REVIEW ESSAYS
EMANUEL A. SCHEGLOFF'S SEQUENCE ORGANIZATION IN INTERACTION

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EMANUEL A. SCHEGLOFF. ***Sequence Organization in Interaction: A Primer in Conversation Analysis, Volume 1.*** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. 316. ISBN: 978-0-521-53279-2 (paperback); ISBN: 978-0-521-82572-6 (hardback).

AN INTRODUCTION TO CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

This article reviews *Sequence Organization in Interaction: A Primer in Conversation Analysis, Volume 1* (SOI) by Emanuel Schegloff, a leading figure in the mode of naturalistic study of human gestural and spoken interaction known as conversation analysis (CA).[1] SOI is the first volume in a proposed set of publications that will systematically present the current state of CA research findings on talk-in-interaction, and thereby collectively constitute a CA primer. Accordingly, though our paper's title characterizes SOI as "an introduction to conversation analysis", the book is also (and more precisely) an introduction to but a single domain of interactional practices—that of sequence organization—among several which are identified and studied by CA, such as the organization of turn-taking, of turns, of repair, of single conversations overall, and more. Additionally, since our paper contains an extended overview of CA in order to facilitate reviewing SOI, it itself can serve as "an introduction to conversation analysis", albeit brief, possibly supplementing several fine previous overviews (see, e.g., Heritage 1984, Maynard and Clayman 1991, Gill and Clayman 2000). The present article's first section sketches in the relevant theoretical and methodological background; the second section presents for consideration some 'applications' of CA in other areas of social science; and the last section reviews SOI via discussion of several of its core concepts.

The theoretical and methodological orientation of CA

CA originated in America in the mid-1960s in the collaborative work of Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson, with the primary impetus coming from Sacks. Both Sacks and Schegloff trained in sociology at the University of California at Berkeley; the teacher there of most consequence in their intellectual development was Erving Goffman, the seminal sociologist who developed incisive, breathtaking accounts of what he came to call "the interaction order"—the domain of face-to-face human interaction. Though researchers working under other disciplinary auspices such as Gregory Bateson and Ray Birdwhistell also played important roles in opening up this realm for study, Goffman has been the most visible natural interactionist in sociology. Sacks and Schegloff derived

additional decisive inspiration from another sociologist, Harold Garfinkel who, influenced by philosophical phenomenology and Gestalt psychology, created the approach to the study of social order called ethnomethodology (EM). Briefly, EM investigates how members of society produce, in and as their everyday activities, phenomena of social order. EM studies the practices and resources ("ethno-methods") people use and rely on to accomplish, describe, and otherwise display orientations to their more encompassing practices—for example, the various stances and motions we exhibit when 'standing in line'. Ethnomethods have three key characteristics: accountability (for all practical purposes, practices are reportable/describable), reflexivity (practices both inform and are informed by members' sense of a shared reality), and indexical expressions (practices' meanings are dependent on their context of performance).[2] Since ethnomethods are, or are in part, interaction-order phenomena, there is a great degree of potential convergence between Garfinkel and Goffman, and CA can be thought of as exploring and developing this potential in the interest of its own research agenda.

Possibly the single most important research guideline in CA is Sacks' doctrine of "[interactional] order at all points" (1984), which resonates with the Goffmanian and Garfinkelian themes just reviewed. Schegloff (2005) has provided the following helpful explication of this aphorism or working hypothesis:

> I do not myself believe that there is order at *all* points, nor do I think that Sacks believed this (…) The stance being put forward might instead better be put as 'order *possible* at any point;' that is, *no aspect of talk-in-interaction can be excluded a priori as a locus of order*. If participants can endow any feature of their talk, conduct, setting, etc., with relevance, then investigators have to hold themselves open to the possibility that any aspect of persons' conduct might be a locus of orderliness, and a potential target of productive inquiry. (17–18)

Sacks' aphorism and Schegloff's gloss of it imply that all the various social actions by means of which we interact with each other are possibly methodical and capable of formal description and analysis. Interaction is possibly orderly and patterned at a fine level of detail. This premise seems reasonable given that people are socialized by a highly circumscribed set of significant others yet somehow attain the ability to meaningfully interact with pretty much any other member, that is, any other fellow competent user of the same natural language (Sacks 1984; Garfinkel and Sacks 1970). This view contrasts with what Sacks characterized as the dominant view in the late 1960s of social order in the social sciences, which view he described via the metaphor of society as a machine that presents observers with relatively few orderly products and a lot of remaining unpatterned behavior. It follows from such a view that social scientists must carefully choose which problems are worth studying, that is, which problems can yield insight into orderly, formally describable social facts. Sacks' view, by contrast, implies that analytical issues such as reliability and validity are of less concern to him than to most other social scientists due to his belief or finding that interaction/society is characterized by massive, overwhelming order. Sacks (1984: 24) goes on to critique as circular the view of language held by linguists who assume a priori that we know "where language is deep and interesting", that is, orderly and formally describable, prior to any attempt at serious examination of instances of actual language use.

