: 'OK?', 'OK' serve as what has been referred to as 'opening up closings'; conversational starters ('Excuse me', 'Yes?') exhibit similar predictable patterns.

In telephone talk in particular, signals such as 'OK', 'well' or other 'summarizing devices' often announce an upcoming closure of the conversation.

Such 'final', or intended-to-be-final, markers can be used as manipulative devices, not only preventing others from joining the conversation, but signaling that what should have been one's next TRP should be considered the end-point of the interchange, rather than an opening up of the floor for a new speaker. If we say something like: 'To sum this all up, let me add a last comment...' or 'Concluding our discussion, we should not omit...'

We are basically telling the other speakers that enough has been said on the matter, and that no further speakers are welcomed on the floor.

In everyday conversations, many such sequences have a ritualized character that wholly or partially excludes a normal reaction. For example, greetings of the type: 'How are you?' are routinely followed by the predictable: 'Fine, and you?'

Such utterances have lost their original content of inquiring about somebody's health, and have become purely formal devices for starting a conversation. Still, these formal pre-sequences can be revived at will by inept conversationalists, who ignore their 'pre-character' and will answer a 'first pair part' of greetings like the one above by a lengthy and detailed account of their bodily and mental state of health.

### 7.1.5.2 HOW DOES CONVERSATION MEAN

We will study on the conversational techniques which are used to convey meaning. True conversation is never the mere exchange of formalities. What we want to know is how the way one talks with people functions in human communication, both through the medium of the simple formalisms such as turn-taking, and by including the content.

Content is an integrating part of our analysis of conversation, as it is of all human language activity.

#### 7.1.5.2.1 PRE-SEQUENCES

Certain utterances are usually felt to be 'precursors' to something else; that's, another utterance, or perhaps a sequence of utterances. The classical examples are the so-called attention getters, such as: 'Hey', 'You know something?', 'Excuse me' and so on, to which the usual answer would be: 'Yes', 'What?' or something in the same vein.

After this initial exchange has been concluded, the real business can be dealt with. Utterances which serve as precursors to others are often called *pre-sequences*. They can be considered as purely formal tools of conversation management, but usually, they are more than that, and occupy a position which is midway between the formal and the content aspect of conversation. Pre-sequences may include pre-announcements such as 'What do you know', 'Guess what', pre-invitations such as 'Are you doing anything to-night?', pre-threats 'Watch it' and numerous others.

Some of the most frequent pre-sequences are of the type sometimes called 'inquirers'. These usually precede a request of some kind; their function is to make sure that the request about to be made is indeed, from the point of the requestee, within the limits of the possible. For example, before purchasing an item in the shop or requesting information about something, help with a task, or any favor at all, we inquire about the available possibilities of obtaining that item, information, help or favor. For instance, a well-known pre-sequence in shopping would be: 'I wonder if you have X?', 'Do you by any chance have X?', 'Does your shop carry X?' and so on.

When the shop clerk answers in the negative, the sequence usually comes to an end. However, if the answer is affirmative, the pre-sequence usually changes its activity type from being a pre-sequence of an informatory kind to being a prelude to an act of buying. This act can, under the circumstances, be almost unavoidable, depending on the item and the social conditions of the purchase.

Since pre-sequences in a way have a life of their own, they are not always counted as sequences on a par with any following, independent sequences to which they play an ancillary role; instead, they may appear to be half-submerged, somewhat under the surface of the conversation, so to speak. The following exchange is an example:

[8] A: Are you doing anything tonight?

B: Why are you asking?

A: I thought we might maybe catch a movie.

B: Well, no, nothing in particular. What do you want to see?

(Mey, 2001, p.145)

After the initial pre-sequence ‘Are you doing anything tonight?’, the sequence is interrupted by the question ‘Why are you asking?’, which is answered first, before the answer to the pre-sequence question is made available. Whereas such overlapping is rather normal in the case of pre-sequences, it is by no means limited to that case.

The following invented dialogue, for example, begins with a pre-request:

[9] C: Do you have hot chocolate?

S: mmhmm

C: can I have hot chocolate with whipped cream?

S: Sure ((leaves to get))

(Levinson, 1997, p.347)

#### **7.1.5.2.2 INSERTION SEQUENCES AND REPAIRS**

Even though the adjacency, or immediate neighboring relationship, typically holds for two utterances belonging to the same exchange, there are cases where such immediacy is not maintained; the resulting gap, however, does not damage conversational coherence, and Sacks’s (Mey, 2001, p.146) well-known rule ‘no gap, no overlap’ remains in force.

What we are dealing with here is called *insertion*; often, insertion is used to effect a remedial exchange, such as a *repair*. In an insertion sequence, the normal flow of conversation is not stopped; conversationalists behave as if they were aware that the turns in their talk are operating at different levels, and thus the main stream of conversation may continue its course, even though part of it is shunted off in order to let the

conversationalists attend to actual or potential, upcoming difficulties. After the obstacles have been removed, conversation continues as before; the original turn-taking counters either have not been affected by the insertion sequence or are reset following it. Thus, in the middle of a conversational exchange, one may be presented with a greeting, or a request for information, or an order, none of these having anything to do with the flow of the exchange.

[10] Jean: Could you mail this letter for me? (Q1 = Request)

Fred: Does it have a stamp on it? (Q2)

Jean: Yeah. (A2)

Fred: Okay (A1 = Acceptance)

(Yule, 2002, p.78)

As shown in [10], there is a pair which consists of making a request – accepting the request (Q1-A1), with an insertion sequence of a question –answer pair (Q2-A2) which seems to function as a condition on the acceptance (A1) being provided.

In the following exchange, different conversational goals are being pursued by different activity types: greeting, buying/selling, exchange of information about the weather and leave-takings. All these activities are intertwined, rather than following each other strictly in sequence: e.g., in the buying sequence below, the conversationalists insert a weather information exchange.

[11] A: Morning Tom!

B: Good morning, sir!

A: Have you got a Guardian left this morning?

B: You're lucky; it's the last one. Bit brighter today, by the looks of it.

A: Yes, we could do with a bit of a dry spell. You got change for a pound?

B: Yes, plenty of change; here you are. Anything else today?

A: No, that's all just now, Tom. Be seeing you.

B: Mind how you go.

(Halliday, 1989, p.219)

Normally, one does not perceive attending to such other business (greetings, requests, orders etc.) as interfering with the business at hand; it is similar to telling your party on the other phone line that you're busy, or to uttering the standardized phrase: 'Just a moment, please.'

The father, being home alone with a sick kid is on the phone to departmental secretary at university in the following sequence.

[12] A: So I think I'll be in tomorrow, when Jacob's a little better. And

if you could maybe ask Bob King to take my phonetics class...

[in a loud voice] HEY STOP THAT RIGHT AWAY

Secretary: You want me to stop WHAT?

A: Sorry, I was talking to the cat - Hold on...

Secretary: ???

A: The damn cat was fixin' to sit on the baby's face... As I was saying, Bob promised to take my phonetics class today if necessary. . .

(Mey, 2001, p.147)

In this extract, while there is no proper sequencing of replies in this conversation, yet, if we know the situation, its content and coherence are obvious, despite the interruption caused by the insertion sequence.

In cases where such sequences deal with non-life-threatening matters, though, we may observe other reaction patterns, with potential loss of coherence and even content. The classic case is the scenario where the shopkeeper or clerk picks up the phone and starts talking to a customer on an incoming line right in the middle of your interchange, and most of the time without so much as asking you for permission or offering an apology. While this is usually perceived as non-cooperative behavior, there seems to be as yet no generally accepted way of conversationally dealing with such situations, even in cases where the inserted conversation (often about obviously private, non-business-related matters) tends to go on and on.

As we see from the examples given, sequencing may be interrupted, or even stopped altogether, whenever other business needs to be attended to. Evidently, natural disasters, or even minor mishaps like in the cat example above, need immediate attention and require that the conversationalists adjust their interchange to the emergent situation in the outside world. In general, although interruptions and insertions may happen at all times during all kinds of conversations, many of the actual phenomena are related to a particular culture, and cannot be properly understood without some insight into the particular pragmatic presuppositions that are at work.

In many cases, an insertion is motivated by a need to repair a damaged conversation. Damages can be of various kinds: misunderstandings, including material

failure to understand what is being said due to noise etc., failure to observe normal sequencing as in the case of non-adjacency, or of speaking out of turn, participants correct either their own word or those of another participant, edging towards a situation in which maximum communication is achieved; in all such cases, a repair sequence may be initiated.

One distinguishes between self-initiated repairs where the speaker momentarily relinquishes the current floor, and erects a temporary structure where repair operations can be performed, and other-initiated repairs, the latter mostly consisting in corrections offered to the speaker, e.g., ‘You mean of course...’, inserted directly into the speaker’s discourse, correcting his or her vocabulary or pronunciation, questioning the utterance’s presuppositions and/or setting them right, and so on. In general, self-initiated repairs are ‘preferred’ to other-initiated ones.

Repairs are also used as strategic devices: correcting oneself, in particular, can be a way of gaining time for thinking, or a means to prevent somebody else from jumping into the conversation at an upcoming TRP. At other times, what seems to initiate a repair sequence by force of a request for information, an apology etc. contains in reality a speech act of a totally different kind.

As an example, we can consider the other-initiated repair in the following constructed conversation between a Macho Male (MM) and a Feminist Female (FF):

[13] MM: So I was trying to pick up this chick when...

FF: Excuse ME, did I hear that right?

MM: Awfully sorry, I mean, woman...

FF: PICK UP?

MM: Awfully sorry, I mean, meet...

FF: So you're trying to imply that there actually are women around who  
would go out with a MALE CHAUVINIST PIG LIKE YOU?

(Mey, 2001, p.149)

In this case, both repairs are other-initiated, and the speech acts of 'asking for confirmation' or 'excusing' are in reality threats, acknowledged as such by the speaker in his apology-cum-repair. The dialogue ends with a rather heavy-handed 'presupposition correction'.

In the following extract, for example, one speaker uses a multiply ambiguous term 'child bar' which the other doesn't understand, causing a temporary breakdown in communication. Together they negotiate a solution to the problem, the first speaker A asking the second B to repair the term by making it more specific, and the second several times, repairing his own explanation to make it clearer:

[14] A: what have you got to do this afternoon

B: oh I'm going to repair the child bar

A: what do you mean CHILD bar

B: uh it's er metal bar goes acr- has to be fixed from one side of the car I  
mean from one side of the back seat to the other for the BABY seat to  
go on

A: AH::::

(Cook, 1989, p.55)

### **7.1.5.2.3 PREFERENCE**

In an adjacency pair, there is often a choice of two likely responses. For instance, a request is most likely to be followed by either an acceptance or a refusal. In such cases, one of the responses is termed the preferred response, because it occurs most frequently; and the other the dispreferred response, because it is less common.

