TO SEARLE ON CONVERSATION:
A NOTE IN RETURN

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Dear John,

I rather wish I had had a chance to see your recently published "Notes on Conversation"[1] before they were given broad circulation. I was puzzled by some of the things you say about the work on turn-taking (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974) from the literature on what is called "conversation analysis" (perhaps even more puzzled than you claim to have been about that work itself), and some of the puzzles (yours or mine) might have been cleared up in advance. But I was heartened to see that you were, as you say, "prepared to be corrected." Unless, of course, that declaration is to be taken with the same irony which you confer on your characterization of this brand of "sociolinguistics" by the use of quotation marks and attributive phrases, for example in "as they would say, 'empirically'" or "they think that they have a set of rules, indeed, 'recursive rules.'" But I will (henceforth) presume that you were serious and not ironic, and try to "correct" where relevant, but mostly try to help you (and others) understand what the work on turn-taking was saying. I trust that once that is understood, whatever correction is in point you can undertake yourself, in keeping with other conversation-analytic work (cf. Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977 on "The preference for self-correction..."). And here (with an occasional lapse) the ironic part of this note ends.

As I understand it, your discussion of turn-taking (and that is the only part of your "Notes..." that I take up here, although the rest merits discussion as well) goes as follows. First, you reproduce part of our

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[1] I first encountered the paper to which I here address myself when it appeared in *Contemporary Issues in Language and Discourse Processes* (edited by Donald G. Ellis and William A. Donohue, and published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986, pp. 7-19) under the title "Introductory essay: Notes on conversation." Nothing appears to have materially changed with the paper's name change to "Conversation," and I have accordingly left the remarks which I drafted in 1987 in response to that version materially unchanged, including the epistolary format. I am grateful to Herbert Clark whose comments on an earlier draft were very helpful.

discussion of turn-taking, but unfortunately not all of the central parts. You include the "rule-set," which, you recall, goes like this:

> The following seems to be a basic set of rules governing turn construction, providing for the allocation of a next turn to one party, and coordinating transfer so as to minimize gap and overlap.
> (1) For any turn, at the initial transition-relevance place of an initial turn-constructional unit:
> (a) If the turn-so-far is so constructed as to involve the use of a "current speaker selects next" technique, then the party so selected has the right and is obliged to take next turn to speak; no others have such rights or obligations, and transfer occurs at that place.
> (b) If the turn-so-far is so constructed as not to involve the use of a "current speaker selects next" technique, then self-selection for next speakership may, but need not, be instituted; first starter acquires rights to a turn, and transfer occurs at that place.
> (c) If the turn-so-far is so constructed as not to involve the use of a "current speaker selects next" technique, then current speaker may, but need not continue, unless another self-selects.
> (2) If, at the initial transition-relevance place of an initial turn-constructional unit, neither 1a nor 1b has operated, and, following the provision of 1c, current speaker has continued, then the rule set a-c reapplies at the next transition-relevance place, and recursively at each next transition-relevance place, until transfer is effected.

But you do not include the explication of the resources which the rule-set deploys -- such as "turn-constructional unit," "transition-relevance place," "current speaker selects next technique," and the like, without which it is difficult to grasp exactly what this statement of the rule set is proposing. I will supply the missing explication a bit later on.

After having reproduced this part of our paper on turn-taking, you offer (p.16) a translation of what you had quoted into "plain English:"

> It seems to me they are saying the following: In a conversation a speaker can select who is going to be the next speaker, for example, by asking him or her a question. Or the speaker can just shut up and let somebody else talk. Or he or she can keep on talking. Furthermore, if the speaker decides to keep on talking, then next time there is a pause in the conversation (that's called a "transition place"), the same three options apply. And that makes

the rule recursive, because once you have the possibility of continuing to talk, that means the rule can apply over and over.

But something gets lost in the translation, most importantly what a "transition place" is, in part because the quotation from our paper omitted that part of the "apparatus." We will come back to this point.