'Applications' of CA

CA has been applied to various issues: patient-doctor relations (Heritage and Maynard 2006) and feminist studies (Kitzinger 2000) are two of the most salient examples. However, we will focus on a third domain of application, second language acquisition (SLA), to give an insight of the tensions such an application is raising.

The socio-anthropological research area about SLA has been one of the latest grounds for the development of applied CA. Especially Firth and Wagner, in their critique of SLA's dominant cognitivist paradigm (Firth and Wagner 1997, 2007) show how CA could be used to challenge the contrast between native and non-native speakers. It could especially help to stress the ways in which non-native language use is interactional, indexical, and thus contextually accomplished, just like that of native speakers. Applied CA thus fosters a welcomed incentive not to prejudge the concept of non-native as being equivalent to a deficient communicator in comparison to an idealized native speaker, but rather to study how the participants display their own perspectives on the relevance of their non-native status. An article by Junko Mori (2007: 847–857) provides additional support to what seems a growing demand among SLA practitioners for an increased focus on the contextual and interactional dimensions of language acquisition and use.

Obviously, CA is being reconsidered as applicable to a variety of fields. The limitations to this expansion are delicate to set. At least linguistics at large and communication studies can make extensive use of CA, since, through meticulous observation of how the participants themselves are analyzing their co-participants' contributions, it gives the key to understanding how co-participants comprehend each other in a moment-by-moment fashion. Consequently, it provides necessary tools to get a sense of the process of learning/ using a language. More generally, there is a whole host of studies interested in shared knowledge and beliefs that could be fertilized and renewed with such a methodology.

Such attempts to apply CA seem, however, to have the potential for varying degrees of theoretical tension. In fact, it would go straight against some of the basic principles of CA, in particular the interdiction of topic-motivated enquiry. Thus, there are still a lot of debates about the proper relationship between CA and ethnography. Although Firth and Wagner (1997: 295–296) conclude that CA can complement cognitivist approaches to SLA, the different ways in which this methodology can relate to other approaches of social science without compromising its theoretical integrity still remain to be defined (for a relatively recent discussion of the relationship between CA and ethnography, see Chapter 5 in Maynard 2003: 120–159).

Sequence organization in interaction

As a '*primer in Conversation Analysis*' the book's essential function is not only to make the theoretical claims of CA explicit, but also, and more fundamentally, to present the conceptual tools every CA practitioner should master. In this section, five prominent guiding concepts are reviewed: the turn constructional unit (TCU), the adjacency pair, the expansion unit, the preference structure, and the sequence of sequences.

Schegloff distinguishes between the organization in talk-in-interaction of turn-taking and sequencing, both of which are types of sequential organization. Sequence organization deals with the patterning of actions performed via turn-taking (Schegloff 2007: 2). A turn-taking system is not anything specific to conversational settings but instead can be found in numerous aspects of everyday life: in traffic, card games, ceremonial settings and queuing, for example (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974: 696–701). However, for a conversation to exist there has to be a turn-taking system whereby participants are allocated (not necessarily verbal) speech turns. A conversation can be sequenced and the sequences can themselves be divided into turns. The turn constructional units (TCU) are the elements out of which turns are built. There is no restriction regarding their nature: a non-exhaustive listing would include sentences, words, tune, glances, phrasing, clauses, opening/closing formulas.

CA attempts to avoid developing *a priori* a set of essential characteristics of a *request*, but instead engages in unmotivated inquiry grounded on actual instances of interaction. One major finding of such inquiry is that the adjacency pair (AP) seems to be the basic unit of sequence organization (p. 13). Indeed, the AP organization is both a major locus of relevance rules and a source for the interpretive meaning which parties to talk-in-interaction accord one another's utterances. The AP is consequently characterized as the sequence-constructional unit, the "central organizing format for sequences". In its minimal (unexpanded) form, AP has five general features (pp. 22–27). It is composed of two turns, performed by two speakers, and adjacently placed; furthermore, the two turns are relatively ordered, that is, the first turn (first pair part, FPP) is a *first* that starts some course of action (such as inviting or requesting), and the second turn (second pair part, SPP) is a *second* that accountably responds to such a proposed course of action; finally the two parts are pair-type related: some SPPs properly follow a given FPP, others do not.