**[15a] A: Can you help me? (First Part)**

**B: Sure. (Second Part)**

**[15b] A: Want some coffee? (First Part)**

**B: Yes, please. (Second Part)**

(Yule, 2002, p.79)

In examples, the responses in each second part all represent preferreds.

The next question is whether we can say anything about the form that such interchanges preferably take. Let's consider the following two conversations:

(In the liquor store)

**[16a] Sales Clerk: You're over 21, aren't you?**

**Customer: Sure.**

**Sales Clerk: OK, here's your beer.**

(Mey, 2001, p.150)

**[16b] Sales Clerk: You're over 21, aren't you?**

Customer: Well, er, yes, my birthday was actually yesterday, and we're  
having a party tonight...

Sales Clerk: All right, may I see your ID?

(Mey, 2001, p.150)

The customer's return in (b) is clearly problematic, given the circumstances. The fact that superfluous information is offered in the second part of the turn makes this type of answer inappropriate, as well as ineffective. As a result, the salesperson gets suspicious and wants to see an ID.

But the story doesn't end here. If we look more closely at the customer's utterance in (b), we notice a couple of other things. The elaborate response in case (b) is in stark contrast to the simple 'Sure' in (a). In (b), there is hesitation in the customer's reply, and he starts his sentence over again (a 'false start'; 'er'); there is an expletive ('yes'), there is a so-called 'hedge' showing a certain insecurity, 'Well'.

Generalizing from these examples, we get the following picture: in conversational interchanges, not all second parts in an adjacency relationship are of equal structural complexity. Some are extremely simple, such as acknowledgments or confirmations 'Yes', 'OK', others show various degrees of structural build-up like elaborate excuses, long explanations and so on.

Here are some further contrasting instances; this time the interchange has the form of a request and an (indirect) denial:

[17] [Simple-structured second part]

A: Could you help me lift this box, please?

B: OK.

[18] [Complex-structured second part]

A: Could you help me move tomorrow morning?

B: Well, er, let me see, I have to take Cindy to nursery school and take my mother-in-law who just has broken her arm to the doctor and Fred my handyman is coming over to fix the attic window, so ... couldn't we make it some other day, perhaps, or does it have to be tomorrow?

(Mey, 2001, p.151)

Such complex, negative responses to requests are different from positive ones in a number of respects: structure, word count, 'hedges' and hesitations like 'er', and probably with regard to some other features as well, such as articulation, speed of delivery, pitch and so on.

The ranking 'acceptance-rejection' from structurally simpler to structurally more complex implies that one has to work harder, use more linguistic resources to say 'No' to a request than to say 'Yes'. A 'No' as in the example above may have to be shored up with lots of background material, in order to convey the impression that one does not just decline to perform the requested action, but that the 'No' is due exclusively to circumstances beyond one's control, which then have to be specified. This specification takes time and requires a greater effort - something which may surface as hesitation, pauses, false starts, repairs and so on.

As we mentioned before, the term used for this ranking is *preference*; another, perhaps more suitable term would be 'markedness'. A 'marked' sequence is structurally richer and more complex than an 'unmarked' one. It is often termed the 'default'. Marked behaviors are, furthermore, dispreferred because they require more effort on the part of the users, which usually results in a noticeable deviance from what is expected or accepted. For the same reason, finally, dispreferred behaviors are often lacking in effectiveness.

Some of the features mentioned above appear also in other contexts where dispreferred responses turn up. Most conspicuous are pauses, false starts, repetitions, wordiness, as well as features of a prosodic kind: speed of delivery, stress, intonation, irregular breathing; maybe even such extralinguistic features as flushing and trembling.

On the whole, one can say that certain kinds of openings and responses are always and definitely preferred, while others are usually and more or less definitely dispreferred. On the telephone, a complex opening such as 'Who is the party I'm speaking to there?' is dispreferred when we have compared to a simple 'Hello'; similarly, a complex and self-contradictory answer such as 'There is not a soul here right now' is normally dispreferred, and only acceptable either as a joke, or in a particular context such as the answering machine especially if followed by instructions like: 'Please identify yourself, stating name, business, time of day and telephone number'. The same goes for complex responses and responses that carry too much information, or suggest dubious or undesired intentions by prolonged silence or significant heavy breathing, and thus do not allow the gradual building up of a conversation. Here's an example of such an unsuccessful informational overload on the second part of a telephone greeting:

[19] [Phone rings]

Bruce: Hello!

Caller: Hello, I'm Julie from the Patriot Ledger. How are you today?

Bruce: I'm fine, thanks, but I already take two newspapers and I think a third would be superfluous.

(Mey, 2001, p.153)

In this extract, the caller, by providing full self-identification and affiliation information, precludes further business; if she hadn't mentioned the name of the newspaper, she probably would have been able to continue the conversation and perhaps persuade Bruce to subscribe.

### ***7.1.5.3 FROM FORM TO CONTENT***

We have concentrated on formal devices in conversation; that's, structuring the talk, measuring the interventions and controlling the 'floor' in the previous sections. These formal devices often are inseparable from what the forms in question express. A request is followed by a compliance or a rejection, not only on the formal level: there is a reason for pairs occurring together, to wit, the fact that both members of the pair deal with the same content. We will examine some of the content-oriented mechanisms of conversation.

#### ***7.1.5.3.1 COHESION AND COHERENCE***

Linguists distinguish between 'cohesion', which is the way words formally hang together in sentences and the like, and 'coherence', which captures the content-based

connections between the words that make them produce sense. Stubbs (Mey, 2001, p.153) expresses that cohesion has to do with relations between surface linguistic forms... whereas coherence refers to relations between communicative acts. In other words, cohesion establishes local relations between syntactic items, whereas coherence has to do with the global meaning involved in what we want to express through our speech activity. As to conversation, while the local sequence of turns creates a certain amount of cohesion, it is by no means sufficient to guarantee coherence.

There is a piece of text that shows no coherence at all, although it is locally pretty well organized as a sequence of turns. The following interchange is between a psychiatrist; namely an interviewer, and his patient, an 80-year-old, educated, middle-classwoman. It is a typical instance of schizophrenic discourse:

[20] I: Is it something you have experienced?

P: No, yes, it's been said to us.

I: Aha.

P: Yes, it's been said.

I: Who said it to you?

P: Well, I can hardly remember who. There are many young gentlemen here, many young people who have been separated, and they have said it – they have told something about it. Yes.

I: Where are these young people?

P: Well, they are three hundred things after all, so we are, we had people all over space, yes. There were ... the whole of space was filled with people and then they were put into three skins at our place.

I: Three skins?

P: Yes, they were put into the body, but I think that two of the skins are ready, they should be ready, they should be separated. And there were three hundred thousand who had no reason, or soul, or reason. But now they are so ..., now it seems that there are some who have neither soul nor reason and they had to be helped, and people have to be helped, I can't do it here in this where we are, we have to be in... if I am to take care of these things. These ... that's what the ladies say, they are aware ...

P: I've helped them in Oster Sogade (a major thoroughfare in central Copenhagen), we helped them in that way.

I: In Oster Sogade?

P: Yes, we helped them in that way there and there were many who slid away and many who were helped. Yes.

I: There were many who slid away and many who were helped?

P: Yes, I don't know how many, I don't know. But there are many trisks and svilts, I think there are most trisks and svilts [meaningless English words]. That is those who are made out of svilt clay.

I: Out of svilt clay?

P: Yes, it is out on space. They make them in trilms.

I: Trilms?

P: By trilms. And then they go through three levels. Some only go through two. Some go through three. Yes. When they make them.

(Mey, 2001, p.155)

The coherence in this piece of conversation is strictly local: it turns around the limited formal organization of the talk by referring to items that have been mentioned in the immediately preceding context. Thus, while there is a certain amount of text cohesion, the patient-interlocutor has to rely heavily on the interviewer's prompting role to be able to proceed in a minimally ordered fashion. Thus, whenever the interviewee halts, the interviewer can only get her started again by repeating some of her last words.

Although it is strictly true that one never completely knows what the other party is going to say in an interchange, the above conversation is more incoherent and less predictable than most. We don't understand what this piece of conversation is about, we don't know the meanings of some words (trisks, svilts, trilms). And even as cohesion goes, the only way to make it continue is for the interviewer to repeat some of the words that have just been uttered by the patient.

In the case of the schizophrenic discourse quoted above, some of the sequencing rules have been violated; this is something we notice while unsuccessfully trying to understand that conversation. As Tsui (Mey, 2001, p.156) remarks, the violation of the rules governing coherent sequences results in incoherent discourse which is noticed and attended to by interlocutors, and... the violation of these rules can usually be accounted for.

[21] A: What's the time?

B: (a) Twelve noon.

(b) Time for coffee.

(c) I haven't got a watch, sorry.

- (d) How should I know.
- (e) Ask Jack.
- (f) You know bloody well what time it is.
- (g) Why do you ask?
- (h) What did you say?
- (i) What do you mean?

(Levinson, 1997, p.115)

Of all these answers, only (a) strictly qualifies for the coherence criterion; that's a common illocutionary intent is observed in the adjacent pair request for information about physical time - compliance by giving the requested information. However, this does not make the rest of the answers irrelevant, in as much as they all make sense in some current context. For example, take the 'coffee' reply, (b): people usually have coffee at the same time every day; hence 'time for coffee' equals some, more or less precise, indication of real clock time.

While sequencing plays an important role in the structuring of our conversations, not only on the level of formal signals, but also on the level of what the utterances mean, and of how they function, the mere fact that utterances follow utterances with a certain amount of regularity and cohesion is in itself no guarantee of coherence. Sequencing clearly cannot just be a matter of constructing utterances according to some abstract rules of 'conversational syntax'; the rules are at best reconstructions of what actually happens in an environment of users building up the conversation. Hence, even though conversations are composed of units that have some direct correspondence to sentences, the analytical methods of sentence grammars have only limited validity in the domain of conversation.

### **7.1.5.3.2 ADJACENCY PAIRS AND CONTENT**

Characteristic of conversation is its adjacency in pair-wise structures. Conversation consists in people's paired turn-wise collaboration, including the repetitions and extensions that these turns naturally lead to.

This collaboration doesn't just proceed at random, but obeys certain rules, governing not only what follows what, who can speak when, and so on, but also what a conversation is about. Thus, adjacency pairs, defined earlier as two subsequent utterances constituting a conversational exchange, or turn, are characterized as to function and content by their type.

The type of a pair is given by a common illocutionary intention; pairs can thus be, 'greeting-greeting', 'order-(verbal) compliance', 'request'-'providing the requested item (e.g., information, permission etc.)' and so on.

Conversation analysts distinguish between the first pair part and the second pair part of any adjacency pair. For instance, the first pair part may be a summons; then what constitutes the second pair part has to be an utterance which deals with compliance (either positive or negative), as in the following exchanges:

[22a] A: Want some coffee? (First Part)

B: Yes, please. (Second Part)

(Yule, 2002, p.79)

[22b] A: Want some coffee?

(First Part)

B: No, thank you.

