

Chapter 1

Issues of Relevance for Discourse Analysis: Contingency in Action, Interaction and Co-Participant Context

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1. Introduction

There are three themes on which I would like to focus attention, whose full incorporation into the analysis of discourse is, in my view, critical for its optimum further development. What needs to be incorporated is an orientation 1) to action, 2) to interaction, and 3) to multi-party interaction. It will turn out that orientation to each of these themes confronts the student of discourse with a sort of challenge whose depth and consequentiality has not yet been fully registered or explored, but is likely to be substantial. What becomes inescapable in facing up to action, interaction and multi-party interaction is the challenge of contingency. What exactly I mean by “contingency” will only come into view over the course of the discussion of empirical materials; as it cannot be usefully elaborated here, I will return to the import of contingency at the end.

But before launching into this agenda, I need to make clear several premises of what I have to say—both as context for my central points and to make explicit my understanding of discourse’s place in the world.

The first is that I take real world, naturally occurring ordinary discourse as the basic target; it is as a student of that that I offer what follows. There may well be grounds for those with other interests to opt for a different point of reference or a different target of inquiry; but for me these involve departures from the natural and cultural bedrock.

Second, whereas for many linguists and other students of language, conversation is one type or genre of discourse, for me discourse is, in the first instance, one kind of product of conversation, or of talk-in-interaction more generally.¹ It can be a contingent product of participants in ordinary conversation;

¹ The term “discourse” now has a variety of uses. In contemporary cultural criticism one can speak of the “discourse of modernity” or “the discourses of power” or “feminist discourse;” indeed, I was tempted to begin the present sentence by referring to “the discourse of contemporary cultural criticism.” In a more technical usage current among linguists and computational linguists, as one reader has reminded me, “...‘discourse’ is simply a broad term that includes interactional talk, but also includes written essays, advertisements, sermons, folk tales, etc. With this view of ‘discourse,’ your characterization

or it can be the designed product of a form of talk-in-interaction which is some systematic variant or transformation of ordinary conversation—like the interview or the lecture. But I take conversation to be the foundational domain. And this leads to the last point of departure I want to make explicit.

I take it that, in many respects, the fundamental or primordial scene of social life is that of direct interaction between members of a social species, typically ones who are physically co-present. For humans, talking in interaction appears to be a distinctive form of this primary constituent of social life, and ordinary conversation is very likely the basic form of organization for talk-in-interaction. Conversational interaction may then be thought of as a form of social organization through which the work of the constitutive institutions of societies gets done—institutions such as the economy, the polity, the family, socialization, etc. It is, so to speak, sociological bedrock. And it surely appears to be the basic and primordial environment for the development, the use, and the learning of natural language.

Therefore, it should hardly surprise us if some of the most fundamental features of natural language are shaped in accordance with this home environment in co-present interaction—as adaptations to it, or as part of its very warp and weft (Schegloff, 1989, 1996). For example, if the basic natural environment for sentences is in turns at talk in conversation, we should take seriously the possibility that aspects of their grammatical structure, for example, are to be understood as adaptations to that environment. In view of the thoroughly local and interactional character of the deployment of turns at talk in conversation (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974), grammatical structures—including within their scope discourse—should in the first instance be expected to be at least partially shaped by interactional considerations (Schegloff, 1979).

is hard to interpret.” My point is meant to contrast with this fundamentally taxonomic usage. The taxonomic usage reflects academic interests in discriminating and conceptualizing a variety of genres, and the relationship of these genres is derived from their relative positioning in this conceptual mapping, not in the naturally occurring processes which might conceivably have engendered them. It is this which the point in the text is meant to invoke. That point turns on what is both a broader and a narrower sense of “discourse,” one which underlies these other usages (and is a common characteristic of the usages discussed in the Oxford English Dictionary), and that is the usage which contrasts “discourse” with single sentences. If one examines the usage of a term like “discourse analysis,” for example, one rarely finds it invoked to deal with single sentences. “Discourse” regularly refers to extended, multi-sentence “texts.” And it originally had reference to speech or talk. Hence my point, which is that discourse—extended or multi-unit talk production—be understood processually—as one sort of product of conversation, rather than conversation being understood taxonomically, as simply one sub-type of discourse. In this view, extended spates of “text” by a single speaker have as their source environment turns-at-talk in conversation in which that is the concerted product of a company of participants in interaction, for example, spates of story-telling. A kind of virtual natural history of interactional genres and speech exchange systems may then track the disengagement of such sustained, multi-unit talk production by a single speaker from the interactional environment of conversation into settings such as religious ceremony, political speech making, prophetic invocation, philosophical disquisition, etc., and the development of writing then enables an explosion of yet further genres.

So much for premises. The three themes on which I wish to focus your attention are endemic to the organization of talk-in-interaction, and follow from these points of departure. The first concerns the centrality of action.

2. Action

Among the most robust traditional anchors for linguistic analysis beyond the level of syntax are orientations to information and truth. This position needs to be reconsidered. It is critical that the analysis of discourse incorporate attention not only to the propositional content and information distribution of discourse units, but also to the *actions* they are doing.² Especially (but not exclusively) in conversation, talk is constructed and is attended by its recipients for the action or actions which it may be doing. Even if we consider only declarative-type utterances, because there is no limit to the utterables which can be informative and/or true, the informativeness or truth of an utterance is, by itself, no warrant or grounds for having uttered it—or for having uttered it at a particular juncture in an occasion. There is virtually always an issue (for the participants, and accordingly for professional analysts) of what is getting *done* by its production in some particular here-and-now.

Although I cannot undertake here to go beyond asserting this to demonstrate it, I do want to exemplify it. In order to make vivid the consequentiality for conversational participants of the action which an utterance is doing, quite apart from the information which it is conveying, I offer a condensed and partial analysis of one conversational fragment. I hope thereby to show at least one way that action can matter, and indicate an order of analysis which this field of inquiry must incorporate if this view of the inescapability of action is correct.

In the conversation between Debbie and Nick (who is her boyfriend Mark's roommate) which is reproduced in its entirety in Appendix A (at whose end the most pertinent notational transcription conventions are explained), a peculiarly insistent exchange develops which can serve to exemplify my theme.

(1) Debbie and Nick:34-69

34 Debbie: .hhh Um:: u- guess what I've-(u-)wuz lookin'
in the paper:.-
35 -have you got your waterbed yet?
36 Nick: Uh huh, it's really nice °too, I set it up
37 Debbie: Oh rea:lly? ^Already?
38 Nick: Mm hmm
39 (0.5)
40 Debbie: Are you kidding?

² As will become clear below, I do not mean here to be invoking speech act theory, whose ability to deal with real ordinary discourse is subject to question, but that is another story (cf. Schegloff, 1988a, 1992a, 1992b:xxiv-xxvii).

41 Nick: No, well I ordered it last (week)/(spring)
 42 (0.5)
 43 Debbie: Oh- no but you h- you've got it already?
 44 Nick: Yeah h! hh= ((laughing))
 45 Debbie: =hhh [hh .hh] ((laughing))
 46 Nick: [I just] said that
 47 Debbie: O::hh: hu[h, I couldn't be[lieve you c-
 48 Nick: [Oh (°it's just) [It'll sink in
 49 'n two day[s fr'm now (then) ((laugh))]
 50 Debbie: [(l a u g h)]
 Oh no cuz I just got- I saw an ad in the
 51 paper for a real discount waterbed s'
 52 I w'z gonna tell you 'bout it=
 53 Nick: =No this is really, you (haven't seen)
 54 mine, you'll really like it.
 55 Debbie: Ya:h. It's on a frame and everythi[ng?
 56 Nick: [Yeah
 57 Debbie: .hh Uh (is) a raised frame?
 58 Nick: °mn hmm
 59 Debbie: How: ni:::ce, Whadja do with Mark's cou:ch,
 60 (0.5)
 61 Nick: P(h)ut it out in the cottage,
 62 (0.2)
 63 Nick: goddam thing weighed about two th(h)ousand
 pound[s
 64 Debbie: [mn:Yea::h
 65 I'll be{:t
 66 Nick: [ah
 67 (0.2)
 68 Debbie: Rea:lly
 69 (0.3)

At a point which I will characterize in a moment (35), Debbie asks Nick whether he has gotten his waterbed yet. He tells her that he has, and this is met with three rounds of questioning, challenging, or disbelief—to settle for pre-analytic characterizations initially. First, (at 37) “Oh really? Already?” When Nick confirms, she asks again (40), “Are you kidding?” “No,” he says, and notes that it has been a while since he ordered the waterbed. And still again she asks (43) “Oh no but you h- you’ve got it already?” Finally, Nick complains (46) that he has already said so. What is going on here?

Debbie has asked a seemingly simple, informational question, and Nick has answered it. Now questioning of the sort which Debbie engages in here can be undertaken in conversation (among other uses) as a kind of harbinger of disagreement—sometimes verging on challenge, and one response to such a usage is a backdown by its recipient. Sometimes this is a backdown in the substance of what was said,³ sometimes in the epistemic strength with which it was put

³ For example,

A: Is Al here?
 B: Yeah
 (0.?)

forward.⁴ If a first questioning does not get such a backdown, sometimes a second one does. But what kind of backdown is possibly in order here? If Nick has in fact taken possession of his waterbed, is he now to deny it? Is he to retreat to a position of uncertainty or supposition about the matter? What could Debbie be after?

