Book Reviews

Hutchby, Ian (2006) *Media Talk: Conversation Analysis and the Study of Broadcasting*. Glasgow: Open University Press. Pp. xiii, 185.

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1. Introduction

As is mentioned in the acknowledgements of Ian Hutchby's *Media Talk: Conversation Analysis and the Study of Broadcasting*, the chapters in the book build upon his and other scholars' prior research on language and talk in the media. However, although the broadcast media has been studied quite extensively from a discourse analytic viewpoint, there are not many texts that assemble the findings of various interactional or conversation analytic research on media talk in one book.[1] Hutchby's book is therefore a welcome addition to the selection.

     The book begins with a discussion regarding the importance of using empirical data and transcriptions, and the methodology offered by Conversation Analysis for investigating and analyzing media talk. After the introduction the book is divided into three larger coherent parts (Television talk and Audience Participation, Radio Talk and Broadcasters and Politicians), which are then further divided into chapters. Each chapter discusses different genres of media talk and supports the findings with examples from various programs. The end of each chapter holds a useful list of references for further readings. At the end of the book there is a brief glossary of some central terminology used in the book. Each chapter is discussed briefly in the following.

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[1] Clayman and Heritage's (2002) book on news interviews perhaps being the only exception.

2.   Summary of contents

2.1   The emergence of empirical interest in broadcast talk

In the first chapter Hutchby provides some background information about the history and development of talk and discourse in the Anglo-American media and previous research on Anglo-American media discourse and media talk. The most important point he makes in the chapter is the division of prior media talk research into the *discoursal* approach (cf. Stuart Hall and the Birmingham school) and the *interactional* approach (conversation analytic media talk research). Even though this division could be considered quite simple, it illustrates the shift in research foci from *explaining* how audiences *interpret* media texts (i.e. reception research) to *describing* what participants *actually do* with talk in the media. Both approaches are important, but the author makes a clear case for focusing on discourse practices and talk in the media and especially on the interactional relationship between journalists, guests and the audience. The central idea in much of the interactional approach is that broadcast talk is first and foremost produced for the audiences (cf. Clayman and Heritage 2002, Scannell 1991). It should be remembered that this is not a rule imposed on the participants by for example the broadcast companies. Rather, as Hutchby and several other studies (e.g. Clayman and Heritage 2002) show, it is something that the participants orient to and which they display by the actions and practices they produce and co-construct through their talk.

2.2   Introduction to Conversation Analysis

In the second chapter Hutchby provides an overview of Conversation Analysis (CA), its methodology, some of the most central terminology and notions ('turn taking', 'action'), and the rationale for its appropriateness and usefulness as a method for analyzing broadcast talk. Interestingly, he also connects the rise of CA to the criticism given to Chomsky's, Austin's and Wittgenstein's work. He also discusses the much-debated relationship between CA and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and similarly to Thornborrow (2002), aims to build—in spite of the distinct methodological

and theoretical differences between the approaches—a bridge between CA and CDA. Still, Hutchby convincingly argues for the importance of the analyst's task to empirically show how power or ideology underpins human action and thus becomes a feature and a resource of institutional interaction.

2.3   Televised audience debates

As Hutchby argues at the beginning of the third chapter, news programs and documentaries have tended to diminish the access of lay people's opinions to the media. Instead they have given for example politicians and other elite groups priority to state their views and opinions. However, audience participation shows, for example *Oprah*, are clear exceptions to this tendency. Although there are numerous books that discuss these programs, Hutchby claims that few actually concentrate on the organization of talk in them. Hutchby shows that in *Oprah* the host's questions to audience participants are different from the questions she designs for her "expert" guests. The questions to the audience members are relatively easy, whereas for the experts she builds a more difficult position to speak from. Hutchby also discusses the role of audience applause and how it displays affiliation with the lay participants and their comments. One question that Hutchby does not raise here is whether the audience is explicitly guided to applaud at particular moments and whether this affects the action of applauding at a particular interactional moment.

2.4   Confrontational TV talk shows

Towards the end of the 20th century a new form of audience participation show emerged (*Ricki Lake Show*, *Oprah Winfrey, Jerry Springer*). The guests in these shows are ordinary people and the topics focus on their everyday dilemmas. What is interesting about these shows is that the everyday topics are discussed publicly and in a very confrontational manner. In the fourth chapter Hutchby focuses on these confrontational TV talk shows and especially on *Ricki Lake Show*. He describes certain routinized practices that organize and construct talk as confrontational and furthermore, render it *hearable* for audiences as such.