(Second Part)

(Yule, 2002, p.79)

The second pair part may contain more information, for example, 'In a minute', or 'No, I'd rather have it open'; but that wouldn't affect the exchange and thus the type of the adjacency pair.

In general, the notion of type is useful when it comes to predicting what the answer could be, and how it is managed: in a way, it defines the base line for the second pair parts that are possible. But it does more.

Following the theory of adjacency pairs, given a first part of a pair, a second part is immediately relevant and expectable. Furthermore, if a second pair part is not found in the context of the conversation, then the first pair part is judged officially not to exist, and the first speaker may repeat the first part by iterating the summons, maybe with some emphasis: 'I asked you to close the window', 'Would you PLEASE close that window'. Such repeated first parts do not normally occur in conversation; namely, one doesn't repeat a greeting, unless one wants to make a point: 'I have not been greeted'.

### **7.1.5.3.3 TYPES AND COHERENCE**

A typical adjacency pair is a question, together with its answer, but we wonder its type. To solve that problem, one has to know what constitutes a legitimate answer to a question, given its particular illocutionary intent.

We consider the following interchange:

[23] A: Is Lennart there?

B: You can reach him at extension 88236.

(Levinson, 1997, p.290)

This pair does not constitute a regular question-answer type: the information requested by the speaker is not given, except indirectly. By contrast, a regular answer, such as 'No, he isn't', or 'I'm sorry, he isn't', or simply 'No', while staying strictly within the bounds of adjacency pair typology would be very uninformative.

The easiest way out of this dilemma is to assume that whatever follows a question simply is the answer. Under this assumption, there strictly is no speech act of answering, no answerhood. Levinson (Levinson, 1997, p.290) remarks there is no proposed illocutionary force of answering. In other words, answering is not a speech act; it can only be properly defined on the basis of, among other things, the preceding question.

Another way of viewing the answerhood of the above reply would be to say that the question in reality was not about whether or not Lennart was at the given location, but just represented an indirect way of asking: 'Do you know where Lennart is right now?', or simply: 'Where is Lennart?' In that case, we could still maintain that the type of the pair was safeguarded and that therefore, the question-answer pair was coherent, also with regard to its illocutionary intent: 'requesting information'.

In a strict adjacency pair typology, such an interpretation of the speech act involved here is not recognized as legal. If one takes the point of the original question to be

the extraction of information about Lennart's presence in a particular location ('there'), then the 'bald on-record' answer 'No, he isn't' is correct, but not too helpful. By contrast, an answer that specifies where I can reach Lennart provides me with the information I need; whether or not Lennart is at the original, presumed location has now become irrelevant.

Conversation analysts have tried to solve the problem of 'unexpected second pair parts' by invoking the distinction between sequences and pre-sequences, introduced above. Thus, in the case of the question: 'Is Lennart there?', we are dealing not with a request for information, but rather with a pre-request for something else. This pragmatic coherence, cannot be explained in a strictly sequential framework. One could perhaps say that the question whether Lennart is there inquires about a felicity condition for the real request: clearly, if Lennart isn't there, then it makes no sense to try and talk to him there. The clever interlocutor perceives this, and infers that the real reason for inquiring about Lennart's location is the speaker's desire to see him, or talk to him on the phone; therefore, he neglects that original question and answers what he thinks is the real request by indicating where Lennart may be reached, 'You can reach him at extension 88236'.

Any question can have numerous answers, all of them relevant to the point of the question. There is an illustrative example:

[24] A: What does Joe do for a living?

B: (i) The same as always

(ii) Oh this and that

(iii) I've no idea

(iv) What's that got to do with it?

(v) He doesn't.

(Levinson, 1997, p.293)

All five answers are to the point, meaning that they make sense as answers depending on the context, naturally, even though they do not provide any real answer to the question, except in some vague, evasive way.

While only answer (i) strictly qualifies as a typologically acceptable reply, it contains no information whatsoever about Joe's business. As to the other answers, they state that Joe doesn't do anything in particular for a living (ii); that the addressee doesn't know the answer (iii); that the question is rejected by the addressee as improper or irrelevant (iv); and that Joe is a lazy bum (v). All these answers are perfectly acceptable, yet they are not all in strict accordance with the principle of pair adjacency.

For a discourse to be coherent, it is not enough, or even necessary, that an utterance and its predecessor or successor, combined into an adjacency pair, abide by the strict rules formulated by the conversation analysts and based on a speech act interpretation of the utterances in question. Pairs are important because they steer us toward a good understanding: 'given an answer, the question is relevant'. But also, conversation is much more than just combining pairs in sequences.

#### ***7.1.5.3.4 CONVERSATION AND SPEECH ACTS***

Levinson (Levinson, 1997, p.289) states that the regular, paired structure of conversation has a parallel to the regularity with which certain speech acts manifest

themselves as institutionalized acts, and to the obvious regularities that operate in speech act behavior: answers follow questions, greetings follow greetings and so on.

We consider the following conversational exchange, in which John says to Mildred at a party they're both attending:

[25a] A: It's getting late, Mildred.

Among Mildred's possible answers, we could imagine at least the following three, and we can increase these answers:

[25b] B: Are you really that bored?

[25c] B: Do you want to go home?

[25d] B: So?

(Levinson, 1997, p.289)

Now, if we want to determine the type of this exchange pair, we have to find out what John's utterance really stands for; it can be a statement about the time of day; an expression of boredom, for example 'Let me tell you frankly that I'm bored out of my mind'; a secret code for 'Remember to take your pill'; or something entirely different. In other words, we must try to establish the illocutionary intention or point of John's remark. What kind of speech act (a statement, request, threat, confession...) it represents depends on such things as: how well Mildred knows John; what sort of a party it is and so on. To borrow a terminology originally developed in another context: one must know the script for this particular interaction in order to assess the contextual value of this particular

utterance. A party script would include information about people's conversational behavior at parties: they may joke, fight, argue, discuss linguistics, eat, get drunk, and so on; alternatively, they may even enjoy themselves.

The funny thing about Mildred's possible answers in the above conversation is that they all, in a way, are OK; that is, in the context, they make sense. Especially if we look at their possible outcomes, they must certainly be valid, effective answers: John may get upset, and just walk off, or he may hand Mildred the car keys, or they may continue the conversation.

The above shows, first of all, that speech acts are not particularly good tools to work with when it comes to understanding an utterance in context: which speech act one actually is looking at depends very much, if not exclusively, on that particular context.

Second, classifying conversational adjacency pairs in terms of illocutionary intention is a problem in itself; however, it certainly is not going to be less thorny if we limit ourselves to situating those pairs in their immediate appropriate contexts, without taking their perlocutionary effects into account.

What counts is how a speech act functions. If John's remark to Mildred functions as a statement, then it is that speech act or some variant of it, such as a reminder; if it functions as an expression of boredom, then it is that expression, and so on. What we're really looking at here is a pragmatic act; as Levinson (Levinson, 1997, p.291) says, the units in question seem to be functionally defined by the actions they can be seen to perform in context.

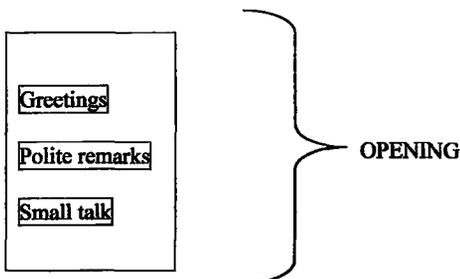
In light of the above, the discussions about the type of conversational interaction are in reality a bit beside the point. What is important is not what a speaker decides to question, order, request etc., but the effects these speech acts have on the conversational interaction.

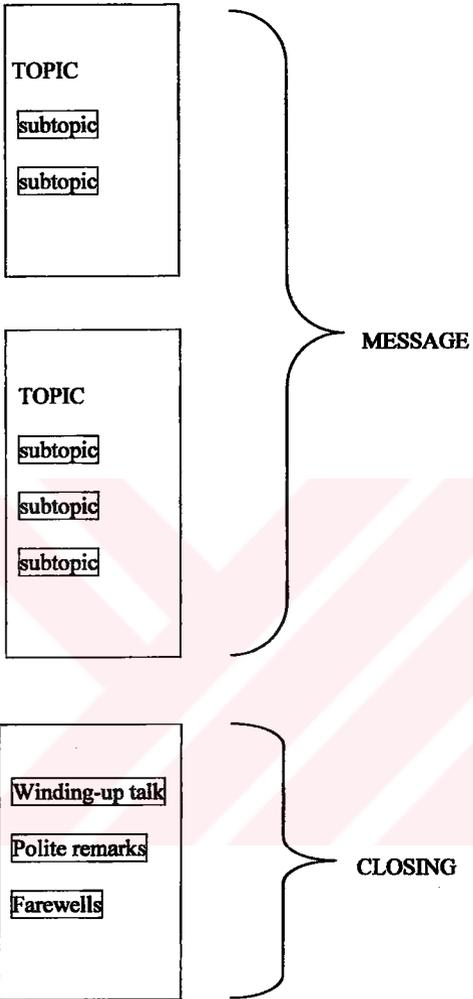
### 7.1.6 CONVERSATIONAL STRUCTURE

It sometimes happens that even complete strangers begin a conversation, go on talking for a while and end the conversation without any introductory and terminating procedures whatsoever. This tends to occur when something unexpected happens. We take for instance the occasional brief chat with somebody waiting in the queue at the bus stop when the bus is not on time, or with a fellow-passenger in a train compartment, when there is a sudden stop and nobody tells you why. Brief chats of this kind consist only of 'what is talked about':

**Topic** → Message

The other extreme is a conversation where beginning and end form elaborate patterns and where the message consists of several topics which in their turn are made up of a number of subtopics:





**7.1.6.1 TWO ORDINARY CONVERSATIONS**

The overall pattern of face-to-face conversation varies largely with the situation and depends on such factors as where the conversation takes place, who is talking to whom and

what the talk is about. The overall pattern of telephone calls is more fixed. Telephone calls always contain an 'opening', and a 'closing' with certain set actions involved.

### 7.1.6.1.1 TALKING FACE-TO-FACE

Two friends meet and they chat about A's real-life accident in extract [26].

[26] B: Hello, Manolo, how are you?

A: Erm, I'm better, I'm better from my ... felt in the Lakes.

B: Why ... why ... what did you happen?

A: Erm, we went to the Lakes for a walk with our teacher of English here and erm, we erm, climb ... climbed ... they say climbed, erm, and, erm, when we came back from the mountain I feel ... felt and broke ... a little broke of my elbow ... then I went to the hospital in the night but it take two hours and I must suspect ... expect ... erm, for the next day ... in the morning, and (points to his sling) I have this slip, I think it's a slip, but I don't remember, as well.

B: The arm, do you ... is still hurt ... still, still hurt?

A: No, no ... not so much ... no it's hurting ... it's not hurting ... is, I think it is good because I have my arm very quiet, and it's good, I don't ... I sleep well, erm, so well, so, so, and ... I can sleep and be...