It is also true that, in keeping with the peculiar interactional “style” of teasing and laughing which some Americans in their late teens and early 20’s practice, Nick has been indulging himself in unrelieved “kidding around” in the earlier part of this conversation, and it is not implausible that, if the first of Debbie’s responses was hearably “surprise,” the second could be checking out whether this is not just more teasing by Nick. But then what is the third about (at 43)? And why the persistence of her stance? Why should this information come in for such scrutiny and doubting?

We can get analytic leverage on what is going on here if we attend to these utterances not only as a matter of information transfer involving issues of truth and confidence, but as actions in a course of action, constituting an interactional sequence of a recurrent form. For it is not enough that a speaker has something to tell and undertakes to tell it; the prospective teller must find a way to tell it, and that implicates a recipient as well, a proper recipient aligned to reciprocity, and not simply a sentient body with functioning eyes and ears. And this involves action in interaction.

C: He is?

B: Well he was.

⁴ For example, in the following fragment from a conversation in a used furniture store (US, 27:28-28:01), Mike is angling to buy (or be given) Vic’s aquarium when Rich intervenes with a challenge to Vic’s ownership of it (at line a). Note the backdowns in epistemic strength at lines c and e in response to Vic’s questionings at lines b and d respectively—first from assertion to assertion plus tag question, and then to fully interrogative construction. (Note finally that in the end Vic does disagree with Rich’s claim.)

MIK: Wanna get some- wannuh buy some fish?

RI? Ihhh ts-t

VIC: Fi:sh,

MIK: You have a tank I like tuh tuh- I-I [like-

VIC: [Yeh I gotta fa:wty::

I hadda fawtuy? a fifty, enna twu[nny:: en two ten::s,

MIK: [Wut- Wuddiyuh doing wit

[dem. Wuh-

a RIC: [But those were uh::[Alex’s tanks.

VIC: [enna fi:ve.

b VIC: Hah?

c RIC: Thoser’ Alex’s tanks weren’t they?

d VIC: Pondn’ me?

e RIC: Weren’t- didn’ they belong tuh Al[ex?

VIC: [No: Alex ha(s) no tanks

Alex is tryintuh buy my tank.

Begin by noting (at 34) Debbie's "guess what." This is a usage virtually dedicated to a particular type of action referred to in past work as a "pre-announcement" (Terasaki, 1975). Announcements, or other prospective "tellings," face the familiar constraint that they generally should not be done to recipients who already know "the news." Pre-announcements and their responses—pre-announcement sequences, that is—allow a prospective teller and recipient to sort out together whether the "news" is already known, so that the telling or announcement can be withheld or squelched, if need be. Of course, the very doing of a pre-announcement displays its speaker's supposition that there is indeed news to tell, and to tell as news to this recipient. Still, one thing prospective tellers can do (and regularly do do) before telling is to check whether the news is already known. And among the recurrent response forms to such pre-announcements, two central types are the "go ahead" type of response (such as, in response to "guess what," "what"), which forwards the sequence to its key action—here announcing or telling, and the "blocking" type of response (for example, a claim of knowledge, such as "I heard"), which aims to forestall such telling.⁵

Often the pre-announcement provides clues about the news to be told (e.g., "Y'wanna know who I got stoned with a few weeks ago?," or "You'll never guess what your dad is looking at," Terasaki, 1976:27–28), the better to allow the recipient to recognize it if it is already known, and to provide a context for understanding it and an interpretive key, if it is not already known. And here Debbie does provide such clues; "I was looking in the paper" (at 34) intimates that what she has to tell is something that one can find (and that she has found) in the newspaper. And then (at 35), "have you got your waterbed yet?" So the thing to be told (about) has something to do with waterbeds, and Nick's possibly being in the market for a waterbed in particular.

So there is another constraint on Debbie's telling here, one which is not generic to "telling" in the way in which "already known-ness" is. Debbie has information to offer—information which is relevant to Nick only contingently. Offers and offer sequences too can take what we call "pre-sequences," just as announcements can and do. With pre-offers, prospective offerers can try to assess whether what they have to offer is relevant to their recipients and may be welcomed by them, so as to not make offers which will be rejected, for example. What Debbie has to offer is information on a cheap waterbed or an especially desirable one, but her pre-offer is designed to find out whether such information is relevant to Nick—whether what will be offered will be relevant. That is what "Have you got your waterbed yet?" appears designed to do—it is an analyzable pre-offer.⁶ As such, it

⁵ For a more general treatment, cf. Terasaki, *op. cit.*; Schegloff, 1990. For an instance with both—indeed, simultaneous—go-ahead and blocking responses, Schegloff, forthcoming.

⁶ Among the design features which make it so analyzable is the negative polarity item "yet," which displays its speaker's orientation to a "no" answer, and builds in a preference for that sort of response (note that "yet" is replaced by "already" after Nick's affirmative response). The placement of the pre-offer *after* the pre-announcement is a way of showing the former to be in the further service of the latter, and part of the same "project." For a formally similar series of sequences, see the data excerpt in footnote 14, where positioning

too (like pre-announcements) takes among its alternative response types a go-ahead response—which forwards the sequence to an offer, and a blocking response which declines to do so.

So when Debbie asks, “Have you got your waterbed yet?” she is not just asking for information; she awaits a go-ahead to the pre-offer, on which her offer of the information which she has come across in the newspaper has been made contingent. And when Nick responds affirmatively, he is not only confirming the proposition at issue—that he already has his waterbed; he is blocking her from going on to tell the information which she has seen in the newspaper.

And this is the proximate sequential and interactional context for Debbie’s repeated questionings. The backdown which is relevant here concerns not the facticity of the presence of a waterbed, and not Nick’s confidence in asserting it; and perhaps not even whether he is teasing. What is at issue is a backdown from the blocking response to the pre-sequences. One form it could take is, “why?” As in (starting at 37–38) “Oh really? Already?” “Mm hmm, why?” Or (at 40), “Are you kidding?” “No, why? Or (at 43–44), “Oh- no but you h- you’ve got it already?” “Yeah! Why?”

As it happens, it appears that Nick has not caught this, and so he responds only at the level of information transmission.⁷ When for the third time Debbie asks, “You’ve got it already?” he says, “Yeah, I just said that...It’ll sink in in one or two days from now.” That is, he just says it again—and more pointedly; he makes her out to be not too quick on the uptake; she’ll get it eventually.⁸

But it is he who has apparently not gotten it. And it will be we who do not get it if we do not systematically distinguish what an utterance is about or what is it saying, on the one hand, from what it is doing on the other. Backing down from one is quite different from backing down from the other. Attention will virtually always need to be paid to the issue “what is someone doing with some utterance? What action or actions are involved?” Because overwhelmingly actions are involved, they are oriented to by the participants both in constructing and in understanding the talk, and the discourse cannot be appropriately understood without reference to them—precisely because they are key to the participants’ conduct.

It follows, of course, that the actions to which analysis needs to attend are not classes of action defined by the conceptual commitments of professional discourse analysts (as, for example, in any of the varieties of academic speech act theory), but those units and understandings of action which are indigenous to the actors’—the interactional participants’—worlds. Hence, the appearance in my account of actions like “pre-offer” or “pre-announcement,” which figure in no speech-act

“Didjer mom tell you I called the other day?” after “Wouldju do me a favor?” puts it under the jurisdiction of the projected request sequence, and in pursuit of that project.

⁷ It is possible, of course, that he *has* caught it, but prefers not to hear of the better buy he could have had, having just taken possession of, and pride in, his new acquisition.

⁸ Let me just mention without elaboration that Debbie does find a way of conveying what she saw in the newspaper in spite of it all, namely, in the questions she eventually asks about Nick’s waterbed—specific questions (about the bed being on a frame, on a raised frame, etc., cf. Lines 55–57) almost certainly prompted by what she saw in the paper.

theory with which I am familiar, but exemplars of which are laced through and through ordinary conversation.

That is the first theme I want to put before you: how an action done by a speaker—taken as an action—has decisive consequences in shaping the trajectory of the talk’s development. The second theme concerns how the absence of an action can have such consequences. But the absent action here is not that of the speaker of the discourse but rather of its recipient, and this forces on us the issue of the interactivity of discourse production.

3. *Interaction*

When I say that the second theme on which I want to focus is *interaction*, I should note that what I mean by the term “interaction” here may be the same as what some workers in the area of discourse analysis and computational linguistics mean by this term. For students of interaction, “multi-party” means “more than *two*.” For at least some students of discourse, it apparently means “more than *one*.” And “produced by more than one” is what I mean here by the *interactive* production of discourse.