This transformation of our position is then subjected to a number of critiques:

First, you claim that "the rule could hardly fail to describe what goes on;" that is, that it is tautological, although you almost immediately retract that as an objection.

Second, you reject it *as a rule*, that is, you appear to object to calling it "a rule" because of a notion you have about the proper use of that term. In your view the term should be used for behavior "[made to] conform to the content of a rule *because it is a rule*" (emphasis supplied). This could have been just a matter of varying usages of the term "rule," but you go on to say that our account "couldn't be a rule because no one actually follows that rule" (17). Earlier (15), you put it even more strongly: "...that [the account] couldn't possibly be a rule for conversational turn-taking simply because nobody does *or could* follow it" (emphasis supplied).

You undertake to show this point about whether it is a rule or not by "go[ing] through the cases" (17), that is, the various modes of speaker transition which you attribute to us. In the course of this, it appears that a) there *are* rules that bear on who talks next (and presumably they are followed, and necesssarily therefore *can* be followed), but that b) these are not rules of the sort we propose -- "rules of asking questions or making offers." As you put it, "The explanation is in terms of the rules for performing the speech acts in question, the internally related speech act pairs." In our terms, you absorb the organization of turn-taking into the organization of sequences such as "adjacency pairs," a term which you find "misleading" (8), but which has seemed to us useful (Schegloff and Sacks 1973).

This stance, that there *are* rules but that they are speech act rules and not turn-taking rules, comes up in the discussion of one of the three modes of speaker transition which you ascribe to us: the other two you say (18) "[don't] even have the appearance of being a rule because [they do not] specify the relevant sort of intentional content that plays a causal role in the production of behavior." This appears to invoke again the particulars of your usage of the term.

Perhaps the best way to begin clearing up your puzzlement is by considering a key component of the organization of turn-taking as we understand it, referred to in the rules but evidently misunderstood in your

rendering of them. We referred to this as "the turn-constructional component," and we introduced it with the following account (Sacks *et al.*, op.cit., 702-703):

> There are various unit-types with which a speaker may set out to construct a turn. Unit-types for English include sentential, clausal, phrasal, and lexical constructions... Instances of the unit-types so usable allow a projection of the unit-type under way, and what, roughly, it will take for an instance of that unit-type to be completed. Unit-types lacking the feature of projectability may not be usable in the same way.
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> As for the unit-types which a speaker employs in starting the construction of a turn's talk, the speaker is initially entitled, in having a turn, to one such unit. The first possible completion of a first such unit constitutes an initial transition-relevance place. Transfer of speakership is coordinated by reference to such transition-relevance places, which any unit-type instance will reach.

A detailed elaboration of all the relevant points is not possible here. One upshot is that there are discrete places in the developing course of a speaker's talk in a turn at which ending the turn or continuing it, transfer of the turn or its retention become relevant. These are not relevant options at any moment in the course of the talk's production, but become relevant at what we have called (unsurprisingly) "transition-relevance places."[2]

Where are these places to be found? We have proposed that talk in a turn is produced out of building blocks which we call (again, unsurprisingly) "turn-constructional units." The ones we mention are characterized roughly by grammatical terms (words, phrases, clauses, sentences), but surely prosody and various aspects of the talk and other conduct enter into the matter. We do not mean any word, any phrase, etc. We mean to note that there are constructions whose possible completion (a term to which I will return) the co-participants can treat as possibly the end of the turn. Not, then, *any* single word, but (to offer a sampling) "yes," "no," "hello," "who?" etc. And this specification of particular words which have this feature can be augmented by more general classes: for example, any word (or phrase or clause) can be a "one word (or phrase, or clause) turn-constructional unit" if it occurred in the immediately preceding turn. The point is: this is not a tautological claim. Not any spate of talk, on any

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[2] Gene Lerner (1987) argues that there are other places as well, not incompatible with the overall position taken in Sacks *et al.*, 1974.

occasion, at any arbitrarily selected stopping point, will have constituted a turn-constructional unit, and make for transition-relevance.