The confrontational TV talk shows are usually organized so that first the host describes the complainable matter ("the problem") and then introduces the guest as indeed having "the problem." After this, the host gives the floor to the first guest, who then produces a complaint about the forthcoming second guest. After the complainer has been heard, the host introduces the second guest, who quite obviously has been presented in rather negative light and can be booed in on the stage by the studio audience. Consequently, the guest is, because of the sequential actions that preceded his/her entrance, introduced as someone who has to respond to the prior complaints. What is also interesting about these shows is that the host can react at any moment by providing an explicit stance about the subject matter. The host's action is targeted to the audience which can provide an audible reaction in return.

Hutchby claims that this sequential order of actions provides a particular participant framework (Goffman 1981) and consequently narrows down the array of actions that each participant can produce in the show. In other words, the sequential structure of the show provides each participant a role: the first guest acts as the complainer and the second guest has to respond to the complaint. Moreover, this particular sequential structure situates the studio audience and the viewing audience as the target for the first guest's complaint and not the person who is being complained about.

Hutchby's analysis of the confrontational audience participation shows is careful and insightful. It reveals the importance of looking at the sequential organization of talk and helps the reader to build up an understanding of the interaction on stage / on TV as "confrontational."

2.5   Talk in radio

In chapter 5 Hutchby moves on to discuss both advice-giving talk radio shows and open-line talk radio shows. In the open-line talk radio shows, the talk is organized sequentially so that first the callers present their standpoints on matters that are on their minds. Consequently, they can select their own topics and can be seen as active participants in media talk. Moreover, in the opening turn callers frequently authenticate their right to speak about the topic by using various types of 'witnessing devices' that are relevant for the topic under discussion. In spite of these features of the

opening turn, the hosts are able to build up an argument against the caller's opinion in the following turn—i.e. in the second position. As Hutchby claims, it is precisely this sequential position, the possibility to go second, which provides the host a resource to call into question or even attack the caller's position. Consequently, the structural organization of talk radio shows provides the host a more powerful discursive position.[2] However, as Hutchby also notes, this does not always happen. Rather, the interactional organization of radio talk shows *provide* the host a possibility to express a disagreement. Nevertheless, some resourceful callers can in fact use the second position as a resource for challenging the host and consequently for building up and fortifying their own stance. Consequently, the power relations in talk radio are not static but dynamic and shifting.

This last point is something that may interest especially critical discourse analysts. Hutchby claims that the sequential approach to talk and what it reveals about "unbalanced" power relations between the host and the caller combines the interests of both Conversation Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis.

2.6   Advice-giving in broadcast media

Advice-giving in talk radio shows is one type of media genre talk, in which the media surroundings provide a public arena for lay people to talk about highly personalized matters. Advice-giving radio shows are slightly different from other talk radio programs in that in addition to the caller (advice-seeker), the host and the audience, the show involves a fourth participant: the expert (the advice-giver). In this context, Hutchby sets out to investigate, on the one hand, how the structural characteristics of talk in the advice-giving context situate *the audience* as a recipient for the advice given in the programs and, on the other hand, the role of the host in the advice-giving sequences.

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[2] By comparison, in news interviews it is the host that goes first and designs the first turn as a question. However, in order to prevent the guest from providing possible counterarguments the hosts frequently design their turns so as to include a difficult position for the guest. By doing so the host "forces" the interviewee to respond to the position (Haddington under review).

Hutchby describes a recurrent practice in which the expert (i.e. person giving the advice, not the host) first responds to the caller's specific question and then subsequently provides general information about the issue at hand. Hutchby calls this the AAI format (Answer plus Auxiliary Information). The latter part (i.e. the auxiliary information) of the expert's turn frequently contains more information than answering the caller's specific question would require. Therefore, the expert's answer can be seen to specifically situate *the audience* as the recipient of his/her talk. However, at the same time the auxiliary information can also confuse the callers–in case they are not able to judge which information in the expert's turn is relevant for them.

The hosts in the advice-giving programs often orient to the expert's role as an advice-giver and do not intervene in the expert's talk. However, sometimes they can intervene in the advice-giving activity by producing 'continuers' or utterances that collaborate with the expert's talk. According to Hutchby, the interventions seem to relate specifically to transfers from answers to the auxiliary information. Finally, before the calls are ended, the topic of the talk is brought back from the auxiliary information to the original caller's question and the expert sums up the call by giving a straightforward and short answer to the original question.

2.7   News interviews – public figures on the air

The news interview genre is perhaps the most familiar and most researched of the various media talk genres discussed in the book (see also Clayman and Heritage 2002). In news interviews politicians and other public figures discuss topical issues. News interview talk differs radically from everyday conversation in that it is organized into exchanges of interviewer questions and interviewee answers. What is more, as is understood in Conversation Analysis, the institutional roles of an interviewer and interviewee in news interviews (or in any form of institutional talk) are not pre-assigned but rather actively co-constructed by the participants themselves. For example, as Hutchby shows (123), if the interviewee asks a question from the interviewer, which is of course rare, the interviewers can hold the interviewee responsible for such unconventional behavior by explicitly stating that it is the interviewer who asks the questions.