B: Can you have a shower?

A: Yes, yes, every day ...

B: Dear, I'm sorry to hear that event, but I'm pleased to see you are OK.

A: Thank you very much. See you later.

B: See you soon.

} Opening

} Message

} Closing

(McCarthy, 2002, p.140)

The conversation as a whole is very informal, and what is talked about is restricted to personal things rather than facts. This face-to-face conversation consists of three sections; opening, message and closing. In this conversation, opening section is very short; namely there is not any saluting expressions. After a short opening section, very long message section starts. And then short closing section starts.

### 7.1.6.1.2 TALKING ON THE TELEPHONE

The following brief telephone call is an excellent example of the routine structure of telephone conversation:

<p>[27] A: HELLO#</p> <p>B: Mr HURD# it's professor CLARK's secretary# *from Paramilitary* COLLEGE#</p> <p>A: *oh YES#*</p>	}	Opening
<p>professor Clark asked if you were . going to collect some SCRIPTS {TONIGHT#}# * SOUND* scripts# .</p> <p>B: *YES##* MHM#</p> <p>A: if you'd collect them from Mr GORDON# *who will be going to* the PLA meeting#</p> <p>B: *Mr GORDON##* - YES# =M#</p> <p>A: RIGHT#</p>	}	Message
<p>B: Y=ES#</p> <p>* . thanks* very MUCH#</p> <p>A: *(- giggles)* OK# . B=YE#</p> <p>B: B=YE#</p>	}	Closing

(Stenström, 1996, p.12)

There is an opening which includes answering the telephone signal and identifying answerer and caller, a message section containing a <request> followed by acceptance, and a closing which involves reconfirming the agreement just made, thanking and bidding farewell.

In the opening, it is the answerer who picks up the phone and answers the call and the caller who makes sure who the answerer is and identifies himself before coming to the reason for the call.

In the message section, it is the caller who provides the first topic, and the reason for the call.

The closing is initiated by the caller. Finally it is the answerer who bids farewell.

Clearly, there is variation. Some calls are even shorter and have very brief opening, message and closing sections, while others may require quite intricate openings, with message sections of almost indefinite length, and closings interrupted and temporarily held up by new upcoming talk.

#### **7.1.6.2 TOPICAL FRAMEWORK**

The topic of a conversation, what the conversation is about, is developed within a topical framework. A brief telephone call, for instance, often has a single message, ie one topic. Half an hour's face-to-face conversation, on the other hand, can contain anything from a main topic divided into subtopics to a series of more or less related topics.

### 7.1.6.2.1 THE MESSAGE

The message consists of the main topic or the subtopics of a conversation. What the conversation is about is directly related to the message.

[28] Mr. Strait: What's your major Dave?

Dave: English – well I haven't really decided yet.

Mr. Strait: So – you want to be a teacher?

Dave: No – not really – well not if I can help it.

Mr. Strait: Wha- \*Where do you\* go ahead?

Dave: \*I mean it's a – oh sorry\* I em-

(Yule, 2002, p.73)

The message; that's, the topic of the conversation in example [28] is about Dave's future plans, for instance his branch at university and his profession selection.

Sometimes, within conversations, there is competitive talk when two speakers want to develop the topic in different ways; both fight because they know there will be no further opportunity to say what they want to say. In the following example Roger wants 'New Pike' to be the topic, Jim, 'P.O.P.'; namely, there is a topic conflict between two conversationalists:

[29] Roger: Isn't the New Pike depressing?

Ken: Hh. The Pike?

Roger: Yeah! Oh the place is disgusting \*Any day of the week

Jim: \*I think that P.O.P is \* depressing  
it's just-

Roger: \*But you go  
you go take

Jim: Those guys are losing Money.

Roger: But you go down – down to the New Pike there's a buncha people  
oh and they're old and they're pretending they're having fun . but  
they're really not.

Ken: How c'n you tell? Mm?

Roger: They're – they're trying make a living, but the place is on the  
decline, 's like a de\*generate place

Jim: \*so's P.O.P.

Roger: Y'know?

Jim: P.O.P. is just –

Roger: Yeah it's one of those pier joints y'know?

Jim: It's a flop! Hehh.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.81)

### **7.1.6.3 CONVERSATIONAL STRUCTURE AND THE DISCOURSE HIERARCHY**

A conversation is a piece of discourse containing one or more topics. The transaction consists of one or more exchanges dealing with one single topic; that's, each topic corresponds to a transaction in the discourse hierarchy, the immediately lower level of which is the exchange.

[30]

Turn Move Exchange Transaction

B: is there any MILK# - .	1	1	}	1
A: ((yeah there's)) this this ə POWDER((ED)) milk#	2	2		
B: AH yes# -	3	3		
what does that do in TEA#		4	}	2
does that DISSOLVE in tea#				
A: I've only just DISCOVERED that# 4 ə a week AGO#	4	5		
B: ((we)) used to have that in the WAR#	5	6	}	3
A: I had it in COFFEE# . *EARLIER#*	6	7		
B: *M#*				1
>A: the thing =IS# that it's quite H=ANDY# if you run OUT of *milk#*		8	}	4
B: *QUITE##* YEAH#	7	9		
will it *MELT* ((in tea though))# .		10	}	5
A: *((it KEEPS))##* I SUPPOSE SO# - 8 It's dehydrated MILK# .	8	11		

(Stenström, 1996, p.56)

The message section of this conversation is consequently equivalent to one transaction consisting of five exchanges, eleven moves, and eight turns.

### **7.1.7 CONVERSATIONAL STRATEGIES**

Conversational strategies differ not only depending on the actual situation, eg in terms of topic, degree of formality and medium, but also depending on how far the conversation has proceeded. This section concentrates on openings and closings.

#### **7.1.7.1 HOW TO OPEN A CONVERSATION**

Most conversations begin with an opening before the message is introduced. Some face-to-face conversations lack an opening altogether. Openings are different; there are conventional, formal, speaker-specific, situation-specific openings, and so on. But generally, we can examine openings as two categories:

- Face-to-face openings
- Telephone openings

##### **7.1.7.1.1 FACE-TO-FACE OPENINGS**

Face-to-face openings can be described according to the following classification:

- An informal face-to-face conversation
- A formal face-to-face conversation

###### **7.1.7.1.1.1 AN INFORMAL FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATION**

A female studio manager, C, has been invited for supper to a married couple, A and B. The atmosphere is very relaxed:

[31] A: \*hello\*

C: \*HELLO##\* . sorry I'm LATE#

A: \*( . laughs) that's alright\* are you -

B: \*( - laughs murmur)\*

C: YES# . I said half past SEVEN#

A: oh I expected you between about . - half past and quarter to

C: hello LIZ# . sorry I'm LATE# ( - laughs)

B: oh I like your hair

C: M#

A: yes Ann you've had it curled

C: ( . laughs)

A: yes that's nice - I say that's nice

(Stenström, 1996, p.141)

The most characteristic features are the informal <greetings> (*hello-HELLO*), the laughs and the spontaneous compliment (*oh I like your hair*) instead of the usual inquiries about health.

#### 7.1.7.1.1.2 A FORMAL FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATION

Tania wants to be a model, so she interviews with an authorized person in an office.

[32] Tania: Good morning.

Interviewer: Ah, come in Ms. Wilson. Good morning. Please, take a seat.

Tania: Thank you.

Interviewer: You'd like to work as a model – is that right?

Tania: Yes, I would.

Interviewer: OK – first of all, could I have your personal details for our records? What is your name?

Tania: Tania – that's T-A-N-I-A.

Interviewer: So that's Ms. Tania Wilson. You're American, I guess?

Tania: Yes, I am.

Interviewer: And how old are you?

Tania: I'm twenty.

Interviewer: Uh huh... how tall are you?

Tania: I'm five foot seven.

Interviewer: Hmm – that's not very tall. We like our models to be taller than that... (Cook, 1989, p.119)

The participants of the conversations salute each other in a formal way (*Good morning*). Since they don't know one another, they don't say 'hello'. After the exchange of <greetings>, the interviewer asks some questions and Tania answers these questions in a formal way again.

#### **7.1.7.1.2 TELEPHONE OPENINGS**

The way telephone openings are realized is very much tied to who answers and in what capacity.

Telephone openings can be described according to the following classification:

- An informal telephone conversation
- A formal telephone conversation

In telephone openings, calls can be answered by a telephonist, a secretary, a person in charge or an individual.

Home calls are the least complicated ones. If there is a [response], you either get in touch with the person you want to talk to at once or, if the person is at home, with the intermediary of a member of the family. When you call somebody at work and you do not have the intended person's direct number you will either have to go via a telephonist who connects you with the person in question, or with a secretary who then connects you with the person you want to talk to, or you can call the secretary directly and ask to be connected.

#### ***7.1.7.1.2.1 AN INFORMAL TELEPHONE CONVERSATION***

The extract [33] is an informal telephone conversation, we can easily understand it from the saluting part (*Hello-Hi*).

[33] C: ((rings))

R: Hello.

C: Hi. Susan?

R: Yes.

C: This's Judith . Rossman

R: Judith!

(Levinson, 1997, p.343)

### 7.1.7.1.2.2 A FORMAL TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

The caller in this example greets (*Good afternoon*) the secretary before the request for connection. The participants are very polite to each other, so this extract is an example of formal telephone conversation.

[34] B: Good afternoon# could I speak to Mr PARKER PLEASE#

A: who's CALLING#

B: it's Doctor EDGTON# -

A: əm . can you tell me what it's in CONNECTION with# \*Doc\*tor  
EDGTON# -

B: \*Y=ES# - well he ə:m . ə ə ə . phoned me earlier this MORNING#  
about ə:m some FLATS# in {Barn HILL#}# . əm and asked me to  
ring BACK# in FACT#

A: OH# right OH# hold ON#

B: thank Y=OU# - - -

(Stenström, 1996, p.145)

Face-to-face and telephone openings have the following features in common:

- ✓ the parties greet each other.
- ✓ phatic talk usually precedes the topic.

Face-to-face and telephone openings different in the following respects:

- ✓ telephone but not face-to-face openings require speaker identification.
- ✓ in a telephone conversation it is the caller who brings up the first topic; in face-to-face conversation there is no such rule.

### 7.1.7.2 HOW TO CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE

Before a topic is introduced in a conversation, there is generally a warming-up period of varying length, where the parties engage in so-called *phatic talk*.

Phatic talk is also used to wind up a conversation.

[35] is a particularly good example. Two female students have met. They have just exchanged <greetings> and this is how the conversation begins:

[35a] A: --- you got a COLD#

B: - NO# . just a bit SNIFFY# cos I'm - I AM COLD# and I'll be all right once I've warmed UP# - do I LOOK as though I've got a COLD#

A: no I thought you SOUNDED as if you were#

Then, B starts complaining about her busy day:

[35b] B: ... I had about five thousand BOOKS# - to take back to Senate HOUSE YESTERDAY# - and I got all the way through the COLLEGE# to where the CAR was# ... and realized I'd left my . COAT# in my LOCKER# . . .