It is some fifteen years now since Charles Goodwin (1979, 1981) gave a convincing demonstration of how the final form of a sentence in ordinary conversation had to be understood as an interactional product. He showed that the speaker, finding one after another prospective hearer not properly aligned as an actual recipient (that is, not looking at him), re-constructed the utterance in progress—the sentence—so as to design it for the new candidate hearer to whom he had shifted his gaze. He showed the effects on the utterance of both the candidate recipients’ conduct and the speaker’s orientation to the several possible recipients—a feature we call recipient design. Goodwin’s account served at the time (and still serves) as a compelling call for the inclusion of the hearer in what were purported to be speaker’s processes, and for the inclusion of the non-vocal in purportedly vocal conduct. In a paper published the following year, Marjorie Goodwin (1980) provided another such demonstration, showing how a hearer’s displayed uptake and assessment of a speaker’s in-process talk shaped the final form which the utterance took.⁹

The general point here is that units such as the clause, sentence, turn, utterance, discourse—all are in principle *interactional* units. For it is not only that turns figure in the construction of sequences (by which I mean action sequences implemented through talk and other conduct). Sequences—and their projected, contingent alternative trajectories—figure in the construction of turns, and of the

⁹ Others have contributed to this theme as well. I leave with a mere mention Lerner’s work (1987, 1991, frth), pursuing several observations by Sacks (1992:I:144–147 et passim; 1992:II:57–60 et passim), on “collaboratives,” in which two or more speakers collaborate in producing a turn, in the sense that each actually articulates part of it. See also Schegloff, 1982, 1987, Mandelbaum, 1987, 1989, and in a somewhat different style of work, the papers in Duranti and Brenneis, 1986 and Erickson (1992).

extended turns which we sometimes call discourse(s). In examining the following conversation, I want to explicate how the sequence which is being incipiently constructed figures in the production of what appears to be an extended spate of talk by a single speaker—a discourse of sorts.¹⁰

(2) Marcia and Donny: Stalled

01 1+ rings
 02 Marcia: Hello?
 03 Donny: 'lo Marcia,=
 04 Marcia: Yea[:h]
 05 Donny: =[('t's) D]onny.
 06 Marcia: Hi Donny.
 07 Donny: Guess what.hh
 08 Marcia: What.
 09 Donny: -hh My ca:r is sta::lled.
 10 (0.2)
 11 Donny: ('n) I'm up here in the Glen?
 12 Marcia: Oh::.
 13 {(0.4)}
 14 Donny: {-hhh }
 15 Donny: A:nd.hh
 16 (0.2)
 17 Donny: I don'know if it's po:ssible but {-hhh/0.2)
 18 see I haveta open up the ba:nk.hh
 19 (0.3)
 20 Donny: a:t uh: (·) in Brentwood?hh=
 21 Marcia: =Yeah:- en I know you want- (·) en I whoa-
 22 (·) en I would, but- except I've gotta leave
 23 in aybout five min(h)utes.[(hheh)
 24 Donny: [Okay then I
 25 gotta call somebody else.right away.
 26 (-)
 27 Donny: Okay?=
 28 Marcia: =Okay [Don]
 29 Donny: [Thanks] a lot.=Bye-.

¹⁰ The following discussion documents another point as well. A number of papers (e.g., Jefferson and Schenkein, 1978; Schegloff, 1980, 1988c,1990) describe various ways in which sequences get expanded as the vehicle for interactionally working out some course of action between parties to talk-in-interaction. Sequence expansion is embodied in the number of turns composing the trajectory of the sequence from start to closure. But the amount of talk in a sequence can increase in ways other than expansion in its sequence structure. Among these is expansion of the component turns that make up the sequence. (Cf. Zimmerman, 1984:219–220 and the discussion in Schegloff, 1991:62–63 concerning different formats of citizen complaint calls to the police.) Most commonly it is the second part of an adjacency-pair based sequence which gets this sort of elaboration, as when a question gets a story or other elaborated response as its answer. There may then still be a “simple,” unexpanded (or minimally expanded) sequence structure of question/answer, or question/answer/receipt, with the second of these parts being quite a lengthy “discourse unit.” “Turn expansion” may then stand as a contrast or alternative to sequence expansion, rather than in a subsuming or subsumed relationship to it (compare Schegloff, 1982:71–72). In the data examined in the next portion of the text, the discourse or turn expansion occupies not the second part position in the sequence, but the first.

30 Marcia: Bye: .

The “discourse of sorts” which eventually gets produced here (at lines 9, 11, 15, 17–18, and 20) could be rendered as follows:

My car is stalled (and I’m up here in the Glen?), and I don’t know if it’s possible, but, see, I have to open up the bank at uh, in Brentwood?

Put this way, each component (e.g., each clause or phrase) appears to follow the one before it, although I have tried to capture with punctuation the possibly parenthetical character of the second component, with attendant revised understanding of the relative organization of the components surrounding it. Now aside from the “Oh” interpolated by Marcia (at line 12) in response to this element, all that I appear to have left out in this rendering of the talk is . . . *nothing*—that is, silences, some of them filled by hearable in- and out-breaths. But, of course, these silences are *not* nothing. The something that they are—the something that each is—is given by its sequential context, and it is *that* which requires us to attend to the actions being done here . . . and *not* being done here. Then we can see that—and how—this is not a unitary discourse produced by a single participant, and how some of its components follow not the components which preceded them, but the silence which followed the component that preceded them. Thereby we can come to see that it is not just a hearer’s uptake and actions which can enter into the shaping of a speaker’s talk; it can be the absence of them which does so.

To begin then, the utterance at line 07 should now be readily recognizable for the action which it is doing: it is (doing) a pre-announcement. It may be useful to be explicit about what is involved in making and sustaining such a claim. Virtually always at least two aspects of a bit of conduct—such as a unit of talk—figure in how it does what it does: its position and its composition (Schegloff, 1992c:1304–1320). A sketch will have to suffice.

We have already noted that this formulaic utterance “Guess what” is virtually dedicated to doing pre-announcements, as are various extensions and variants of it, such as “Guess what I did today,” “Guess who I saw,” etc.¹¹ This account of composition is only rarely available; precious few configurations of talk are so dedicated, and even those that are are contingent on their position. “Hello,” said upon tripping over a prone body in a British film, is not a greeting, however much that expression might appear dedicated to doing so.

And what is the position of this utterance? How is it to be characterized? It comes just after the opening—the telephone ring’s summons and the recipient’s response (01–02), and the exchange of greetings intertwined with the explication

¹¹ Cf. Terasaki, *op. cit.* Note that such utterances are neither designed, nor are they heard, as commands or invitations to guess, i.e., to venture a try at what their speaker means to tell, though hecklers may heckle by so guessing (though I must say that I have seen very few empirical instances of this). On the other hand, some recipients of pre-announcements who know—or think they know—what the pre-announcer has in mind to tell may not simply block the telling by asserting that they know; they may *show* that they know by pre-empting the telling themselves.

of the identities of the two participants (03–06). I can only mention here something that would inform the parties' conduct of the ensuing interaction, namely the rushed, charged, almost breathless quality of Donny's participation, embodied here in his preemptive self-identification at line 5, rather than waiting to be recognized (Schegloff, 1979). It is a way of doing "urgency," and it is part of the positioning of "Guess what." Another part is the possible absence here of the start of an exchange of "Howaryou"s, a highly recurrent next sequence type in conversations between familiars under many (though not all) circumstances (Schegloff, 1986). In moving directly to "first topic" and the "reason for the call," Donny pre-empts "Howaryou"s as well, and this further informs the position in which "Guess what" is done. This position and the utterance in it, then, contingently foreshadow not only a telling of some news; they adumbrate the character of that news as well—that is, as urgent (or in some other respect "charged").

The pre-announcement projects further talk by its speaker, contingent on the response of the recipient, and we have already said a bit about the fairly constrained set of response types by the recipient which it makes relevant: a go-ahead response (the "preferred" one in the terminology of conversation analysis¹²), a blocking response, a preemptive response or a heckle-version of one. In the data before us, the response (at line 08) is a go-ahead.

The position (at line 08) is the turn after a pre-announcement which has made a response to it relevant next. The composition is common for responses to pre-announcements of the form "guess + question word" (as well as "y'know + question clause"): returning the question word from the pre-announcement ("Guess what." "What." "Y'know where I went?" "Where." etc.).¹³

With this response, Marcia both shows that she understands Donny's prior turn to have been a pre-announcement (thereby further grounding our analysis of it along these lines in the just preceding text), and provides an appropriate response to it. And note that that is how Donny hears Marcia's response; for otherwise, her "What" could invite treatment as displaying some trouble in hearing or understanding. It is not, of course, doing that, and it is not heard that way. "What" displays an understanding of "Guess what" as a pre-announcement; and Donny's ensuing turn displays his understanding of it as a go-ahead response to a pre-announcement. Of course Donny's ensuing turn—the one at line 09—is in the first instance otherwise engaged, and that is what we turn to next.

The pre-announcement sequence having been completed with a go-ahead, what is Donny's next utterance?

Well, in the first instance, it seems clearly enough designed to deliver the projected news. Note well: that it is conveying information is one formulation; that it does so by an utterance designed to be a recognizable action—"announcing," or "telling"—is another. For, of course, information can be

¹² Cf. for example Heritage, 1984b:265–92; Levinson, 1983:332–356; Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1987[1973]; Schegloff, 1988d:442–457.