Even if always based on a specific AP, a talk-in-interaction is often expanding around this base AP. There are three positions in which expansion can occur: before the FPP (pre-expansion), between the FPP and SPP (insert expansion), and after the SPP (post-expansion) (pp. 28, 97, 115). The expanded AP is thus a base sequence ("an armature") composed of two poles, the FPP and SPP. Pre-sequences, themselves composed of APs, are often type-specific: they project a particular type of base FPP such as invitation or offer. Pre-invitations project base FPP invitations and recipients may respond with go-aheads that elicit the projected action, blocking moves that retard or prevent such progress, or hedges that withhold an explicit response until further information about the invitation is provided. Further examples of type-specific pre-sequences are pre-offers, pre-announcements, and pre-pre's (pre-sequences that project a further pre-sequence) (28–47). The summons-answer sequence exemplifies a generic pre-sequence that does not project a particular type of base FPP (pp. 48–53). Multiple pre-expansions may occur before the base FPP is reached, if it is reached at all (pp. 53–58).

The fourth elementary notion in CA is *preference.* It refers not to psychological aspects of language-use but rather to how the organization of APs both projects only *certain* types of immediately forthcoming talk and fulfills (or not) such projection (Schegloff 2007: 58–96). Preference organization thus deals with asymmetrical AP patterning in the practices of talk-in-interaction. As Schegloff puts it: "the set of alternative possible SPPs for a given sequence type is itself structured; the alternatives are not homogeneous or symmetrical"

(p. 57). Some SPPs, "minus responses" instantiate a disalignment with the course of action projected by the FPP; and some SPPs, "plus responses", embody an alignment with the FPP's projected course of action. Minus responses are typically dispreferred responses, and plus responses are typically preferred responses (pp. 58–63). Exceptions to this general pattern include self-deprecations in which minus responses seem to be preferred and plus responses dispreferred. Dispreferred responses are often positioned in a remote place, at the end of the SPP, after inter-turn gaps, turn-initial delay and anticipatory accounts, which are all strategies to attenuate the disagreement implicit in the SPP. The fact that the dispreferred response is often prepared makes it easy to anticipate. It provides multiple opportunities for either party to revise the sequence in ways that permit preferred responses to be given. Pre-sequences or pre-expansions are measures undertaken by the speaker of a prospective base FPP to secure the utterance of a preferred SPP (pp. 63–81). In a similar vein, we can approach insert expansions or insert sequences as measures initiated by the prospective SPP speaker to co-elaborate a sequence whose parts are in a preferred relationship. Actually, the FPP in adjacency pairs can also be divided between preferred and dispreferred, roughly along the same lines as those drawn for the SPP. There is a preference for noticing over telling, a preference for recognition over self-identification, a preference for the requests promoted by go-ahead sequences.

A fifth central conceptual tool is the sequencing of sequences. Even if, most of the time, successive sequences are less closely linked than successive turns, there are instances where sequences are so closely interrelated that they should be referred to as sequences of sequences. In those cases, the coherent and organizational features of a stretch of talk should not only be located in the base sequence and its expansion units, but the analysis should rather extend to related sequences. Exactly as with the other conceptual tools he is addressing, Schegloff provides the reader with numerous empirical examples. Among them, the most common are the canonical exchange of greetings (Howareyous), with a reversal of the initial sequence into an irreducibly related following sequence; and the retrosequences, which retrospectively locate a trouble-source and initiate a repair. The apparition of the source-outcome relationship in the sequences of sequences is one more sign that"some sequence types are so tied to specific activities and the settings in which they are largely conducted that, even in the absence of factual information, they prompt inferences about the source of exchanges in which they figure" (p. 223). However, as stated in Chapter 13, sequences should always be analyzed as practices responding to contingencies pressing for solution and resolution. Schegloff's book, even in its very satisfying account of the main concepts of CA, is traversed by a tension between the "practices for implementing a course of action-in-interaction through talking, and the structures of talking through which such a course of action can be implemented" (p. 231).

Our goal in outlining CA's theoretical and methodological orientation, and its possible applications to other social scientific areas, has been to enable the reader to appreciate SOI's account of sequence organization. As noted in this article's introduction, SOI is Schegloff's first installment of a projected multi-volume introduction to conversation analysis. We hope that this project comes to fruition, and that more of what is currently known about the domains of interactional practices mapped by CA will thereby be given systematic presentation.

NOTES

[1] Our understanding of Schegloff's book and of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis in general, benefited from our participation in Doug Maynard's Fall 2007 Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis seminar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Thanks to all the members of the seminar and to Professor Maynard.

[2] The sense in which Garfinkel (2004 [1967]) uses these three terms is somewhat murky, and, unsurprisingly, ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts have developed various interpretations of them.

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