Further, it is not the *actual* completion of some spate of talk which is crucial, but its *possible* completion. A turn at talk is finally complete when some other begins, for a speaker can add increments to it, either as grammatically independent additions or as increments within a continuing grammatical structure. The empirical materials with which we work indicate that co-participants do not ordinarily wait to hear if a current speaker means to add to the talk already produced,[3] if it has come to a possible completion. If they behaved in that manner, we would generally expect to find gaps of silence between the end of prior turns and the starts of next turns -- the silences which gave evidence of the prior speaker's "actual completion." But we do *not* find that. We find instead closely coordinated articulation between the possible completion of one speaker's talk and the start of a next's. And we find incipient next speakers starting to talk at possible completions of a current speaker's talk, even when, as it happens, the current speaker continues talking.

That, in part, is what we mean by saying "transfer of speakership is coordinated by reference to such transition-relevance places." Note, then, that "transition-relevance place" does *not* translate into plain English as "pause." (By the way, this is not only because most transition-relevance places do not have silences, let alone being recognized by them. It is also because there *are* silences in the talk during which others specifically *withhold* intervention, and these are when the silences occur at other than possible completions of the turn-constructional units, that is, when they are *not* at transition-relevance places.) And decisions to shut up or keep talking have a very different character (and very different likelihood of occurrence) at different points in the talk. Once launched into a turn-constructional unit a speaker is under some onus to talk to possible completion; once arrived at such a point, the speaker encounters a structurally provided occasion for other participants' opportunities to take over.[4]

Similarly, starting up by an interlocutor is of differing import and differing frequency (and potentially differing manner, cf. French and Local 1983) depending on the point a current speaker's turn has reached. Talk

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[3] There are describable classes of exceptions here; cf. for one example, Schegloff *et al.*, 1977: 374 and footnote 20.

[4] Many of the preceding and ensuing points, and many additional observations about the consequences of the turn-taking organization, were first formulated and developed by my late colleague Harvey Sacks in lectures between 1965 and 1972 (cf., Sacks, in preparation).

which overlaps a current speaker's talk may be recognized as "interruptive" if initiated nowhere near a possible completion, and as enthusiastic if overlapping what has already been recognized as its incipient possible completion (on the opening of the transition space, cf. Schegloff 1987: 106-107). As well, the absence of talk by another while a current speaker is mid-turn-constructional-unit is not recognized as absence, whereas a failure to start up at a transition-relevance place *may* be so recognized (depending on the character of the preceding talk).

Note in all of the above that it is the *possible* completion of turn-constructional units which organizes the occurrence and import of further talk by current speaker or its cessation, transfer of turn to another or its retention, and that possible completion is something projected continuously (and potentially shiftingly) by the developing course and structure of the talk. That is to say, speakers can build their talk and format it with an orientation to the possible completion which it will project; they can assume that their interlocutors will be oriented to that projected possible completion as providing the occasion for taking, or relevantly passing, the opportunity for a turn, sometimes having been put under a compelling onus of taking a next turn, and doing so at that point of possible completion. This means, correlatively, that among the ways hearers hear talk is a parsing for points of possible completion, and specifically with respect to whether or not they have been chosen to talk next there or whether some particular other has been chosen. This is so whether or not they end up actually talking there. And speakers build their talk in ways addressed to this sort of attention which it will be accorded. This is to claim that indeed the rules we have proposed (or some such rules) are followable, and are followed. Or, if the language of "practices" is preferred to the language of "rules," that these practices *can be*, and *are*, employed, although not necessarily with the same articulatable self-consciousness as characterizes some rules or practices, such as the side of the raod on which one should drive.

In the paper on turn-taking, and in a number of other works (e.g., Sacks, 1965-1972, passim; Schegloff and Sacks 1973; Jefferson 1973; Goodwin 1981; Schegloff 1980, 1982, 1987), we have offered various sort of evidence that parties to talk-in-interaction are oriented to organizing their talk in these ways. I have mentioned or alluded to some of these sorts of evidence: for example, that next speakers routinely start up directly after possible completion of turn-constructional units, either with no gaps of silence to indicate their completion or in the fact of actual continuations by prior speakers, shows an orientation on their part to the *possible* completion of turn-constructional units as a place at which starts of next

turns by new speakers is relevant. Perhaps an example taken from an ordinary conversation will be useful to illustrate the point.