(Stenström, 1996, p.149)

This leads over to the weather:

[35c] A: it's gone very COLD# HASN'T it#

B: M# - - - it's FREEZING#

(Stenström, 1996, p.149)

Phatic talk usually has the following ingredients:

- ✓ questions about health
- ✓ comments on the weather
- ✓ comments on personal matters
- ✓ polite phrases

### 7.1.7.3 HOW TO DEAL WITH TOPICS

The *topic* is what the speakers talk about. The message section of a conversation consists of the topic(s) dealt with. Some conversations contain only one topic, but since one topic has a tendency to generate another, most conversations contain more than one. A topic tends to split into *subtopics* dealing with particular aspects of the main topic.

The following strategies are the topical strategies:

- Introducing a topic
- Terminating a topic
- Changing the topic
- Shifting the topic
- Drifting from the topic
- Digressing from the topic

- Resuming the topic
- Speech-in-action

### 7.1.7.3.1 INTRODUCING A TOPIC

Introducing involves bringing up a first topic at the beginning or a new topic in the course of the conversation.

The first topic is most likely to be introduced by means of some linguistic strategy which helps the speaker to get started and prepares the listener for the speaker's next action. Certain linguistic items, like *right*, *well* and *now*, can either introduce a topic on their own or precede some other introductory strategy, as in [36]:

[36] A: Well it wasn't really a holiday more a ... a ... I don't know ... more an expedition

B: Why? \*Did you

\*Oh I guess because we ed- we ended up carrying so much...\*equipment and

C: \*that sounds like a trip I took ... em two years ago I think ... yeah in the summer and ... I've never gone again ...

B: So where did you go?

A: Oh we followed the river and the p- the idea you see was to find the source you know ... and ... just to avoid the ... the roads well ... \*unless th-

C: \*and did you?

A: What?

B: \*get

C: \*find the source ... the river

A: Oh yes sorry ... but we ended up ... em walking on roads quite a bit  
because ... it ... it just took too long (Yule, 1996, p.149)

In spontaneous conversations, with speakers who know each other well and share a great deal of common ground, the first topic may be embarked upon <questions> come in very handy:

[37] A: Well, what happened in this country in the last six weeks?

B: I really can't tell you, I haven't read any newspapers.

A: Wasn't there a big event in politics?

B: Yes, it turned out the Democrats got a new leader.

A: Oh, I see, that's interesting, can you tell me more about it?

B: Awfully sorry, I heard it on the radio but I was too tired and I don't remember.

A: Doesn't matter. What about Manchester United's game?

B: Sorry, I'm not interested in football. (McCarthy, 2002, p.124)

#### 7.1.7.3.2 *TERMINATING A TOPIC*

Terminating involves closing the old topic before introducing a new one or before closing the entire conversation. Linguistic termination markers are rare. The example [38] is one of the few:

[38] C: Hullo, I was just ringing up to ask if you were going to Bertrand's party.

R: Yes, I thought you might be.

C: Heh heh.

R: Yes, would you like a lift?

C: Oh, I'd love one.

R: **Right, okay** um I'll pick you up from there.

(Levinson, 1997, p.359)

Silent pauses, for instance, may serve as termination markers, as in [39]:

[39] A: ... no bother to me, 'cos I happened to have in my side pack a spare vest and \*socks you see.

B: \*Ah, I see, that was in your hand baggage \*was it?

A: \*And I'd got my toilet equipment with me.

B: Yeah, it's a good idea to take a few basic things in the hand baggage, isn't it, \* I think in case of that.

A: \*Yeah, well it's usually the things you require first, you see, sometimes you don't have time to unpack all your luggage when you arrive.

B: Still, pretty horrendous, though.

A: Oh, it was very unsettling, ... stil, so many other unsettling factors I didn't know whether I was on my head or my heels that day.

B: **Mm...**

A: Do you do a lot of skiing then?

B: I go each year, yes... it's my only chance of getting my weight down, you see, and it isn't the exercise that does it, it's the fact that the meals are so far apart.

(McCarthy, 2002, p.133)

Laughter is another non-lexical termination marker. Besides, in some cases the current topic comes to an end, and there is no need for a marker to indicate the termination.

Termination markers
OK
all right
right
that's it
there we are
well

### 7.1.7.3.3 CHANGING THE TOPIC

Changing involves abandoning the current topic in favour of a new, unrelated, topic. A new topic can be introduced in the course of the on-going conversation after the previous topic has been properly terminated by an explicit lexical marker:

[40] A: do we now write a NOTE#

B: WELL# NO# I {think ((NO#)# do) you SEE# that's what I've DONE#

A: \*OH#\*

B: \*that's\* all he SAYS# . SHOULD be ENOUGH#

A: well# that's IT# \*((let's pass))\*

B: \*((this P=OLLY#\* . you know that G=IRL# whom I've I I presented .

((a)) rather ABSURD report in a way ((that)) genuinely represented

what I FELT# I ((said)) she might FAIL# ... do you KNOW her#

(Stenström, 1996, p.154)

A terminates the old topic by (*well# that's it*) T) and tries to go on to something new (*let's pass*), when B interrupts and brings up a new topic.

[41] R: Um, you and Sheila have been doing some lectures for first year  
Microbiology.

C: I wonder whether I could possibly have a copy of last year's tax return.

(Levinson, 1997, p.363)

In extract [41], the informal marker '*I wonder*' emphasizes the change of the topic.

Informal markers
what else
did I tell you
do you know
I wonder

Formal markers
can I ask you
let me tell you
let me ask you

#### 7.1.7.3.4 SHIFTING THE TOPIC

Shifting involves moving from one topic to a related topic or from one aspect of the current topic to another.

Like topic changes, topic shifts may be initiated by a marker. The difference is that it now marks the transition between an old and a new topic instead of introducing an entirely new topic.

[42] C: Okay, thank you.

R: Okay dear.

C: Oh, **BY THE WAY**. I'd just like to say... (Levinson, 1997, p.322)

When linguistic markers are entirely missing, transitions tend to be marked by pauses and/or laughter.

Shift markers
actually / by the way
in (actual) fact
incidentally
now
talking about
that reminds me
well

### **7.1.7.3.5 DRIFTING FROM THE TOPIC**

Drifting involves moving almost imperceptibly from one topic to another.

Drifting is shifting in an inconspicuous way. Topic drifts are linguistically unmarked, but there is usually some associative link between the old and the new topic. The following extract is a good example. The speakers are talking about various places to go for a holiday. A mentions Dorset, and as soon as she does, speaker B is reminded of a mutual friend whose parents own a house in the area. Suddenly the conversation is all about the friend's parents:

[43] A: I love DORSET though# it's so BEAUTIFUL# - - .

B: Ian's ties with it are about to be broken

A: ARE \*they#\*

B: \*cos\* his parents are selling their house or trying to .

A: OH# that's SAD#

(Stenström, 1996, p.157)

### **7.1.7.3.6 DIGRESSING FROM THE TOPIC**

Digressing involves moving away temporarily from the current topic.

Some digressions are spontaneous, others are deliberate. Some digressions are clearly related to the current topic, others seem to be completely unrelated. Some digressions are clearly deliberate, made for the purpose of clarifying and getting clarification and additional information:

[44] A: ...HE# wasn't a very GOOD lecturer# in FACT# ((he)) . wrote very  
very CL=EAR# L=UCID and ((untranscribable murmur))

B: where did you READ#

A: CAMBRIDGE#

B: M# - -

A: it was a: - WELL# the COURSE# was well thought OUT# . there was  
nothing wrong with it at ALL# it was just his MANNER# .

(Stenström, 1996, p.159)

The fact that A studied at Cambridge has no direct importance for the understanding but adds to the information value of what A says.

[45] A: so if there's a hardware store we could call in and get one on the way  
back

B: do you think there is one

A: yes

B: OK then

A: that would be nice wouldn't it?

B: yes it would

A: I mean the job not the hardware shop

B: yes I realize what do you keep telling me for

(Cook, 1989, p.57)

In extract [45], '*I mean*' is the digression marker.

Digression markers
actually
as a matter of fact
by the way
I mean
incidentally

### 7.1.7.3.7 RESUMING THE TOPIC

Resuming the topic involves ending the digression and going back to the old topic.

The speaker who broke out of the current topic also usually takes the initiative to go back:

[46] A: \*... we didn't wrap UP for you#\*

B: \*oh INCIDENTALLY ə:# . ə: you know\* about MALCOLM# . ə:  
 putting his dislocating his SHOULDER# ...

B: no I wouldn't like to TOUCH it# I'd put DIRTY FINGER-MARKS on  
 it (laughs - -)

(Stenström, 1996, p.160)

B initiated the digression (oh INCIDENTALLY) and it is also B who resumes the old topic, 'unwrapping presents', that's, there are two topical strategies (digressing and resuming) in this extract.

Return markers
all right
right
OK
(well) now
now then
anyway
so

#### 7.1.7.3.8 SPEECH-IN-ACTION

Speech-in-action is extra-topical talk which is embedded in the conversation.

The instances of speech-in-action generally consist of inquiries about time and date, offers of food and drink, and accompanying talk:

[47] A: ... I lose MORE# IMMEDIATELY# then MALLET does# . although  
less . perhaps in the LONG term#

B: have a glass of SHERRY# .

A: OH# that's NICE of you# as I'm not DRIVING# . THANK you#

B: bloody HELL# - - -

A: but what about YOU# ə CRISPIN# ...

(Stenström, 1996, p.161)

[48] A: I'm dying to know -- where's my watch by the way?

B: What?

A: What Gillian's aerobics sessions are like HA HA HA HA

B: What aerobics sessions? It's here.

A: Gillian does aerobics sessions every evening. LEADS them. Thanks.  
Can you imagine.

(Cook, 1989, p.54)

In this conversation, the speakers alternate between the main topic of the aerobics and the lesser topic of the missing watch.

In a conversation the speakers talk about one or more topics, which in their turn may consist of one or more subtopics. Casual conversation is characterized by topic drifts, ie unnoticeable transitions from one topic to the next by association.

Topic change, which involves going from one topic to a new and unrelated topic, is generally marked by a transition marker, and so are topic shifts, ie the transition between related topics. <Frames>, <prefaces>, <metacomments>, tempo variations, pauses, and laughter serve as transition markers.

#### ***7.1.7.4 HOW TO CLOSE A CONVERSATION***

Most closing sections consist of winding-up talk and polite phrases before the conversation is definitely called off and closed.

We will examine closings as two categories:

- Face-to-face closings
- Telephone closings

Closing a face-to-face conversation may be more demanding than closing a telephone call, the main reason being that telephone closings are rather routine-like, while the face-to-face situation may demand more varied closing techniques.