¹³ Again, cf. Terasaki, op. cit. for a range of exemplars; Schegloff, 1988a.

conveyed by utterances designed to do something else in the first instance and on the face of it. But this one is clearly enough designed to do “telling.”¹⁴

But what are the design features that make that “clear?” I can only tick off a series of observations whose development would be pertinent to such an analysis. First, the utterance is in an assertion or declarative format. Second, it refers to a speaker-specific event (what Labov and Fanshel called an “A-event”¹⁵). Third, it is presented as a recent, indeed as a current, event (Donny says “My car is stalled”). Fourth, as a current A-event, it is not otherwise accessible to recipient (by definition, else it would be an “A-B event”). There is undoubtedly more, and none of this may strike you as itself news. Still, if we are to get clear on how the actions which people do with talk “are” transparently what they “are,” we will have to make analytically explicit how they are constructed to be transparently that (or equivocally that, for that matter), and how they may therefore be recognizable as transparently that (or equivocally that)—both to their recipients and (derivatively) to us as analysts.

It is not enough that there was a pre-announcement sequence with a go-ahead response. What follows is not necessarily an announcement; it will have to be constructed by its speaker as a recognizable, analyzable announcement, though its position after a pre-announcement sequence will potentiate such recognition. Once again, then: position and composition matter. So if discourse analysis takes the actions being done in the discourse as key to understanding its organization, then this will be part of the job.

Anyway, just as pre-announcements make sequentially relevant a response from some restricted set of next actions, so do announcements or tellings. Among them are some form of information uptake (such as registering the new information as new, for example through the use of the “oh” which Heritage (1984a) termed a “change-of-state token,” or alternatively registering it as having already been known after all), or some form of assessment of what has been told—as good, awful, interesting, discouraging, etc. And indeed, these forms of action both regularly occur in the immediate sequential context of announcements. Not here, however.

¹⁴ See, for example, Schegloff, 1990:63, footnote 6, for a discussion of the same bit of information first being conveyed in an utterance designed to do something else, and immediately thereafter done as a “telling” at arrows a and b respectively in the following exchange:

B: But- (1.0) Wouldj_u do me a favor? heheh
 J: e(hh) depends on the favor::, go ahead,
 B: Didjer mom tell you I called the other day? ← a
 J: No she didn't.
 (0.5)
 B: Well I called. (.) [hhh] ← b
 J: [ʊhuh]

¹⁵ By this they refer to “...representations of some state of affairs...drawn from the biography of the speaker: these are A-events, that is, known to A and not necessarily to B.” Labov and Fanshel, 1977:62.

It now becomes pertinent for us to note that what follows this bit of news—"My car is stalled"—is silence, at line 10. Only two tenths of a second of silence to be sure; still, it is a silence after the prior speaker has produced a possibly complete utterance, one which makes relevant a response from its recipient, indeed, as noted, one which makes relevant quite specific types of response. Although everyone is silent (which silence as a state requires), someone in particular is "relevantly not talking," and that is Marcia. For Donny has produced a possibly complete turn, one which implicates some responsive action next—by Marcia. Absence of talk is then, in the first instance, attributable to Marcia. So although the effect of her silence is that no action seems to get done, what she is specifically and relevantly "not doing" is registering some uptake of what has been told, and/or some assessment of it—for it is these which Donny's announcement has made conditionally relevant.

At least that is some of what she is not doing. For a bit of talk can do more than one action. And some sorts of actions regularly serve as the vehicle or instrument by which other actions are done—announcements or tellings prominent among them (as are "questions" and "assessments"). In this case, I suggest, "My car is stalled" is not only an announcement, it is as well a complaint.¹⁶

The features which provided for this utterance as a possible "announcement" do not, of course, analyze its status as a possible complaint. In a variety of contexts it appears that formulating a state of affairs or an event as an absence, as a failure, as a non-occurrence is a way of constructing a recognizable complaint. And although the utterance under examination here is not as distinct an embodiment of such a usage in its surface realization as many others (for example, "You didn't get an ice cream sandwich," analyzed in Schegloff, 1988b:118–131), "stalled" is used to mean "engine will not start or run," i.e., it does formulate a failure.

Again, a complaint or report of trouble makes different types of response relevant next than does an announcement. Among such sequentially implicated next turns to complaints can be (depending on the character and target of the complaint or reported trouble) such ones as a sympathy expression, apology, excuse or account, agreement and co-complaint or disagreement and rejection, and—perhaps most relevant here—a remedy or help, or the offer of remedy or help.¹⁷ So the silence at line 10 is to be understood not only for its withholding of news uptake and assessment, but for its withholding—by Marcia—of an offer to help. Though the silence by definition has no talk, it is as fully fledged an event in

¹⁶ Alternatively, it could be characterized as a possible troubles telling (cf. Jefferson, 1988; Jefferson and Lee, 1981) or a pre-request (see below), though I cannot here take up the differences between these formulations, which in any case are not material to the issues I am presently concerned with.

¹⁷ Drew (1984:137–139 *et passim*) describes the use of reportings which leave it to the recipient to extract the upshot and the consequent appropriate response. He addresses himself specifically to the declining of invitations by reporting incapacitating circumstances. His materials share with the present data the feature that a "dispreferred" action is circumlocuted by the use of a simple reporting of "the facts"—there declining invitations, here requesting a service.

the conversation as any utterance, and as consequential for the ensuing talk. The talk which follows is properly understood as following not the utterance "My car is stalled," not the information which that utterance conveys, and not the announcement which that utterance embodies or the complaint which that announcement implements; rather it follows the silence following that announcement, in which its "preferred" response (in the technical conversation-analytic sense of that term¹⁸) is hearably and analyzably withheld.

Note well: not every silence in conversation can be accorded an analysis along these lines. Silences get their interactional import from their sequential context (their "position"). A silence developing where an utterance has not been brought to possible completion is generally heard not as the interlocutor's, but as a pause in the continuing turn of the one who was talking (Sacks et al., 1974:715). And not all silences following a turn's possible completion are equivalent either: the silence following a question has a different import and consequence than one following an answer, or one following receipt of an answer. That something is missing, and what something is missing, should not simply be asserted; both need to be analytically grounded, based on structural analyses of relevant empirical materials. (This is so not only when silence develops, but at any apparent juncture in the talk where the analyst is drawn to introduce claims about what is "missing.")

Were sufficient space available, it would repay the effort to continue tracking in detail the development of this interaction, the whole of which lasts barely 18 seconds. A selective set of observation will have to suffice, focussing on the recurrent re-entries of Donny in the aftermath of "My car is stalled."

(3) Marcia and Donny: Stalled (partial)

09 Donny: ·hh My ca:r is sta::lled.
10 (0.2)
11 Donny: ('n) I'm up here in the Glen?
12 Marcia: Oh::.
13 {(0.4)}
14 Donny: {·hhh}
15 Donny: A:nd.hh
16 (0.2)
17 Donny: I don'know if it's po:ssible but {·hhh/0.2}
18 see I haveta open up the ba:nk.hh
19 (0.3)
20 Donny: a:t uh: (·) in Brentwood?hh=
21 Marcia: =Yeah:- en I know you want- (·) en I whoa-
22 (·) en I would, but- except I've gotta leave
23 in aybout five min(h)utes. [(hheh)

Note to begin with that each of these re-entries (at lines 11, 15, 17 and 20) is constructed by Donny as an increment to the earlier talk, with the series of "turns-so-far" laced with silences, at many of which intervention from Marcia with an offer of help might be relevant. This incrementally constructed discourse is a

¹⁸ Cf. footnote 12.

multiply renewed effort (or series of efforts) to elicit help from Marcia, without ever requesting it (as we say in the vernacular) explicitly.

First, although we lack independent ethnographic knowledge, “n I’m up here in the Glen” appears designed to reassure Marcia of Donny’s proximity, and thereby to mitigate the costs or difficulty of helping for Marcia. Note further that it is delivered as a sort of parenthetical insert¹⁹, projecting a further continuation. In making itself out to be a continuation of what preceded (note that it begins—at line 11—with a compressed conjunction), it treats what preceded as having not been complete, and the silence which it breaks as having been not a post-completion withholding of response, but a pause in the continuing production on an ongoing turn. That something might have been missing is thereby suppressed or camouflaged.²⁰

The projection of continuation carried by the parenthetical informing is echoed and renewed (after Marcia’s receipt of the informing, once again with no response to the complaint) by a substantial hearable (pre-talk) in-breath (line 14), and an isolated continuation marker “A:nd” (line 15), after which another pause/silence is allowed to materialize (line 16), with provision already made that further talk by Donny (should it be necessary) will be a further continuation of the utterance-in-progress. It turns out to be necessary.

With “I don’t know if it’s possible, but” Donny adumbrates the conventional grounds of rejection of requests (cf. note 17), and thereby comes to the very verge of doing an outright request himself, for this usage virtually serves as a form of marking an utterance or an incipient utterance as a request. It serves, then, as a form of pre-request, a form cognate with the earlier mentioned pre-announcement and pre-offer. But unlike those forms, the preferred response to a pre-request does not promote the sequence to doing the request; it preempts the request with an offer (Schegloff, 1979b:49; 1990:61). So here again, as in the initial installment of this now-extended turn, Donny is providing for help to be offered without requesting it explicitly, but by now the utterance has become not a complaint, but a pre-request. That is, as the turn is extended, the action which it is analyzably doing can be—and here is—transformed.