Consider the following instance, taken from the paper on turn-taking (p.721):

Tourist:	Has the park cha:nged much,		
Parky:	*Oh::* ye:s,		
	(1.0)		
Old man:	Th'*Fun*fair changed it'n	⌈ahful lot	⌈didn'it.
Parky:		⌊Th-	⌊That-
Parky:	*That* changed it,		

Note (as we did in the original paper) that Parky starts an incipient next turn at the first possible completion point in Old man's turn. He withdraws as soon as he hears that Old man's turn is not actually complete, and then starts up again, not any place, but at the next possible completion of Old man's turn. Again, he starts not by virtue of any silence, but by virtue of the projected possible completion of the turn-constructional unit. Again, as it happens, Old man is not finished and Parky yields. He tries again at the next possible completion, which is finally a place for a next turn by another speaker. As we remarked at the time (ibid.):

> The empirical materials of conversation, then, lead to the observa-
> tion about the use of such components, and to their inclusion in the
> model of turn-taking as the elements out of which turns are built.

Another practice which gives evidence of an orientation to this organization of turn-taking, and to other participants' orientation to it, is that by which a speaker who is approaching a projectable possible completion speeds up the talk and talks "through" the possible completion, through the "transition place," without pause or breath into a next turn-constructional unit, in order to inderdict, or circumlocute, the prospect of another speaker starting up (Schegloff 1982). It is the effort to ground our claims in such details of repeatably inspectable occurrences in this domain of natural events that we refer to in speaking of our work as "empirical."

Now all of this may well be conceded to be relevant evidence for something but not for a *rule* such as the one we have proposed, for, in your view, something is only to be counted a rule when persons make their behavior conform to it "because it is a rule," because it plays "a causal role in the production of...behavior" (16). I envy you the certitude of your grasp of the causal well-springs of human behavior. It is apparently quite clear to you that you drive on the left in England *because* there is a rule which

tells you to (16); you apparently have been able to reject quite firmly some not unrelated possibilities, such as that you are oriented to the possibility that other drivers will be oriented to the rule (i.e., to just this orientation on your part), and that if they (and you) do otherwise you are likely to collide head on, it being the avoidance of this prospect which motivates your compliance, rather than "because it is a rule." Although you have apparently ruled this out (if I may put it that way), it is nonetheless strongly suggested as a possibility by your own discussion when you write (16-17), "If another driver is coming directly toward me the other way, I swerve to the left, i.e., I make my behavior conform to the content of the rule." But that suggests that you do so only when there is the prospect of a collision; there would be no need for swerving if you (and the other drivers) conformed your behavior to the rule *because it was a rule.*

Now I am not proposing that your swerving to the left is caused by the prospect of the collision; I am somewhat more cautious about the adequacy of such causal theories. But if all this makes the use of the term "rule" somewhat delicate, then I am willing to adopt for now an alternate term, such as "practice" or "usage." There is still an interrelated set of these, whatever we call them; they are still followable, followed, practiced, employed -- oriented to by the participants, and not merely, as you suggest, "extensionally equivalent descriptions of behavior."

It occurs to me that you may be bothered by the fact that the "rule set" we propose provides a) alternatives and b) options, as compared to "Drive on the left," which appears simple, direct, unequivocal, etc. (I say "appears," because we both know that there is as much contingency and equivocality and optionality here, but it is just remanded to the unarticulated practice of the rule-follower, which is, I suppose, how you come to find the need for swerving). But I don't see why the fact that there are alternative ways to achieve some outcome, ways that provide for initiatives by any of the participants, ways that provide differing degrees of constraint including pure options, should disqualify such organized practices from the status of "rule." (When you go shopping, once you enter a store you may or may not buy something (it could be otherwise; it could have been that once you enter, you must buy something); if you do, you can pay by cash, check or credit card; if cash, value must be transferred when the goods are; if check or credit card, the value will be transferred later, but you must give the commitment now, and in writing; or you can take a loan...etc., but if you choose to buy and have not done one of these options and leave with the goods, you have broken a rule and can be arrested for shoplifting.) But I am not a philosopher, and must surely be missing some critical conceptual point here. As I say, for now we can make do with "practices" instead of "rule."