Hutchby describes various features of the question-answer sequences in news interviews, such as the *lack of* third-turn evaluative actions, continuers and minimal responses, which are very common in everyday talk and some other forms of institutional talk. There are two main reasons for the lack of these interactional phenomena. The first is that news interview talk is directed to the "overhearing" audience. The second is that by not producing evaluations, continuers and minimal responses, the interviewers actively refrain from reacting to the interviewees' answers and thus maintain a 'neutralistic' stance towards their guests.

Hutchby also describes how interviewees can produce a formulation of an interviewee answer in order to recapitulate, elaborate or even challenge the point in it. Although formulations have generally been considered as 'neutralistic' in that they avoid taking explicit stances on the topical matter (cf. Clayman 1992, Heritage 1985), they still represent the interviewer as an active interpreter of what has been said in the previous turn.

In the remaining part of the chapter, Hutchby discusses some rare but interesting examples from news interviews in which the interviewee has made a move to either take control of the interview situation or to walk away from the TV studio. From a conversation analytic viewpoint, such incidents are interesting deviant cases, because they show how the conventional interactional structure of news interview talk is broken down. Moreover, as Hutchby notes, such incidents often become more newsworthy than the actual interviews themselves.

2.8 Rhetoric and live political talk

Although the news interview has for a long time been an important arena for political discourse, a variety of other political discussion genres have emerged quite recently; one of them is the political panel interview or as Hutchby calls it, the political debate show. Hutchby takes a detailed look at these shows that have a co-present audience and describes how the audience can take or be given the role of an active participant. Consequently, if talk in news interviews is structured so that it addresses the "overhearing" audience, in debate shows the audience often takes a more active role. One central element of audience participation is

alignment or counter-alignment with the guests, which is expressed mainly by jeers and applause.

Hutchby also discusses the use of rhetorical devices in debate shows, namely *three-part lists*, *contrasts* and *recompletions*, which frequently generate situated displays of audience alignment in form of applauses. As regards *three-part lists* in particular, audiences orient to them as coherent lists and anticipate their completion by applauding either in overlap with the third part of the list or immediately after the list has been completed. Consequently, the three-part list is an important rhetorical device that politicians can use for pursuing an aligning response from the audience.

3. Evaluation and discussion

Ian Hutchy's book focuses on talk and language in the media by looking at various interactional and discursive features of different media talk genres. Those who are already familiar with the conversation analytic research on media talk are probably not going to find much new information in the book—unless they find it useful to have all conversation analytic research on media talk between single covers. However, linguists, interaction analysts, discourse analysts, sociologists and media researchers who are not familiar with CA research and who are seeking for an introductory book or a textbook on media talk that is both accessible and in-depth will surely find Hutchby's book useful. The book should be particularly useful for students and scholars interested in the use of language as a resource for producing and maintaining social order and in the issue of *power* in media discourse.

The book is well-written, informative and accessible. In general it is a great summary of previous interactional and conversation analytic research on various types of media talk exchanges systems, genres and research findings. The analysis and the interactional phenomena are presented in a very clear manner without an overwhelming use of complicated terminology. Those unfamiliar with the conversation analytic terminology will find the glossary at the end of the book useful. In addition to the general reference list provided at the end of the book, each chapter ends with suggestions for further reading.

More specifically, there are perhaps three things that make this book an important contribution among other books on media discourse and

media talk. First of all, one of the most important and positive things about the book—which reflects Goffman's (1981) ideas about the participation framework and which is also discussed in detail in Heritage (1985) and Clayman and Heritage (2002)—is the fact that it focuses on the ways in which media talk is produced for the audience. Second, the book emphasizes the way in which participants jointly produce and orient to each others' actions and practices, and consequently co-construct the interaction themselves. Finally, the claims made about media talk are supported with several illuminating examples.

In addition to the fact that Hutcby's book provides a good summary of prior interactional research on media talk, it also shows what has *not* been studied. For (functional and interactional) linguists in particular, one path to take would be to pursue the study of recurrent linguistic practices that co-occur with the actions described in Hutchby's book. Some work has already been done on for example questions (Heritage and Roth 1995) and denials (Haddington 2005) in news interviews, but a lot remains to be done.

Moreover, during the recent years, the analysis of interaction has increasingly started to consider also other interactional modes than language. This is an area of research that certain areas of linguistics (e.g. functional linguistics, interactional linguistics) needs to start to take into account in its analysis. Thus, what is indeed missing in media talk research is a combined analysis of the different interactional modes (language, embodiment and place) as resources for action production in the televised media in particular. This is perhaps the next step that needs to be taken in the analysis of broadcast media.

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