At just at the point at which the request itself would be specified, and thereby brought to realization, Donny self-interrupts (with “See” at line 18), and suppresses the clearly projected request. In its place, “I have to open up the bank” underscores both the urgency and the potential costs of failure. Here again, for the first time since “My car is stalled,” the utterance is brought to possible completion both grammatically and prosodically (cf. Ford and Thompson, *frth*), and once again there is no uptake or response from Marcia. Once again Donny breaks the silence (as he did at line 11), again with talk built as an increment to the prior—otherwise apparently completed—talk, again with a place reference delivered with

¹⁹ For recent treatments of parenthetical prosody from a variety of approaches see the papers by Local (1992) and Uhmann (1992).

²⁰ On the use of additional increments to otherwise possibly completed turns after developing silences portend incipient disagreement or rejection, see Ford, 1993.

upward intonation, in the manner of a try-marked recognitional reference (Sacks and Schegloff, 1979) for a place, inviting its recipient's claim of recognition, and whatever other response might be forthcoming to this by now elaborately constructed, multiply laminated utterance.

Each of these increments comes after, and is analyzably directed to, the absence of any response to the complaint or (later) to the pre-request which Donny had presented as the reason for his call. When she eventually responds, Marcia declines to offer help, without ever saying "no." But her response does display (lines 21–22) her understanding that a solicitation of help was being made relevant ("en I know you want-") and that she would ordinarily comply ("en I would,"), but for a disabling circumstance.

Donny's "discourse of sorts," with the presentation of which this discussion began, has now been analyzed into the components from which it was assembled through a series of sequential and interactional contingencies, and its elaborate pursuit of help anatomized as the proposed underlying action. Here is one use of such analytic and terminological tools as the "parts" of an "adjacency pair," which are sometimes bemoaned as merely jargon. It is the analysis of "My car is stalled" as a possible announcement (a first pair part which makes one of a set of potential second pair parts relevant next), and consultation of other empirical announcement sequences (to establish what kinds of utterances serve as second pair parts which satisfy these sequence-organizational constraints), which grounds claims about what is missing in the following silence. It is analysis of that utterance as also a possible complaint (another type of first pair part), and examination of complaint sequences, that provides for the possible relevance next of the variety of responsive turn types proposed above, and characterizations of them as preferred or dispreferred, and underwrites further claims about what might be hearably missing. Without some such analytic resource (as well as analytic resources bearing on turn organization such as "possible completion" and further talk as either new "turn-constructive unit" or "increment" to the prior unit), it is easy for a post hoc observer (unlike an in situ participant) to overlook that an action is missing—precisely because the prior speaker (here Donny) may talk in such a manner as covers over and obscures that missingness, and makes it appear a mere pause in an ongoing utterance in progress. That action by the speaker, together with our vernacular inclination to normalize and naturalize the events in the interactional stream, can give the air of inevitability to what ends up having transpired. Stopping to say of "My car is stalled" that it is a possibly complete turn that is a first pair part, and what type or types of first pair part, prompts thinking explicitly about the possibly relevant second pair parts, prompts looking for them, and finding them "missing" if they are not there. The relevant "missing" is, of course, "missing for the participants," and one must then go back to the data to find evidence of an orientation to something being awry for the participants.

The point of this analysis, however, has been that not only is action a relevant facet and upshot of the talk, but that actions by other than the speaker are relevant to understanding a speaker's construction of discourse; and, relatedly, that the

absence of actions by recipients—the absence of actions made relevant by the speaker’s prior talk, the speaker’s turn-so-far—may be crucial to understanding the speaker’s further construction of the discourse.

This was my second “burning issue;” discourse involves not just action, but action in interaction, and the consequential eventfulness of its absence. Interaction, then, the relevant participation of a second party, the co-construction of discourse, may be most critical to our analysis of discourse when one of the participants is not producing talk—or doing anything else visible or hearable. For the very production of a discourse may be one contingent response by a prior speaker to the absence of a response by a co-participant to an apparently completed, action-implementing turn constructional unit.

4. *Multi-party Interaction*

My third theme concerns *multi-party* interaction. In light of the discussion so far, multi-party interaction can now be understood to refer to some instances of discourse in settings composed of more than two participants.²¹ I will limit myself to sketching several organizational concerns which inform multi-party interactions and their participants which are not present (at least not in the same way) when there are only two participants. These concerns are relevant because they can enter into the design, implementation and understanding of the talk which composes the discourse, and a discourse analysis which is not sensitive to them may go badly astray. The first is an orientation to the turn-taking issue: who will talk next; the second is an orientation to the action implications for non-addressed parties of utterances designed for their addressees; the third is the issue of schism, i.e., the problem in extended discourse in multi-party interactions of maintaining a single discursive arena in the face of the potential for the breaking up of the interaction into two or more separate conversations.

First, who will talk next. In contrast to most other treatments of conversation, discourse or other formulations of talk-in-interaction which focus on “dialogue,” conversation-analytic work has from the outset found it necessary to address data with varying numbers of participants. In part, this is because one of the underlying organizations of talk-in-interaction, the turn-taking organization by which opportunities to participate get distributed, cannot plausibly be taken to be differently designed for each discrete number of participants, and does not appear to follow some straightforward algorithm with increasing numbers. As my late colleague Harvey Sacks remarked early in his explorations of turn-taking, although two-party conversation appears to alternate formulaically—ABABAB, three-party conversation does not proceed ABCABCABC.

²¹ I say “some instances of discourse” because settings with more than two *persons* may nonetheless be self-organized for the purposes of talk-in-interaction into two parties (cf. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 1995).

Rather, turn-taking appears to be formally organized, that is, for any number of parties rather than particular numbers, and there appear to be orderly practices by which opportunities to speak are allocated among the parties in ways which also constrain the size of what can be done in those opportunities. The apparently formulaic alternation in the case of two-party interaction is, then, a special case of a more general and formal type of organization.²² In conversation that allocation is administered by the participants locally, that is, allocation of next turn is the product of practices implemented in the current turn.

The consequence is that whatever else some speaker may be doing in a turn, whatever information may be distributed in it or whatever actions may be done through it, one issue systematically relevant in it, for which interlocutors parse it, is its bearing on the allocation of next turn—an issue which becomes organizationally consequential with more than two parties, when formulaic alternation gives way to contingent distribution. Because this issue infiltrates and permeates the talk rather than constituting separately articulated expressions in it (the practices of addressing aside), it can enter into the shaping of various aspects of discourse, and an increasingly sophisticated discourse analysis will have to be attentive to it.

For example, the selection of reference terms for persons (Sacks and Schegloff, 1979) or for places (Schegloff, 1972) is highly sensitive to considerations of “recipient-design;” that is, speakers are ordinarily charged with using forms of reference which recognize and exploit what the targeted recipient of the utterance is supposed to know. By incorporating reference terms differentially accessible to different co-participants, an utterance can be constructed to select one co-participant in particular to respond next (cf. Goodwin, 1979, 1981); such a selection may at the same time make necessary supplementary identification of what/who has been thereby referred to for those to whom the reference form is not recognizable. Thus, both the composition and the extensiveness of the discourse may be shaped by considerations related to next speaker selection.

A second issue which can become salient in interaction involving more than two parties is an orientation to the action implications for non-addressed parties of utterances designed for their addressees. Here I will be brief, for this issue is not in principle systematic, as the prior one was, but is occasional. Some utterances, by virtue of the action which they implement vis-à-vis one interlocutor, can be understood as doing another, related action to a different interlocutor (I described it once as a “derived action,” Schegloff, 1984). If I compliment a contributor to this volume as the most elegant writer on discourse, I risk insulting others who feel slighted thereby.²³ Although it turns out that this potential can be realized in two-

²² More generally, two-party talk-in-interaction can be the site of organizational problems and practices (both ones bearing on turn-taking issues and ones relevant to quite disparate themes and exigencies) whose major provenance is multi-party interaction, and which are simply inherited into an environment which does not especially give rise to them.

²³ Sacks developed a penetrating analysis of “safe compliments” by reference to their avoidance of this vulnerability (Sacks, 1992: 1:60–61, 464–465, 597 ff., et passim).

party interaction as well (Schegloff, 1984), it is more exposed as a problem in multi-party interaction, and can impact on the construction and realization of discourse.

The third issue I want to mention is the issue of schism, i.e., maintaining a single interactional arena vs. the breaking up of the interaction into two or more separate conversations. This is again related to the number of participants. The issue of who will be next speaker emerges when there are three or more participants. The possibility of schism emerges when there are four or more. Its bearing on discourse—and especially on extended talk articulated by a single speaker—is that, as long as the extended speaker retains a single hearer, other parties to the interaction may gradually disengage, and, beginning with collusive side exchanges, may gradually develop a separate conversation of their own. The most effective deterrent to this development is the distribution of opportunities to talk among the several participants—including at times the forced draft of ones who appear in danger of drifting into schisms.²⁴ Because discourse (in the sense of multi-sentential productions) in particular is vulnerable to this dynamic, discourse design regularly is sensitive to it, and the production of what could have been extended discourses as shorter bursts of talk may often be understood in part by reference to this and related organizational issues. Analysts of discourse therefore need to be alert to this area.