To cases, as you say. Two of the "rules" we propose you say are not rules at all. In one of these, "next speaker self-selects." You explicate that as follows (18):

> That means that there is a pause and somebody else starts talking. That rule says that when there is a break in the conversation anybody can start talking, and whoever starts talking gets to keep on talking. This doesn't even have the appearance of being a rule because it doesn't specify the relevant sort of intentional content that plays a causal role in the production of the behavior.

By now we are in a position to see what is wrong here.

First, it does *not* mean that there is a pause and somebody else starts talking. It means that when current speaker has come to a *possible* completion, and has not selected some particular other (in a multi-party conversation) to talk next, then anyone can start talking. Nothing about "breaks" is at all relevant; not only are "pauses" not required, but because the first to start gets the turn (in the absence of some superceding basis for another to get the turn), there can be a premium on earliest possible start, minimizing "breaks" in that sense (Sacks *et al.*, 106-7, 719), and what motivates someone to take next turn at the earliest possible opportunity may be the relevance of responding to what current speaker is saying, minimizing "breaks" in that sense.

Further, it is not the case that "whoever starts talking gets to keep on talking." That person's talk will also be composed of a turn-constructional unit which will itself fairly rapidly come to a possible completion, which will be transition-relevant, affording another participant the opportunity for turn-transfer. While the one who starts to talk may thus *end up* keeping talking, they do not "*get* to keep on talking;" they get one turn constructional unit; if they keep on talking, that is something they achieve (Schegloff 1982, 1987), not something they "get."

Note several points about this "option rule." First, it is contingent on the non-applicability of the preceding one (by which current speaker can select next speaker). Second, it offers current non-speaker(s) an option, which lends both their talking and their non-talking a different import than informs talk after a prior speaker has selected someone to talk next. Third, when read together with the global conditions of application which inform each of the "rules," it specifies particular points/moments in the flow of conduct at which these options apply; that is, it sequentially organizes the relevance of determinate action options. Whether or not this qualifies it as a rule, it certainly is relevant to the contingent shaping of the trajectory of conduct in interaction.

The same considerations apply to the third of our options: current speaker continues. You write, "It just says that when you are talking, you can keep on talking." Actually, of course, it says more than that, and less.

On the one hand, it says that where you have otherwise come to a possible completion, and sometimes should *not* continue talking (if, following our option 1a, you have selected someone to talk next), under other conditions you *can* continue (for example, when with respect to option 1b others have not self-selected). (There is a lot more to be said about this, but not here, not now). You write, "But you don't need a rule to do that," i.e., keep on talking. But you do, if sometimes you are not to keep on talking.

On the other hand, if you are still within the boundaries of a turn-constructional unit, you *should* keep talking, and people do, even when it is clear that their interlocutors have already grasped what they are in the process of saying. In these circumstances, speakers rarely just stop before possible completion.

But there is one circumstance about which you apparently agree that there are rules, and that is the option we call "current speaker selects next speaker." But that is not something you think is much done in conversation. As you say, "speakers hardly ever *directly* select a subsequent speaker" (emphasis supplied). You furnish an example from a formal occasion with a master of ceremonies, but characterise as "very unusual" cases in which "the speaker *literally* selects somebody" (emphasis supplied). Now these terms "directly" and "literally" refer us back to a larger position which you have developed about direct and indirect speech acts, and their relationship to so-called literal meaning. I do not want to take all that up here, but at least one aspect of it merits some attention for the present exchange.

