

The Machinery of Speech (Conversation Analysis)

Conversation analysis is an **important component of discourse analysis**. It is an approach of spoken source that looks at the way in which **people manage their everyday conversational interaction**.

1. **Transcription Conventions**. Specific transcriptional conventions are used in conversation analysis. The rise and fall of pitch / intonation, the length of sentences, and the pauses indicated in the transcription all contribute to the analysis of the transcriptions.
2. **Sequence and Structure in Conversation**. Aspects of conversational interactions that have been examined from this perspective include **conversational openings, closings, turn taking, sequence of related utterances** and preferences for particular combination of utterances. Adjacency pairs are a fundamental unit of conversational organization and a key way in which meanings are communicated and interpreted in conversation. These pairs put the conversation in the sequence and treat the sentences spoken by each of the speakers as **consequential to each other's utterances**. Adjacency pairs across cultures their stage and convention is fundamental to the analysis to the spoken discourse.
3. **Turn-taking and turn constructional units (TCU's)**

TCU's are units of speech. The boundaries of these units are called turn transition relevance points (TTRP'S). These are points at which intervention from another speaker is syntactically or semantically possible. At a TTRP:

- a. The current speaker selects the next speaker, or (if this does not operate)
- b. The next speaker self-selects
- c. The current speaker may continue

4. **Repair (simultaneous speech and silence)**

Participants will not usually talk at the same time. Simultaneous speech and silence are problems which need to be repaired. In simultaneous speech, one person usually wins the right to speak and be attended to by the other participants. When the turn taking rules (above) fail to operate, there is silence.

Silence is a problem which needs to be repaired. Who is the person who repairs the silences in the conversation between Miss A and Mr B?

5. Adjacency pairs

Spoken interaction is often structured around pairs of adjacent utterances (utterances which occur one after the other) in which the second utterance is functionally dependent on the first.

Question-answer: "how are you?" "fine" Greetings: "good morning" "good morning"

In these sequences we expect the first part to be followed by the second part. If it is not there, we interpret it as rude, unfriendly or socially inept. Different types of questions produce different types of response. For example, a tag-question organizes a response better than an open question.

6. Insertion sequences

These sequences can be inserted between adjacency pairs. The topic of the insertion sequence is related to that of the main sequence in which it occurs and the main sequence continues after the insertion.

7. Preferred and dispreferred responses

The *preferred response* to a proposal is acceptance, which can be performed without hesitation or elaboration. Agreement is a preferred response.

The *dispreferred response* is refusal. It tends to be hesitant and elaborate (we often give reasons for a refusal). Disagreement is also an example of a dispreferred response.

8. Discourse markers (markers of interaction)

These have the general function of moving the conversation on but they may have specific functions, depending on the conversation:

- to signal to the listener that the speaker wishes to continue speaking (a *filler*)
- to signal where the conversation is going

For example, "well" may be used to indicate a) the opening of a conversation, b) that the speaker is about to say something which is in conflict with what has been said earlier.