5. Contingency

One last note in closing. The several themes to which I have called attention all involve a major challenge to computational interests in discourse, though they are hardly alone in posing this challenge. The challenge is *contingency*. Although the organization of talk-in-interaction is orderly (else it would be opaque to its participants), it is characterized by contingency at virtually every point.

The action(s) which some utterance implements is often a contingent product of its interactional setting. Although the orderly basis for various possible understandings of an utterance can be explicated, which understandings (e.g., of the action it is doing) will actually be entertained on a particular occasion may not be predictable. And, as we have seen, the action which some utterance component enacts can turn out to be retroactively contingent; having implemented an announcement and complaint when brought to first possible completion, subsequent increments can recast it as the start of a different action (without “falsifying” the initial understanding of it, either by interactional co-participant or by professional analyst).

In implementing some action(s), an utterance can make a range of sequelae or responses contingently relevant next. Which of alternative contingent next actions a next speaker will do, however, is not in principle predictable. Still, although

²⁴ See, for example, Goodwin, 1987a for analysis of such an episode. On the full development of schisms and their subsequent resolution, cf. Egbert, 1993.

whether an invitation will be accepted or declined, for example, is in principle indeterminate, much can be said about how either will be done if it is chosen—for example, whether it will be done promptly or delayed, explicitly or indirectly, baldly or with an account, etc. To be sure, that is also contingent, but there are orderly types of inferences which are observably generated if that type of next action is not done in that way—if, for example, an invitation is rejected precipitously, directly, explicitly and with no account. The co-participation of interlocutors in the production of talk, though a principled feature of talk-in-interaction, is always contingent in its occasioned expression. There are various places at which another can initiate talk and action, various practices for doing so, and (in multi-party interaction) alternative participants who can do so. But who, when and where are always contingent. There is virtually nothing in talk-in-interaction which can get done unilaterally, and virtually nothing which is thoroughly pre-scripted.

Contingency—interactional contingency—is not a blemish on the smooth surface of discourse, or of talk-in-interaction more generally. It is endemic to it. It is its glory. It is what allows talk-in-interaction the flexibility and the robustness to serve as the enabling mechanism for the institutions of social life. Talk-in-interaction is permeable; it is open to occupation by whatever linguistic, cultural, or social context it is activated in. It can serve as the vehicle for whatever concerns are brought to it by the parties engaging it at any given time. One underlying "burning" issue for computational interests in discourse analysis is how to come to terms with the full range of contingency which talk-in-interaction allows and channels. The themes of action, interaction and multi-party interaction on which I have focussed are three strategic—and I suspect under-appreciated—loci of this contingency.

Postscript

A referee of an earlier draft of this paper concluded a graciously appreciative assessment with a juxtaposition of its "whole method of analysis" to the referee's own "reservations," ones thought "likely to be shared by other readers," and suggested the possibility that "the author may want to explicitly address them in a preamble." I welcome the suggestion, though the reader will have noticed that I have preferred a post-amble, as it were, though I disavow the air of leisureliness which the neologism may hint at. If a reader shares the reservations, they will have been prompted by the paper, and should be addressed after that prompting, not before it. So here are the referee's reservations. I give them en bloc, and then take them up one by one.

The problem for me is that the approach is purely descriptive and the analysis seems post hoc. The account of the data given by Schegloff seems persuasive, but is there any way of checking its validity? It seems that Schegloff is really setting up a hypothesis—(or really a set of hypotheses) that is interesting and plausible but which remains untested. My concern is

that someone else could come along and offer a very different interpretation of a conversation. (To some extent, we had examples of this in the discussion at the Burning Issues meeting, where there were alternative accounts suggested for the first conversation). If so, how would we know which interpretation to choose? Do we just rely on the intuitions of native conversationalists, or can we put this kind of hypothesis to more stringent test? In short, I'd like to see the insights that he has gained about what seem to be regularities in how conversations are managed firmed up into much more specific statements that would be objectively testable. Take, for instance, the interpretation of the Donny/Marcia conversation. As one with experimental leanings, I'd like to see someone do a study where conversations were contrasted in which A is trying to persuade a reluctant B to do something, as opposed to a situation where A is requesting help from a willing B. (Even if one didn't want to set up an artificial situation, it would be possible to use real data, by getting naive listeners to classify conversations as one kind or the other and then contrasting the transcripts of conversations that represented these two kinds.) The prediction would be that B would be silent more often in the first type of situation. I'm not suggesting that Schegloff should rush off and run such experiments, but I'd be interested to know whether he thinks this would be a valid next step—or if not, why not? He is critical of those who adopt more formal modelling approaches that they do not incorporate features such as interaction and timing into their analyses; I think that they would be very ready to do so if he could state much more explicitly the regularities that one sees and their significance. So it is crucial to know whether he thinks that this is in principle possible, even if it is not a currently achievable goal. If he doesn't, then there seems little hope of any integration between those adopting more computational approaches and researchers such as Schegloff.

A variety of issues are presented here, only some of which can be taken up, and those only in a truncated (if not preemptory) fashion.

1) The problem for me is that the approach is purely descriptive and the analysis seems post hoc. The account of the data given by Schegloff seems persuasive, but is there any way of checking its validity? It seems that Schegloff is really setting up a hypothesis—(or really a set of hypotheses) that is interesting and plausible but which remains untested.

1a) The analysis is surely post hoc, in the plain sense that it is done after the events being examined. So is most of astronomy, geology, paleontology, etc. Response to the characterization of the work as “purely descriptive” depends on what that is taken to mean, and what it is taken to contrast with. If it is taken to contrast with experimental studies designed around explicitly causal hypotheses or “formal models,” then it is plainly the case; as there is no element at all of experiment, explicit causal hypotheses, or formal models here (though conversation-analytic work of the sort presented in Sacks et al., 1974 or Schegloff et al., 1977 is criticized by some for its formalism), it is “purely descriptive.” If that is meant to deny, however, that there is an account of how the conversational episodes examined came to have the actual, specific, detailed trajectory which they did, then it seems on the face of it incorrect. The analysis offered here is full of claims about how various occurrences in the talk were heard and understood, how subsequent conduct by the other party gives evidence that that is indeed how they

understood it, proposes how the next bit of conduct is to be understood as responsive to what preceded and as relative to alternative sequelae which previous research has shown to be alternative possibilities, and how the production of that alternative moves the interaction down a particular path or trajectory and/or embodies some already described formal organization. If accounts of how something comes to be—in detail—how it is are understood as involving some element of explanation, then the approach taken here is *not* “purely descriptive.”

1b) If the account seems “persuasive,” then one might look to that account for a first check on its validity—for part of its persuasiveness is that those who find it persuasive take it to formulate with some adequacy the actual processes at work in the data, and that is what validity is most directly about. Persuaded readers might then begin by asking themselves what makes it persuasive for them. But I am not abandoning them; there are ways of checking validity, and they (or some of them) are already in the paper. If it is “a hypothesis” that, for example, “Guess what” is a possible pre-announcement, then one of the directly relevant claims being entered is that it is taken by its recipient to be a possible pre-announcement (or could have been)—for it could hardly matter less that we analysts call it that or treat it as that if the interlocutors do not. What else could we mean by the claim anyway? There is a way of checking the validity of this claim, and that is to examine what the recipient of this utterance does in its immediate aftermath for some display of how they understood what preceded. (That it is to the initial aftermath that we should look in the first instance is a very general, multiply documented finding in a broad and extensive range of conversation-analytic research.) As the foregoing text has already presented a brief version of this analysis, and a number of other such analyses, I will not repeat it/them here. I simply want to invite readers to re-frame their understanding of these earlier discussions as precisely seeking and explicating evidence that the accounts being offered of/for each element of the interaction are “valid”—i.e., represent the understanding of the participants of that element and how it figures in what is going on in the setting.

2) My concern is that someone else could come along and offer a very different interpretation of a conversation. (To some extent, we had examples of this in the discussion at the Burning Issues meeting, where there were alternative accounts suggested for the first conversation). If so, how would we know which interpretation to choose? Do we just rely on the intuitions of native conversationalists, or can we put this kind of hypothesis to more stringent test? In short, I'd like to see the insights that he has gained about what seem to be regularities in how conversations are managed firmed up into much more specific statements that would be objectively testable.

2a) The possibility of “different interpretations” is a common theme in reactions to work of the sort presented here, perhaps because the data with which it deals appear to be *prima facie* accessible to vernacular understanding and interpretation. Indeed they *are* vernacularly accessible, for one job which a society's culture does for its members is to provide the resources for the “common sense” or “practical” analysis of what goes on in interaction. That does not mean, however, that any old

interpretation will do. Or, indeed, that it is trivially easy to provide alternative interpretations in the first place. Or ones at a comparable level of detail—or *any* level of detail. Or ones for which supportive accounts can be given of the sort just discussed under point 1b—i.e., evidence that the new interpretation is grounded in the *demonstrable* orientations of the co-participants *in the interaction*, as evidenced in their observable conduct.