You write as if the basic way, the default position, for selecting someone to talk next is to say, "I select you to talk next." Anything other than a variant of this is not doing (directly at least) "selecting someone to talk next." You write (18),

> What normally happens, rather, is that the speaker asks somebody a question, or makes him an offer. The rules that determine that the second person is to speak aren't rules of "speaker selects next technique," but they are rules of asking questions or making offers.

One *or* the other. Why not both? A speaker can, after all, ask a question without "asking *somebody* a question;" for example, "Any a'you guys read that story about Walter Mitty?" (cf. Sacks *et al.*, p.703). A speaker can, after all, make an offer, without making *somebody* an offer: "More dessert

anyone?" (as others have noted as well, although from somewhat different points of view, e.g., Clark and Carlson 1982). Here actions are done which do not select anyone as next speaker, but provide for self-selection by intending next-speakers. When a speaker asks, "John, have you read Walter Mitty?" or offers "Bill, you want some?" (Sacks *et al.*, ibid.), the speaker has done more than a question or an offer. By addressing a turn of this type to a particular recipient, they have selected someone as next speaker. And it is not that they have done this "indirectly;" this is one, perhaps *the*, basic way of selecting someone as next speaker.[5] And it need not be done with the address term; it can be done, for example, by gaze direction. This basic device for next speaker selection we formulate as "addressing a first pair part" to them. Such an addressee is expected to analyze from the speaker's turn not only that a question, or offer, or request has been done, but that it has been done to *them*; and, further, that by virtue of its having been done to them, some response is due from them (something which is not the case by virtue of just any utterance being addressed). They can fail on either count.

And there is the class of instances in which more than one interlocutor is selected to speak next. For example:

Mark:	Hi Sherry. Hi Ruthie,
Ruth:	Hi Ma:rk.
Sherry:	*H*i Ma:rk.=
Mark:	=How're you guys.
	(0.4)
Ruth:	Jis' fi:ne.
	(0.4)
Sherry:	Uh:: tired.

Whatever the rules for whatever speech act one takes "How're you guys" to be doing, it is unclear how they contribute to ordering the talk offered in response. That talk is certainly orderly, and it can be shown that the order of the answers is closely related to their character (or "content"). An explication of that relationship is not appropriate here, but it turns on several of the turn-taking "rules" (including the self-selection option) as well as other types of organization. It does not appear to be part of

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[5] This is but one of the points at which a conversation-analytic tack diverges from a speech-act theoretic one, and specifically with respect to "indirect speech acts." See, for example, Levinson's comparative treatment of "pre-sequences" and "indirect speech acts" (1983: 356-364, and the general review of speech act theory in Ch.5) and a similar juxtaposition in Schegloff 1988b and 1989.

constitutive rules for requests for information, or well-being inquiries, or greetings, etc.

So there are various reasons for not treating next speaker selection as an aspect of speech act rules. First, the same speech acts (such as "request for information," "request for service," "offer," "complaint," and many others) can be done while selecting someone as next speaker, while not selecting someone as next speaker, or selecting several someones without ordering their responses. Second, selecting someone as next speaker is a formal job that is invariant to a whole set of types of speech act (however we understand the notion "speech act"), and very simple notions of parsimony suggest that we not duplicate next-speaker selection operations separately for each speech act, but formulate them to operate across the members of a class of action types, types which we have called "first pair parts" of adjacency pairs. Third, some speaker selections are not done by addressing particular act types to particular addressees, but by invoking social identities of the parties (Sacks *et al.*, 718) or differentially distributed information (cf. Goodwin 1981, chapter 5), or by "recipient designed" choice of diction (for example, by use of "recognitional" references to persons; cf. Sacks and Schegloff 1979), or by implicit reference to recent events in the interaction in particular ways (asking "Y'want some nuts, babe?" selecting the daughter who has not had any yet to be next speaker, rather than the husband who has, for whom the utterance would have been "Y'want some more nuts, babe?"). These devices operate even if the speech act in which the reference occurs would not ordinarily select anyone to speak next.