#### ***7.1.7.4.1 FACE-TO-FACE CLOSINGS***

A distinction has been made between informal and formal face-to-face openings. The same distinction is used for closings.

Face-to-face closings can be described according to the following classification:

- An informal face-to-face conversation
- A formal face-to-face conversation

##### ***7.1.7.4.1.1 AN INFORMAL FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATION***

[49] R: Why don't we all have lunch?

C: Okay so that would be in St Jude's would it?

R: Yes.

C: Okay so...

R: One o'clock in the bar

C: Okay

R: Okay?

**C: Okay** then thanks very much indeed George

**R: All right**

**C: See you** there

**R: See you** there

**C: Okay**

**R: Okay, bye**

**C: Bye.**

(Levinson, 1997, p.317)

There are some typical features of the arrangements for the next meeting in this extract. A sequence of '*Okays*' closes down the arrangement; that's '*Okays*' and '*Alright*' are pre-closing items, '*See you*' and '*Bye*' are the final exchange of terminal elements in this conversation.

#### **7.1.7.4.1.2 A FORMAL FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATION**

The closing section is brief, matter-of-fact and polite. There is no 'extra' talk other than what the situation demands. Participants use the phrase '*GOODBYE*' instead of using '*BYE*' and we can easily understand that this extract is from a formal face-to-face conversation:

**[50] A: all RIGHT# - THANK you#**

**B: RIGHT# - GOOD\*BYE#\***

**A: \*GOOD\*BYE#**

(Stenström, 1996, p.164)

#### 7.1.7.4.2 TELEPHONE CLOSINGS

Telephone closings, like telephone openings, differ in complexity and formality depending on who calls whom and under what circumstances, but in any case it is generally the caller who takes the initiative. Closings are typically initiated by *right*, *alright* and *OK*.

Telephone closings can be described according to the following classification:

- An informal telephone conversation
- A formal telephone conversation

##### 7.1.7.4.2.1 AN INFORMAL TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

[51] B: ... OK#

A: RIGHT# \*thanks very MUCH#\*

B: \*((2 sylls))\* BYE#

(Stenström, 1996, p.165)

The caller initiates the closing section 'OK' and has the last word: 'BYE' in extract [51]. B uses 'BYE' instead of 'GOODBYE', so it's an informal telephone conversation.

##### 7.1.7.4.2.2 A FORMAL TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

[52] B: ... OK# thank you very MUCH#

A: RIGHT#

**B: RIGHT# \*GOODBYE##**

**A: \*GOODBYE\***

(Stenström, 1996, p.165)

The caller initiates the closing section 'OK' and the farewell exchange 'GOODBYE'.

Face-to-face and telephone closings have at least the following general characteristics in common:

- ✓ the adjacency-pair format for pre-closings, closings, <thanks> and goodbyes
- ✓ the visitor/caller usually initiates the closing section and the goodbye Exchange
- ✓ items like *right*, *alright* and *OK* (and *thanks*) figure in both.

In sum, opening and closing sections may be lacking, openings and closings are affected by the degree of formality, topic changes, shifts and drifts are common, body language plays an important role, extralinguistic details play an important role in face-to-face conversations. But, there is always an opening, followed by a reason for calling and a closing, openings and closings contain a minimal set of obligatory actions, extralinguistic features except laughters, sighs and the like play no role in telephone calls.

**-CHAPTER VIII-**  
**THE ANALYSIS OF A CONVERSATION**

**8.1 THE ANALYSIS OF A CONVERSATION**

The term “conversational analysis” generally contains the discourse hierarchy; that’s the levels from act to interaction. In this hierarchy, opening, message and closing parts are three units and universal features of the conversation.

Sacks (Coulthard, 1985, p.88) asks whether one can use conversation as an analytic unit. The basic question is whether there are some universal features which all conversations share, or whether conversations consist of a random collection of smaller units in no fixed sequence. He suggests that greetings are close to being universal in conversation and although they sometimes don’t occur, on some of these occasions their absence is noticeable, which suggests that conversationalists feel they are an almost invariant feature.

For example, there are two important features about greetings: firstly, they occur at the very beginning of a conversation, and cannot be done anywhere else in the conversation; secondly they allow all the speakers a turn, right at the beginning of the conversation:

[1] R: Hello there you two

C: Hi

R: Hi there

(Levinson, 1997, p.311)

There are two major types of occasion on which a conversation does not open with a greeting. Firstly, conversations between people who do not consider themselves co-conversationalists, for example strangers. They are not on greeting terms and therefore do not exchange a greeting. The speaker who opens must demonstrate in his first utterance why he is beginning the conversation:

[2] A: Excuse me. Can you tell me the way to...

[3] Hey. You've dropped your book.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.89)

The other conversations which typically don't open with a greeting are telephone conversations. Schegloff (Coulthard, 1985, p.89) argues that although the person who answers the telephone may say 'hello' this is not a greeting, it is an answer to the summons from the caller embodied in the ringing of the telephone. Following this indication that the channel is open there is often a greetings sequence to begin the conversation proper, although sometimes, if the answerer simply answers with 'hello', there is first a checking sequence to make sure the caller is talking to the right person.

[4] *Summons* Telephone rings.

*Answer* A: Hello.

*Greeting* { B: Goodmorning.

*Sequence* { A: Oh hi.

(Levinson, 1997, p.328)

Following the opening sequence the conversation consists of a series of one or more topics, though occasionally, as Schegloff and Sacks (Coulthard, 1985, p.89) observe, the conversation may be closed before speakers reach the first topic:

[5] A: Am I taking you away from your dinner?

[6] A: Are you busy?

(Coulthard, 1985, p.89)

It is a general rule that the caller or visitor introduces the first topic, and if there is no specific reason for the call or visit this is often explicitly stated – ‘I was just dropping by’. There are of course exceptions, most notably when the caller has been asked to call and wants to be told why, and also when the called has been trying to contact the caller, and uses his second turn not simply to reply to the greeting but to initiate the first topic:

[7] A: Where you been all day, I've been trying to get hold of you?

(Coulthard, 1985, p.90)

Even if the called doesn't initiate, the first topic may still not be the ‘reason for the call’. We mentioned above that sometimes a caller may not want the real reason to occur in the distinctive first topic slot and may therefore substitute another. At other times conversationalists may not feel they have anything sufficiently important to be preserved as the ‘reason for the conversation’ and there are ways of talking past the first topic slot.

[8] A: Hello there.

B: Hello.

A: What's new with you?

B: Not much, and you?

A: Nothing.

The endings of conversations are also things that have to be achieved - speakers don't just stop speaking. Conversations virtually always end with a closing pair, composed of 'goodbye', 'goodnight', 'see you', and so on. However, the closing sequence can only occur when a topic has been ended and other speakers have agreed not to introduce any new topics. Arriving at a point where a closing sequence can begin requires a certain amount of work.

Topics frequently merge one into another. There are, however, ways of bounding topics to produce a clean ending. One way involves one party producing a proverbial or aphoristic summary or comment on the topic which the other party can agree with.

[9] Dorinne: Oh - you know, it's just like bringin the - blood up.

Theresa: Yeah well. THINGS UH ALWAYS WORK OUT FOR THE

\*BEST.

Dorinne: \*Oh certainly.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.90)

Another technique is for the speaker to indicate that he has nothing further to add to the topic by using his turn to produce simply 'alright', 'okay', 'so', 'well', often lengthened and with a falling intonation contour. In doing this the speaker passes. This

allows the next speaker the choice of either introducing an entirely new topic, because the constraints of topical coherence have been lifted, or of also passing and turning the first speaker's offered possible pre-closing into a pre-closing sequence. Then, as neither speaker has raised a new topic they can move into a closing sequence and end the conversation:

<p>[10] <i>Topic</i></p> <p><i>Bounding</i></p> <p><i>Sequence</i></p> <p><i>Pre-closing</i></p> <p><i>Sequence</i></p> <p><i>Closing</i></p> <p><i>Sequence</i></p>	<p>{</p> <p>{</p> <p>{</p> <p>{</p> <p>{</p> <p>{</p>	<p>Theresa: Yeah well. Things uh always work out for the *best.</p> <p>Dorinne: *Oh certainly.</p> <p>Dorinne: Alright Tess.</p> <p>Theresa: uh huh. Okay.</p> <p>Dorinne: G'bye.</p> <p>Theresa: Goodnight.</p>
--	---	--

(Coulthard, 1985, p.91)

In this example both participants agreed that the conversation had gone on long enough; however, sometimes one speaker wants to end but for some reason is unable to achieve a topic bounding sequence and is then forced into a different type of pre-closing: either a statement which presents a reason for stopping:

[11] A: I gotta go, baby's crying.

(Schiffrin, 2002, p.286)

These are only possible pre-closings and especially the latter kind may not be accepted; the other speaker may deny that he wants to get away, though if he accepts they can then move straight into the closing sequence:

(B has called to invite C, but has been told C is going out to dinner)

- [12] *Pre-closing* { B: Yeah. Well get on your clothes and get out and  
*Sequence* { collect some of that free food and we'll make it  
some other time Judy then.  
C: Okay Jack.
- Closing* { B: Bye bye.  
*Sequence* { C: Bye bye.

(Coulthard, 1985, p.91)

These examples contain only the essentials of a closing, an achieved pre-closing sequence and closing pair, but pre-closings may include making arrangements, re-emphasizing arrangements made earlier, restating the reason for the call, as well as many repetitions, and may continue for many utterances: Schegloff and Sacks (Coulthard, 1985, p.91) quote a modest example of a closing containing twelve utterances.

The slot after the possible pre-closing is the one provided for introducing any topic which has not yet received mention, but new topics can be introduced after a pre-closing or even after a closing, provided they are marked as being misplaced.

[13] C: Okay, thank you.

R: Okay dear.

C: OH BY THE WAY. I'd just like to say...

(Levinson, 1997, p.322)

### **8.1.1 THE SYSTEM OF ANALYSIS**

In this chapter, our aim is to apply the techniques described and explained in all chapters of our study. We are going to analyze a telephone conversation, and a face-to-face conversation in English and German in terms of six discourse hierarchical levels; that's, act, move, turn, exchange, transaction and interaction.

We are going to analyze a long telephone conversation which was taken from the book '*Advances in Spoken Discourse Analysis*' by Malcolm Coulthard in 7.2.