But if someone does offer another interpretation, or analysis, and it does address observable details of the interaction being examined, and it can be grounded in the activities of the participants as displayed in their conduct, then what is the problem? It may well elaborate, enrich, laminate, complement, etc., the analysis which I have offered (or some other analyst has offered in some other inquiry). Or it may be arguably (or even demonstrably) incorrect. For example, one account offered of the Debbie/Nick conversation at the meeting was that Debbie was “coming on” to Nick, i.e., was engaged in a form of seductive behavior. If the claim is that she initiated the conversation to do this, then I believe that it is demonstrably incorrect, though there is not the space here for me to explicate the demonstration.²⁵ If the claim is that there are elements of “courtship-related” talk informing Debbie’s participation in the conversation, then I am inclined to agree, although I would want to treat these together with the ways in which Nick’s talk is produced, and this might qualify the somewhat one-sided attribution of “coming on” to Debbie. However, it is unclear what bearing this “different interpretation” has on the analysis offered earlier in this paper. One potential bearing—which relates Debbie’s questioning uptake of Nick’s claim to have his waterbed to his persistent teasing earlier in the conversation—is noted in the earlier analysis, but is tied to Nick’s teasing without relating that teasing to courtship ritual.

In sum, it is non-trivial to provide different interpretations which have a *prima facie* claim to be taken seriously, but if such alternative accounts are offered, there are ways of evaluating them—the same ways employed in grounding the account offered in the first instance. If alternative accounts do well under such examination, then they may be compatible with prior analysis, in which case we have a net gain—an enrichment of the analysis (as in the relationship of Schegloff, 1992d to Goodwin, 1987b, whose data it re-examines). Or if they are not compatible, then we have to figure out some way to choose—just as we do in any other systematic, disciplined form of empirical research.²⁶

²⁵ It involves evidence at both the outset and the closing of the conversation that Debbie called in the first instance to talk to her boyfriend, Mark, and not to Nick.

²⁶ Indeed, it could be argued that in a great many other research paradigms and programs the point of direct contact between analyst and data is hidden from scrutiny in coding operations, technical equipment registering only outcome/measures, etc. which insulates the primary analysis on which all subsequent analysis is built from “different interpretations;” all potential variation and discrepancies in the relationship between data and analysis is “managed” by waving the magic wand of conjectured randomization of error. In the procedures followed in the present analysis, the reader is shown the primary data and the primary analysis, as well as warrants for that analysis. Why this procedure should engender

2b) That said, and quibbles over terminology aside, it may be useful to insist on a distinction between “interpretation” and “analysis,” because the terms carry with them virtually ineradicable traces of their vernacular usages—in which “interpretation” is essentially contestable and invites alternatives no matter how compelling, whereas “analysis” carries the possibility of definitiveness (a definitiveness which is not incompatible with alternatives, but does not imply them). One key difference between “interpretation” and “analysis” in this domain of inquiry (as I understand it) is that analysis lays bare how the interpretation comes to be what it is—i.e., what about the target (utterance, gesture, intonation, posture, etc.) provides for the interpretation which has been proposed for it. So interpretation may be more or less subtle, deep, insightful, etc., but remains vernacular interpretation nonetheless; the issue is not its excellence. Analysis is “technical;” it explicates by what technique or practice the interpreted object was composed and produced, and by what technique or practice of uptake the interpretation was arrived at. And analysis grounds those claims in the observable conduct of the parties whose interaction is being examined.

2c) In any case, nowhere in the preceding analysis is it proposed or implied that we “just rely on the intuitions of native conversationalists.” The analyses offered above have undoubtedly been informed by my intuitions as a native conversationalist, but it is not in that capacity that I ask colleagues to take them seriously. They are offered as technical analysis. And it is with other technical analyses that they are to be juxtaposed. What I have said in the prior two points concerns precisely the issue of making competing accounts into technical analyses. Curiously, it is those experimentally inclined investigators who wish to put interactional materials before naive judges and treat their reactions seriously (see below) who seem to me to wish to “just rely on the intuitions of native conversationalists.” Indeed, I submit that the accounts offered above have been put “to a more stringent test,” and have been “firmed up into much more specific statements that [have been] objectively test[ed].”

3) Take, for instance, the interpretation of the Donny/Marcia conversation. As one with experimental leanings, I’d like to see someone do a study where conversations were contrasted in which A is trying to persuade a reluctant B to do something, as opposed to a situation where A is requesting help from a willing B. (Even if one didn’t want to set up an artificial situation, it would be possible to use real data, by getting naive listeners to classify conversations as one kind or the other and then contrasting the transcripts of conversations that represented these two kinds.) The prediction would be that B would be silent more often in the first type of situation.

3a) Although it is tempting, I will forego the opportunity to discuss the problems with setting up “artificial situations” for studying interaction along the lines embodied in the present paper. Suffice it for now to say that proceeding in that

greater concern about “different interpretations” may be understandable, but is not clearly justifiable.

fashion would quickly involve constraints such as “holding everything constant” in a domain where we are still finding out what “everything” should be taken to include, in which it does not appear possible to “control” what we already know to be included, and in which there is no good reason to think that “it all evens out.” So I will stick to the proposal “to use real data.” It is a touch ironic to point out that no loss in rigor (or “scientificity”) is necessarily entailed in opting for “real data.” There is, after all, an alternative “scientific” rhetoric (and “paradigm”) often termed naturalistic, exemplified in disciplines such as astronomy, ethology, geology, paleontology, etc. Indeed, in many areas successful experimentation has followed a stage of naturalistic inquiry in which the parameters of the target domain were established by observation, as were the terms and conditions for viable experimental inquiry.

Although the analytic practice exemplified here has not availed itself of “naive listeners” (although our data sources have undoubtedly included some!), there have in fact been systematic efforts to compare the sorts of sequences in question here, including the ways in which silence figures in them. In fact, there is a robust literature in this area (which goes under the name of studies of preference/dispreference). Some of the relevant findings are reviewed in Atkinson and Drew, 1979: Chapter 2; Heritage, 1984b:265–292, Levinson, 1983:332–356, Schegloff, 1988d:442–457; among the relevant papers reporting these findings are Davidson, 1984, 1990; Drew, 1984; Pomerantz, 1978, 1984; Sacks, 1987[1973]; and Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977.

“The prediction,” by the way, “that B would be silent more often in the first type of situation” is, generally speaking, on target. However, researchers working along conversation-analytic lines prefer (if I may again quote the referee) “...to see the insights...about what seem to be regularities in how conversations are managed firmed up into much more specific statements that would be objectively testable.” It has seemed to us that for an organization of interaction which is always employed by participants in singular occasions and moments, the relevant orderliness in the deployment of silence would be underspecified if characterized only as “more often in the first type of situation.” The conversation-analytic literature, accordingly, is rather more specific about where the silences are relative to the structure of turns, relative to the types of actions being done in a turn, relative to the structure of sequences, relative to other forms of conduct which may enhance or mitigate or qualify the import of the silence, etc.²⁷

- 4) I’m not suggesting that Schegloff should rush off and run such experiments, but I’d be interested to know whether he thinks this would be a valid next step—or if not, why not? He is critical of those who adopt more formal modelling approaches that they do not incorporate features such as interaction and timing into their analyses; I think that they would be very ready to do so if he could state much more explicitly the regularities that

²⁷ The findings in question here were all derived from studies of naturally occurring interaction. Whether that qualifies under the criterion of “objectively testable” I do not know. If the issue regarding objectively testable is quantification, cf. the discussion in Schegloff, 1993.

one sees and their significance. So it is crucial to know whether he thinks that this is in principle possible, even if it is not a currently achievable goal. If he doesn't, then there seems little hope of any integration between those adopting more computational approaches and researchers such as Schegloff.

4a) I do hope that students of discourse will come to appreciate that criticizing “formal modelling approaches” for not incorporating “features such as interaction and timing into their analyses” is not a stylistic or paradigmatic or political option which one may or may not adopt. It is like not incorporating gravity and electricity into one's model of the physical world. They are, so far as we can tell, naturally occurring, indigenous properties of co-present social interaction and many of its transformations (e.g., talk on the telephone), and ones which are thus “present at the birth” of discourse in what seems its primordial provenance. “Interaction and timing” are not simply two more variables to be added in after other, supposedly more basic, factors—such as propositional content, information structure, syntactic organization, lexical composition, semantic specification, phonological realization, prosodic shaping, and articulatory enactment — have done their work. All of those “factors” do their work within a situation fundamentally shaped by—no, *constituted* by—interactional considerations, structures and constraints and in an ineluctably temporal world, whose temporality (as it happens) has been made organizationally relevant to the way interaction works. So it is not a matter of taste whether to incorporate them or not. It is a matter of dealing with the world as it is, as best we now understand it.

As suggested in the discussion in point 3a above, there is a larger literature available in this area than many students of discourse seem familiar with. Perhaps if serious researchers examined the best of that literature seriously, and thought about how to incorporate it in their own work, they might find it sufficiently explicit and specific to be of use. If not, perhaps they could tell those of us who study talk-in-interaction naturalistically where the problems are which trouble them, and we could try to be helpful within the canons of rigorous work as we understand them from having tried to think hard about our materials.