Although not exhaustive, these grounds are "sufficive." Although it is true that the organization of turn-taking and the organization of sequences (or speech acts) are not independent (after all, addressing a first pair part to another is the primary mode of selecting them as next speaker), and both are always operating on any talk, they are largely distinct and only partially intersecting (I discuss one intersection in Schegloff 1987: 107). So if you agree that there *are* rules operating here (*at least* here), then I think you should conclude that there are *turn-taking* rules. I don't know whether or not this is a problem for you -- whether it violates some aesthetic of theoretical parsimony, for example. I don't see why it should be. For the conversation-analytic enterprise, such a tack seems warranted in order to account for readily observable empirical features of conversation -- both features observable in single episodes of talk and features observable over aggregates of episodes of talk. This is one of the points which the 1974 paper on turn-taking was designed to show.

Your 'Notes..." began with a search for "constitutive rules for conversations in a way that we have constitutive rules for speech acts." I don't know about that last constraint, but I think that empirically if we are to have conversation as we know it we will have to have some turn-taking organization -- whether rules or practices. The task of ordering contributions to talk-in-interaction is a generic organizational problem. It is not (or not only) an issue of politeness or civility. Single violations of turn-taking practices may be treated by their sufferers as rude or uncivil. But absent a turn-taking organization as an institutionalized practice of organizing talk-in-interaction, what would be lost would be the very possibility of concerted action, of *responsive* action, in interaction. This is as close to a constitutive set of rules as we are likely to get *sociologically*, if not conceptually (Schegloff 1988a).

The shift to the empirical and the sociological from the conceptual and philosophical underlies much in our exchange. For when we examine the details of the actual talk of actual people in interaction, we encounter the omnipresent relevance of context, in various of the senses of that term, for sentient actors. In certain respects, of course, you have sought to provide for the relevance of certain senses of context in your work, although not always positioned where I believe it should be in accounts of action (Schegloff 1989). There is, to my mind, no escaping the observation that context, which is most proximately and consequentially *temporal* and *sequential*, is not like some penthouse to be added after the structure of action has been built out of constitutive intentional, logical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic/speech-act-theoretic bricks. The temporal/sequential context rather supplies the ground on which the whole edifice of action is built (by the participants) in the first instance, and to which it is adapted "from the ground up," so to speak (Schegloff 1988b). How sequential context and organization are shaped and operate, how they are embodied and displayed, and how they are oriented to by participants in real time, turn out to be empirical, not philosophical, questions. They appear in the world as detailed practices and features of the conduct of talk -- hesitations, anticipations, apparent disfluencies, apparently inconsequential choices and replacements of words, and the like. Often unnoticed or underappreciated in casual observation or even effortful recollection of how talk goes, these facets of talk are strikingly accessible to empirical inquiry, and once registered in inquiry, are increasingly inescapable as observations for which disciplined inquiry must account, because they are relevant and consequential for the conduct of the talk by its participants.

There is the prospect then that we are going through another of those phases in which a part of what has been philosophy's turf is claimed by empirical inquiry; what its dimensions and boundaries are remains to be

determined.[6] As I noted, some of what turns out most to need accounting for is not even noticed by casual observation or introspection. The questions and the answers resonate to a different wavelength, and are disciplined by different responsibilities. Wittgenstein spoke of the ways in which we use language as "forms of life." Disciplined inquiry into "forms of life" is the calling of anthropology and sociology. Another domain of inquiry is passing from philosophy to an empirical discipline.

With unconditional felicitations and sincerity,
Manny

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[6] See, for example, the final paragraph of John Heritage's (1984: 337) detailed exploration of the uses of the particle "oh." After a fine-grained explication of various contexts of use and various sequential imports and consequences of empirically encountered and examined occurrences of "oh" in conversation, Heritage cites a passage from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Grammar* (1974: 67), in which he remarks of objects like "oh" that there is in them "nothing comparable" to "...the calculus, to the complicated game which we play with other words[.]" In the juxtaposition of these two treatments of "oh" lies embodied one exhibit of the transition to which I refer.

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