**8.2 ANALYZING A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BY USING THE FEATURES OF SPOKEN INTERACTION**

A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION	TURN	ACT	MOVE	EXCHANGE	TRANSACTION	INTERACTION
(Telephone rings)		<alert>	[Summon]	(Stating) 1	1	1
A: Hello	1	<greeting>	[Initiate]			
B: Hello	2	<greeting>	[Response]			
A: Oh hold on I've got to get the extension hold on	3	<statement>	[Initiate]	(Stating) 2		
B: --- (20 seconds)						
A: Hello! (1 second) Hello! (2 seconds)		<greeting>	[Initiate]	(Stating) 3		
B: Yeah, hello.	4	<greeting>	[Response]			
A: Hello?		<greeting>	[Initiate]			
Oh (#)		<uptake>	[Focus]			
No we were just leaving actually	5	<inform>		(Stating) 4		
B: Oh		<acknowledge>	[Response]			
Why (#) did you wake up late today	6	<question>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 5		
A: Yeah Pretty late	7	<answer>	[Focus]			
B: Oh dear		<statement>				
A: So I've got to get him off to school How are you anyway Danny	8	<uptake>	[Response]			
	9	<inform>	[Follow-up]			
B: All right		<question>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 6		
	10	<answer>	[Response]		2	

A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION	TURN	ACT	MOVE	EXCHANGE	TRANSACTION	INTERACTION
A: You all right?	11	<check>	[Repair]			
B: Uh-huh	12	<emphasizer>	[Response]			
A: Yeah?	13	<check>	[Repair]			
B: Mm	14	<emphasizer>	[Backchannel]			
A: You got home all right? (#) You weren't too tired?	15	<question>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 7		
B: Well er ( 2 seconds) I got up pretty late myself I mean I-I was supposed to get up at about seven o'clock	16	<staller> <inform> <meta-comment>	[Response]			
A: What d'you mean you were supposed to	17	<check>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 8		
B: Well I had the alarm clock on for seven	18	<starter> <inform>	[Response]			
A: Hah Well Your alarm clock doesn't seem to work?	19	<acknowledge> <uptake> <question>	[Backchannel] [Follow-up] [Initiate]	(Questioning) 9		
B: No it did I think I turned it off	20	<reject> <meta-comment>	[Response]			
A: Mm It's you that doesn't work	21	<acknowledge> <meta-comment>	[Backchannel] [Follow-up]			
B: Hey Danny	22	<alert>	[Summon]	(Stating) 10	3	

A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION	TURN	ACT	MOVE	EXCHANGE	TRANSACTION	INTERACTION
B: Yeah	23	<reply>	[Response]			
A: You know we bought Ben that helium balloon	24	<statement>	[Initiate]	(Stating) 11		
B: Yeah	25	<reply>	[Response]			
A: Why doesn't it float any more (2 seconds) It doesn't float any more	26	<question> <inform>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 12		
B: What do you mean it doesn't float	27	<check>	[Repair]			
A: I mean you know It's not (laughs) important it's just er	28	<filler> <opine>	[Response]			
B: What do you mean it doesn't float any more? A peculiar physical fact that helium yesterday was lighter than air and today it's heavier	29	<question> <inform>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 13		
B: Really?	30	<question>	[Re-open]			
A: Yeah isn't that weird I mean nothing could have happened to it (3 seconds) But i-	31	<confirm> <meta-comment> <opine>	[Response]			
B: Well unless they weren't using helium	32	<uptake> <statement>	[Initiate]	(Stating) 14		

A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION		TURN	ACT	MOVE	EXCHANGE	TRANSACTION	INTERACTION
A: They were I saw them fill it	33	<disagree> <meta-comment>	[Response]				
B: It was written helium that he -er that was what was written on the *um*	34	<statement>	[Initiate]	(Stating) 15			
A: *No* but I mean -	35	<reject>	[Response]				
B: on the tank or something	36	<statement>	[Follow-up]				
A: Well what was it then	37	<question>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 16			
B: Sorry?	38	<question>	[Initiate]				
A: What was it then	39	<question>	[Repair]				
B: I don't know you know I mean I'm just trying to work out and see I I mean it could be anything wh- helium doesn't get converted	40	<answer> <filler> <opine>	[Response]				
A: What? I can't hear you at all	41	<question> <justify>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 17			
B: Well helium doesn't get converted erm you know lying just lying around	42	<opine> <emphatizer> <opine>	[Response]				
A: That's what I would have thought too	43	<statement>	[Follow-up]				
B: I mean unless you're thinking about something that undergoes a reaction and er you	44	<opine>	[Initiate]	(Stating) 18			

A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION	TURN	ACT	MOVE	EXCHANGE	TRANSACTION	INTERACTION
A: What?	45	<question>	[Repair]			
B: Well the only possibility is (#) I don't know er unless it's some (#) some gas that undergoes a reaction and is converted to something else I mean *er et*	46	<opine>	[Response]			
A: *Obviously* must be cos it's now *converted*	47	<statement>	[Follow-up]			
B: *but* I can't figure out what it could *be*	48	<justify>	[Response]			
A: *into* something heavy	49	<opine>	[Response]			
B: Why I - it's not floating at all	50	<justify>	[Follow-up]			
A: Not (#) It's lying on the floor like any old balloon (1 second)	51	<question>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 19		
B: It's a bit strange you know	52	<agree>	[Response]			
A: Yeah interesting (#) Anyway look I have to be off OK (#) Did you enjoy last night	53	<statement>	[Initiate]	(Stating) 20		
B: Er well It was pretty good exercise	54	<emphatizer>	[Response]		4	
		<acknowledge>	[Response]			
		<alert>	[Initiate]	(Stating) 21		
		<opine>	[Focus]			
		<question>	[Response]		5	
		<staller>				
		<opine>				

A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION	TURN	ACT	MOVE	EXCHANGE	TRANSACTION	INTERACTION
A: (laughs) what do you mean good exercise it	55	<question>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 22		
B: (laughs) I mean walking round looking for the fair was exercise	56	<opine>	[Response]			
A: Yeah my feet hurt Looking for the what?	57	<acknowledge> <statement>	[Follow-up]			
B: Looking for the fair	58	<question>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 23		
A: Mm	59	<answer> <acknowledge>	[Response] [Backchannel]			
B: the trade fair or whatever it was	60	<expand>	[Response]			
A: Mm	61	<acknowledge>	[Backchannel]			
B: aunnm something fair	62	<expand>	[Response]			
A: Yeah We we don't walk enough my feet Really hurt (2 seconds)	63	<acknowledge> <statement>	[Follow-up] [Initiate]	(Stating) 24		
B: Mm, yeah A bit of a let-down	64	<acknowledge> <statement>	[Backchannel] [Response]			
A: Mm Still Ben had a nice time	65	<acknowledge> <opine>	[Backchannel] [Initiate]	(Stating) 25		
B: Especially when the Chinese opera turned out to be (#) era group of Chinese madrigal singers or something	66	<opine>	[Focus]			
A: If it was	67	<statement>	[Response]			

A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION	TURN	ACT	MOVE	EXCHANGE	TRANSACTION	INTERACTION
B: (laughs) wh-whatever	68	<statement>	[Follow-up]			
A: OK Danny I must go	69	<alert>	[Summons]	(Stating) 26	6	
B: ---		<statement>	[Initiate]			
A: Look I'll - can I talk to you later on this morning		<alert>	[Summons]			
		<request>	[Initiate]			
B: Yeah, OK Sure	70	<accept>	[Response]			
		<emphasizer>				
A: Is that OK? Hah?	71	<question>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 27		
		<appealer>	[Focus]			
B: Sorry, what was that	72	<question>	[Repair]			
A: Can I - I'll talk to you when I get there	73	<statement>	[Response]			
B: Yeah	74	<accept>	[Follow-up]			
A: I must go now	75	<statement>	[Initiate]	(Stating) 28	7	
B: OK	76	<accept>	[Response]			
A: Bye-bye	77	<greeting>	[Initiate]	(Stating) 29		
B: Well have a nice day	78	<greeting>	[Response]			
A: Thank you Bye-bye	79	<thanks>	[Re-open]			
		<greeting>				
B: Bye	80	<greeting>	[Follow-up]			

### **8.2.1 THE EXPLANATION OF THE TELEPHONE CONVERSATION ANALYSIS**

This conversation constitutes an interaction. The interaction is formed by seven transactions. The conversation consists of twenty-nine exchanges and eighty turns. The first transaction consists of five exchanges (stating, stating, stating, stating and questioning in turn), thirteen moves (summon, initiate, response, initiate, initiate, response, initiate, focus, response, initiate, focus, response and follow-up in turn), fifteen acts (alert, greeting, greeting, statement, greeting, greeting, greeting, uptake, inform, acknowledge, question, answer, statement, uptake and inform in turn) and nine turns.

The second transaction consists of four exchanges (questioning, questioning, questioning and questioning in turn), sixteen moves (initiate, response, repair, response, repair, backchannel, initiate, response initiate, response, backchannel, follow-up, initiate, response, backchannel and follow-up in turn), twenty-one acts (question, answer, check, emphaziser, check, emphaziser, question, question, staller, inform, meta-comment, check, starter, inform, acknowledge, uptake, question, reject, meta-comment, acknowledge and meta-comment in turn) and twelve turns.

The third transaction consists of eleven exchanges (stating, stating, questioning, questioning, stating, stating, questioning, questioning, questioning, stating, questioning and stating in turn), thirty-two moves (summon, response, initiate, response, initiate, repair, response, initiate, re-open, response, initiate, response, initiate, response, follow-up, initiate, initiate, repair, response, initiate, response, follow-up, initiate, repair, response, follow-up, response, follow-up, initiate, response, initiate and response in turn), forty-seven acts (alert, reply, statement, reply, question, inform, check, filler, opine, question, inform, question, confirm, meta-comment, opine, uptake, statement, disagree, meta-comment, statement, reject, statement, question, question, question, answer, filler, opine, question, justify, opine, empathizer, opine, statement, opine, question, opine, statement, justify, opine, justify, question, agree, meta-comment, statement, empathizer and acknowledge in turn) and thirty-two turns.

The fourth transaction consists of an exchange (only stating), a move (only initiate), two acts (alert and opine in turn) and a turn.

The fifth transaction consists of five exchanges (stating, questioning, questioning, stating and stating in turn), twenty moves (focus, response, initiate, response, follow-up, initiate, response, backchannel, response, backchannel, response, follow-up, initiate, backchannel, response, backchannel, initiate, focus, response and follow-up in turn), twenty-two acts (question, staller, opine, question, opine, acknowledge, statement, question, answer, acknowledge, expand, acknowledge, expand, acknowledge, statement, acknowledge, statement, acknowledge, opine, opine, statement and statement in turn) and sixteen turns.

The sixth transaction consists of two exchanges (stating and questioning in turn), ten moves (summon, initiate, summons, initiate, response, initiate, focus, repair, response, follow-up in turn), eleven acts (alert, statement, alert, request, accept, emphazizer, question, appealer, question, statement, accept in turn) and six turns.

The seventh transaction consists of two exchanges (stating and stating in turn), six moves (initiate, response, initiate, response, re-open, follow-up in turn), seven acts (statement, accept, greeting, greeting, thanks, greeting, greeting in turn) and six turns.

In this conversation, pauses are timed in parenthesis; (#) indicates a pause of less than one second.

We are going to analyze a face-to-face conversation which was taken from the book '*An Introduction to Spoken Interaction*' by Anna-Brita Stenström in 7.3.