I am not optimistic about the use of experiments which compromise the naturally occurring constitution of talk-in-interaction for reasons which I hinted at earlier, and whose elaboration is not possible here. This is not a principled objection to experimentalism per se, but to the at present non-calculable effects of imposed artifice on the conduct of interaction. But elements of experimental inquiry can be combined with naturalistic inquiry in ways which do not compromise the naturalistic integrity of the empirical materials, and such undertakings may appeal to some who sympathize with the referee's comments. I end with a case in point, a project developed several years ago in collaboration with a neurolinguist—Dr. Diana Van Lancker, though not in the end carried through.

My colleague had worked within an experimentalist paradigm on problems experienced by persons who had suffered trauma to the right hemisphere of the brain with the recognition of familiar voices. A mutual colleague had told me that this was the topic of her research and we got together because I too had worked on

the recognition of familiar voices (Schegloff, 1979b). It turned out that the voices she was concerned with were those of Kennedy, Churchill, Bob Hope, etc., as presented in brief taped excerpts from public occasions, presented under experimentally controlled conditions to experimentally partitioned sub-populations. The familiar voices with which I had been concerned were those of one's spouse, or parent, or child, or close friend, or work associate, as presented at the start of a telephone conversation to one expected to recognize the speaker from a very small voice sample (typically only "Hi") in the course of ordinary, mundane conversations. There was here a marvelous opportunity to combine naturalistic with experimental research. We planned to secure permission to tape record the bedside telephones of recent victims of right hemisphere brain insults, and hear how they dealt with the first moments of calls in which friends' and intimates' voices would be presented for possible recognition. The patients for the study could be selected according to any experimental protocol that seemed desirable; my collaborator could do the formal testing using snippets of tape from famous people supporting that research program. I had no objection to the experimental framework for this research for it left uncompromised the naturalistic auspices of the data with which my analysis would have to come to terms. We could then compare recognition of familiar/intimate voices with recognition of familiar/celebrity voices, recognition in experimental test situations with recognition as part of a common interactional context of the society, and begin to explicate the ways in which our understanding of brain function could be specified, and our understanding of the artifacts of experimentation in this area illuminated.²⁸

It does not seem to me that the future lies in the direction of that kind of experimentation (limited as it is) which can be made compatible with serious disciplined work on naturally occurring interaction. But perhaps the perceived necessity of such experimental work is an artifact of methodological traditions whose serious relevance is waning. If those who favor computational approaches to discourse find the sort of work presented here of potential interest, the next step may best be not denaturing it by trying to graft it onto experimental formats, but rather seriously pursuing it in its own terms, trying to understand why researchers proceed as they do in this area, and then thinking through what changes this work might suggest for how computationally oriented work is done, rather than how conversation-analytic work might adapt to them.

Successful convergence here is, after all, a long shot. The problem of contingency with which my paper began poses truly formidable obstacles to computational approaches. But if some useful interchange between these modalities of work is to be realized, it is most likely to come not from transforming the object from which you would like to learn, but from taking it

²⁸ Other such efforts to combine elements of experimentalism and naturalism in ways which avoid—or minimize—compromising the integrity of the data include some of the work of Herbert Clark and his associates, e.g., Clark, 1979 or Clark and French, 1981.

seriously in its own terms. In the end, it will be the computationalists who will have to figure out how to do this. I hope we will be allowed to help.

Note

Parts of this paper have previously appeared under the title "Discourse as an Interactional Achievement III: On the Omnirelevance of Action" in the journal *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, by permission of the editors and publisher. That title alludes to two earlier papers on the theme "Discourse as an Interactional Achievement" (Schegloff, 1981, 1987, 1988), which are relevant here as well. My thanks to John Heritage, Sally Jacoby, Sandra Thompson and the editors and referees for helpful comments on earlier drafts of the present effort.

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Appendix A

Debbie & Nick

01 ((Ring Ring))
 02 ((Click/Pick-up))
 03 Nick: H'llo
 04 Debbie: -hh- 'z <Who's this,
 05 (0.2)
 06 Debbie: This'z Debbie
 07 (0.3)
 08 Nick: Who's this.
 09 Debbie: This'z Debbie
 10 Nick: This is >the Los Angeles Poli[ce<
 11 Debbie: [Nno: (((Laugh))
 12 Nick: [ha ha
 13 Debbie: [Hi Nicky how areya.
 14 Nick: O:kay
 15 Debbie: hh u- Did Mark go to Ohio?
 16 Nick: Ohio?
 17 Debbie: Uh huhz
 18 Nick: I dunno did he?
 19 Debbie: -hh I: dunn[o::]
 20 Nick: [ha]ha
 21 Debbie: Ny-
 22 Nick: Yeah I think he's (com-)/(still) () -
 23 when's Mark come back, Sunday? ((off phone))
 24 (0.8)
 25 Nick: Yeah I think he's comin back Sunday=
 26 Debbie: =Tomorrow? Is Rich gonna go get 'im?
 27 (0.2)
 28 Nick: I guess
 29 Debbie: Or is he gonna ca:ll?
 30 (0.8)
 31 Nick: h! (h)I du(h)nno he didn't tell me=
 32 Debbie: =Oh:: you have nothin' t'do with it
 33 Nick: (n)ha ha
 34 Debbie: -hhh Um:: u- guess what I've-(u-)wuz lookin'

35 in the paper:-have you got your waterbed yet?
36 Nick: Uh huh, it's really nice °too, I set it up
37 Debbie: Oh rea:lly? ^Already?
38 Nick: Mm hmm
39 (0.5)
40 Debbie: Are you kidding?
41 Nick: No, well I ordered it last (week)/(spring)
42 (0.5)
43 Debbie: Oh- no but you h- you've got it already?
44 Nick: Yeah h! hh= ((laughing))
45 Debbie: =hhh [hh ·hh] ((laughing))
46 Nick: [I just] said that
47 Debbie: O::hh: hu[h, I couldn't be[lieve you c-
48 Nick: [Oh (°it's just) [It'll sink in
49 'n two day[s fr'm now (then)((laugh))]
50 Debbie: [(l a u g h)]
Oh no cuz I just got- I saw an ad in the
51 paper for a real discount waterbed s'
52 I w'z gonna tell you 'bout it=
53 Nick: =No this is really, you (haven't seen)
54 mine, you'll really like it.
55 Debbie: Ya:h. It's on a frame and everythi[ng?
56 Nick: [Yeah
57 Debbie: ·hh Uh (is) a raised frame?
58 Nick: °mm hmm
59 Debbie: How: ni::ce, Whadja do with Mark's cou:ch,
60 (0.5)
61 Nick: P(h)ut it out in the cottage,
62 (0.2)
63 Nick: goddam thing weighed about two th(h)ousand
pound[s
64 Debbie: [mn:Yea::h
65 I'll be[:t
66 Nick: [ah
67 (0.2)
68 Debbie: Rea:lly
69 (0.3)
70 Debbie: ·hh Q:kay,
71 (·)
72 Debbie: Well (0.8) mmtch! I guess I'll talk tuh Mark
later then.hh
73 Nick: Yeah I guess yo[u will.[eh heh huh huh [huh
74 Debbie: [·hhh [W e : l l : - [eh
75 heh ·hhthat that: (·) could be debatable too
I dunno
76 (0.2)
77 Debbie: Bu:t ·hh so um: ·hh=
78 Nick: =So (h!) um [uh [let's see my name's Debbie
[Idon't ((laugh))
79 Debbie: [·hh [um [((laugh))
80 Debbie: ·hhh! Okay I'll see you later Nick=
81 Nick: =Okay
82 Debbie: Buh bye
83 Nick: Bye bye
84 ((phone hung up))
85 ((click))

Selected transcription notational conventions

(Cf. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974; Atkinson and Heritage, 1984)

- Um:: colons represent lengthening of the preceding sound; the more colons, the greater the lengthening.
- I've- a hyphen represents the cut-off of the preceding sound, often by a stop.
- ^Already? the circumflex represents sharp upward pitch shift; underlining represents stress, usually via volume; the more underlining, the greater the stress.
- ni::ce underlining directly followed by colon(s) indicates downward inflection on the vowel.
- hhh hh ·hhh represents aspiration, sometimes simply hearable breathing, sometimes laughter, etc.;
- P(h)ut when preceded by a superposed dot, it marks in-breath; in parentheses inside a word it represent laugh infiltration.
- hhh[hh ·hh] left brackets represent point of overlap onset;
 [I just] right brackets represent point of overlap resolution.
- .,? punctuation marks intonation, not grammar; period, comma and "question mark" indicate downward, "continuative," and upward contours, respectively.
- () single parentheses mark problematic or uncertain hearings; two parentheses separated by an oblique represent alternative hearings.
- (()) double parentheses mark transcriber's descriptions, rather than transcriptions.
- (0.2)(·) numbers in parentheses represent silence in tenths of a second; a dot in parentheses represents a micro-pause, less than two tenths of a second.
- °mm hmm the degree sign marks significantly lowered volume.