

Conversation Analysis

Day 2

9.00 – 13.00



Qualitative Methods

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Content of presentation

- Defining 'conversation'
- What is Conversation Analysis (DA)?
- Concepts
 - turn taking
 - adjacency pair
 - preference organization
 - closings



What is conversation?

- A form of talk-in-interaction
- Its study is a sociological as well as linguistic issue
- Its structural organization is governed by turn-taking rules



What is Conversation Analysis (CA)?

- Study of the structural organization of interaction (how patterns occur)
- Origin primarily from ethnomethodology
- Influenced by sociologists (Sacks, Schegloff)
- Focus on a structural approach to the study of language in use
- Context and the interactional aspect of conversation are eschewed



Turn-taking systems

- Conversations are cooperative activities
- Participants take coordinated turns (A-B-A-B)
- (Self-) selection of speakers
- More complicated as more interlocutors participate
- Important issues
 - transition relevant points (TRPs), e.g. 'aha'
 - overlaps
 - interruptions
 - gaze
 - silence



Adjacency pairs

- Fundamental unit of the organization of conversation
- Display's interlocutors' understanding of each other's contributions
- Simple sequences that provide insights into the organization of conversation
- Sets of utterances that are positioned adjacently
- Exchanges of two or more parts



Adjacency pairs (2)

- Consist of
 - first-pair-part (FPP)
 - second-pair-part (SPP)
- Two basic properties
 - parts relatively ordered
 - parts discriminately related
- Some pairs
 - are not repeatable (e.g. introductions)
 - are positionally restricted (e.g. greetings)
- Insertion sequences



Preference organization

- Alternatives for second turn position
- Preferred: positive responses (accept, agree); expected
- Dispreferred: negative responses (reject, decline); unexpected and more elaborate
- Preference organization is related to the notion of “face” (Brown & Levinson)
- Pre-sequence: avoidance of a dispreferred response



Preference organization: repair

- Repair: the system that accounts for a range of 'problems' or 'trouble' in interaction
- Broader than 'correction'
- Self-repair v. other-repair
- Self-initiated v. other-initiated
- No repair attempted when it is face-threatening



Conversational closings

- Conversations are interactively brought to an end
- When topics are covered, a terminal exchange occurs
- Pre-closing: no more topics to discuss, preparation for the terminal exchange with empty items ('well')
- New topics can be introduced at the pre-closing stage ('by the way')
- Pre-topic closing: offer to close the discussion before it even starts ('Am I disturbing?')



Task

- Compare and contrast examiner behavior in the transcribed data in relation to
 - turn-taking
 - adjacency pairs
 - preference organization