8.3 ANALYZING A FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATION BY USING THE FEATURES OF SPOKEN INTERACTION

A FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATION	TURN	ACT	MOVE	EXCHANGE	TRANSACTION	INTERACTION
A: Did you arrange to have lunch with Jamie?	1	<question>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 1	1	1
B: No, I didn't	2	<answer>	[Response]			
A: No	3	<query>	[Re-open]			
B: No	4	<confirm>	[Response]			
I I just sort of said -		<expand>				
let's sometime or something *vague*		<hedge>				
you know bit silly		<empathizer>				
A: *Yeah*		<acknowledge>	[Backchannel]			
B: but əm - yeah		<frame>	[Follow-up]			
oh I must do that sometime -		<expand>				
oh yes		<frame>	[Focus]		2	
one thing too .		<preface>				
ə:m . are you at all interested in coming to the B minor mass		<question>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 2		
A: When is it the fifteenth of April	5	<check>	[Repair]			
B: Yeah	6	<clue>				
A: əm - when is that *next week*	7	<confirm>	[Response]			
B: *that's next* Tuesday --	8	<check>	[Repair]			
		<clue>				
		<confirm>	[Response]			

A FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATION	TURN	ACT	MOVE	EXCHANGE	TRANSACTION	INTERACTION	
A: I'll ask Trish tonight I think . it's the day before she goes back to school	9	<inform> <expand>	[Focus]	(Stating) 3			
B: Mm	10	<acknowledge>	[Backchannel]				
A: and - she may be doing something	11	<expand>	[Initiate]				
B: Yeah	12	<acknowledge>	[Response]				
A: if she . if she would like to come I will come	13	<meta-comment>	[Follow-up]				
B: Mhm - (* - - - giggles*)	14	<acknowledge>	[Follow-up]				
A: *Where*							
B: in other words you'll come if your girlfriend wants to come		<suggest>	[Initiate]				(Stating) 4
A: Yes	15	<answer>	[Response]				

### **8.3.1 THE EXPLANATION OF A FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATION ANALYSIS**

In this extract, two topics are discussed: “the lunch with Jamie” and “coming to the B minor mass”, which means that this piece of conversation consists of two transactions. The <frame> oh yes and the <preface> one thing too serve as transition markers between the two transactions.

This conversation constitutes an interaction. The interaction is formed by two transactions. The conversation consists of four exchanges and fifteen turns. The first transaction consists of an exchange (questioning only), six moves (initiate, response, re-open, backchannel and follow-up in turn), ten acts (question, answer, query, confirm, expand, hedge, empathizer, acknowledge, frame and expand in turn) and four turns.

The second transaction consists of three exchanges (questioning, stating and stating in turn), fourteen moves (focus, initiate, repair, response, repair, response, focus, backchannel, initiate, response, follow-up, follow-up, initiate and response in turn), eighteen acts (frame, preface, question, check, clue, confirm, check, clue, confirm, inform, expand, acknowledge, expand, acknowledge, meta-comment, acknowledge, suggest and answer in turn) and eleven turns.

We are going to analyze a telephone conversation which was taken from the book ‘*Deutsche Sprachlehre für Ausländer*’ by Heinz Griesbach and Dora Schulz in 7.4.

**8.4 ANALYZING A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BY USING THE FEATURES OF SPOKEN INTERACTION**

A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION	TURN	ACT	MOVE	EXCHANGE	TRANSACTION	INTERACTION
P: Guten Morgen, Fritz! Kannst du heute abend zu mir kommen?	1	<greeting> <question>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 1	1	1
F: Heute leider nicht, Peter! Ich muß zu Haus bleiben und arbeiten.	2	<answer> <expand>	[Response]			
P: Aber vielleicht morgen?	3	<question>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 2		
F: Morgen gehe ich mit Erika zum Tanzen. Aber Samstag bin ich frei.	4	<answer> <expand>	[Response]			
P: Gut, dann lade ich dich am Samstag zum Abendessen ein. Meine Schwester und ich wollen nach dem Essen ins Kino gehen. Die Vorstellung beginnt um Viertel nach acht. Wir essen um sieben Uhr, dann kommen wir nicht zu spät. Kannst du gegen sieben Uhr bei uns sein?	5	<react> <invite> <precursor> <expand> <emphasizer> <offer>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 3		
F: Ja, vielen Dank, ich komme um sieben Uhr. Aufwidersehen bis Samstag!	6	<accept> <thanks> <meta-comments>	[Response]			
P: Wir er warten dich um sieben Uhr. Auf Wiedersehen!	7	<greeting> <confirm> <greeting>	[Follow-up]			

#### **8.4.1 THE EXPLANATION OF A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION ANALYSIS**

In this extract, only one topic is discussed: “Peter invites Fritz to go out having dinner”, which means that this piece of conversation contains only one transaction.

This conversation constitutes an interaction. The interaction is formed by a transaction. The conversation consists of three exchanges and seven turns. The transaction consists of three exchanges (questioning, questioning and questioning in turn), seven moves (initiate, response, initiate, response, initiate, response and follow-up in turn), nineteen acts (greeting, question, answer, expand, question, answer, expand, react, invite, precursor, expand, emphasize, offer, accept, thanks, meta-comments, greeting, confirm and greeting in turn) and seven turns.

The second transaction consists of three exchanges (questioning, stating and stating in turn), fourteen moves (focus, initiate, repair, response, repair, response, focus, backchannel, initiate, response, follow-up, follow-up, initiate and response in turn), eighteen acts (frame, preface, question, check, clue, confirm, check, clue, confirm, inform, expand, acknowledge, expand, acknowledge, meta-comment, acknowledge, suggest and answer in turn) and eleven turns.

We are going to analyze a face-to-face conversation which was taken from the book ‘*Deutsche Sprachlehre für Ausländer*’ by Heinz Griesbach and Dora Schulz in 7.5.

**8.5 ANALYZING A FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATION BY USING THE FEATURES OF SPOKEN INTERACTION**

A FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATION	TURN	ACT	MOVE	EXCHANGE	TRANSACTION	INTERACTION
B: Guten Tag, Walter! Du kommst auch einmal nach Köln?	1	<greeting>	[Initiate]	(Stating)1	1	1
		<question>				
W: Ich mache gerade eine Geschäftsreise. Heute abend fahre ich nach Hamburg weiter.	2	<answer>	[Response]			
		<expand>				
B: Schade, Dann ist dein Besuch ja sehr kurz. Wie geht es deiner Familie?	3	<evaluate>	[Follow-up]			
		<meta-comment>				
W: Danke, sehr gut. Wir sind alle gesund. Mein Sohn studiert jetzt in Frankfurt.	4	<question>	[Initiate]	(Questioning) 2	2	
		<answer>	[Response]			
		<emphasizer>				
B: Und deine Tochter? Was macht Sie?	5	<precursor>				
		<question>	[Re-open]			
W: Erika geht noch in die Schule. B: Aber gehen wir doch ins Zimmer! Du möchtest bestimmt eine Tasse Kaffee!	6	<expand>				
		<answer>	[Follow-up]			
B: Ja, sehr gern! Vielen Dank!	7	<invite>	[Initiate]	(Stating)3	3	
		<offer>				
W: Ja, sehr gern! Vielen Dank!	8	<accept>	[Response]			
		<emphasizer>				
		<thanks>				

### ***8.5.1 THE EXPLANATION OF A FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATION ANALYSIS***

In this extract, three topics are discussed: “Walter’s travelling for business”, “talking about family members” and “invitation for a cup of coffee” which means that this piece of conversation consists of three transactions.

This conversation constitutes an interaction. The interaction is formed by three transactions. The conversation consists of three exchanges and eight turns. The first transaction consists of an exchange (stating only), three moves (initiate, response and follow-up in turn), six acts (greeting, question, answer, expand, evaluate and meta-comment in turn) and three turns.

The second transaction consists of an exchange (questioning only), four moves (initiate, response, re-open and follow-up in turn), seven acts (question, answer, emphasize, precursor, question, expand and answer in turn) and three turns.

The third transaction consists of an exchange (stating only), two moves (initiate and response in turn), five acts (invite, offer, accept, emphasize and thanks in turn) and two turns.

## -CHAPTER IX- CONCLUSION

### *9.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY*

In this study, we have tried to show the importance of the basic features of conversational analysis. We have argued that conversation analysis has made important contributions to the understanding of utterance meaning by showing how a large proportion of the situated significance of utterances can be traced to their surrounding sequential environments.

In our study, Chapter I and II presented an overview of what is typical of spoken interaction in general. Chapter III presented the six level model of analysis, further developed in Chapter IV which constituted a detailed description of the main strategies speakers use in conversation. Chapter V presented the relationship and communication between the speaker and the listener(s). Chapter VI explained the main theme of our study; that's, the 'Conversational Analysis' and the structure of conversation in general. And we analyzed a telephone conversation, and a face-to-face conversation in English and German in details in Chapter VII.

In this study; especially in Chapter VI, we have mentioned that conversational analysis offers an approach to discourse and it is a particular method of studying conversational structure, based on the ethnomethodology. Ethnomethodologists set out to discover what methods people use to participate in and make sense of interaction. Conversation analysis differs from other branches of sociology because rather than

analyzing social order, it seeks to discover the methods by which members of a society produce a sense of social order. Conversation is a source of much of our sense of social order, e.g. it produces many of the typifications underlying our notions of social role. Conversation also exhibits its own order and manifests its own sense of structure.

Conversational Analysis is like interactional sociolinguistics in its concern with the problem of social order, and how language both creates and is created by social context. It is also similar to the ethnography of communication in its concern with human knowledge and its belief that no detail of conversation or interaction can be neglected as unimportant. Conversational Analysis provides us its own assumptions, its own methodology including its own terminology, and its own way of theorizing.

In sum, Conversational Analysis approaches to discourse consider the way participants in talk construct systematic solutions to recurrent organizational problems of conversation. Among the many problems that are solved are opening and closing talk, turn taking, repair, topic management, information receipt, and showing agreement and disagreement. Solutions to such problems are discovered through the close analysis of how participants themselves talk and to what aspects of talk they themselves attend: Conversational Analysis avoids positing any categories (whether social or linguistic) whose relevance for participants themselves is not displayed in what is actually said.

## ***9.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS***

Conversation Analysis is a useful method for language learners and language teachers, because language learners can easily understand their mother language and the

target language usage by analyzing great number of different conversations by using the features of spoken interaction.

This methodology is an excellent addition to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research because it outlines a way that can empirically illuminate how on-line, socially constructed conversation contributes to the speakers' understanding and use of new language, specifically definitions of new vocabulary.

This approach has some limitations. First of all, the conversation analyzed should be natural; that's, it should be recorded, transcribed and then analyzed. For instance, it should have pause units and tone units. The more natural conversation is, the better language learners understand the features of interaction. So language teachers should use natural conversations so as to explain the approach Conversation Analysis.

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