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**A Comprehensive Introduction to Conversation
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A Comprehensive Introduction to Conversation Analysis

Anthony J. Liddicoat. 2011. *An Introduction to Conversation Analysis (2nd ed.)*. London/New York: Continuum.

The monograph *An Introduction to Conversation Analysis (2nd ed.)* by Anthony J. Liddicoat is designed to provide an overview of Conversation Analysis (CA). CA, originating in the ethnomethodological tradition in sociology (Garfinkel, Goffman), is one of the key methodological approaches to the study of interaction. Rather than studying language as a decontextualized object, it explores how language is used in social action by people to achieve certain aims.

This revised and updated edition includes 13 chapters. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction, in which the origins and the core assumptions of CA as a research approach are outlined. The main methodological considerations of CA are discussed in this chapter as well. Chapters 2 to 4 take up the issues of methodology in more depth. These three chapters examine some of the issues that relate to the process of doing CA, covering three main areas in the process respectively: data collection, transcription and analysis. In Chapter 2, the author starts with discussing the nature of naturalistic data for studying interaction in CA, and then briefly introduces the ways of recording data and technical issues in recording, before he finishes this chapter with the issues concerning the ethics in data collecting. Chapter 3 follows with an extensive introduction to the transcribing conventions of CA. It is rightly pointed out that transcripts are not neutral but rather subjective representations of talk. In addition to the well-adopted transcription system in CA developed by Jefferson (1985, 2004), Liddicoat also describes transcription systems adopted by scholars such as Atkinson (1984) and Goodwin (1981, 1984) for representing non-verbal elements of talk (e.g., eye gaze, nods, and hand and body movements), as well as issues of translation data. Chapter 4 deals with how conversational data are analyzed in CA. It provides an overview of the specimen perspective adopted by CA in analyzing data and documents the process of data analysis. In addition, the chapter discusses how theory can be incorporated into a CA account.

The five subsequent chapters, mainly following the works by Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson and other conversation analysts, examine the 'basic machinery of talk': the sets of procedures which participants follow and employ in order to communicate effectively in interaction. This 'machinery of talk' covers three broad areas of conversational organization: the first is how turns at talk are structured and managed by participants (Chapters 5 and 6); the second is

the ways in which turns at talk are organized into conversation as sequences and how sequences can be expanded (Chapters 7 and 8); the third is the repair system which deals with breakdowns in conversation (Chapter 9).

To be specific, Chapter 5 starts with the turn-taking mechanism, which is locally organized and interactionally managed. The discussion of the turn constructional units (TCUs) is supplemented with the notion of completeness (possible and actual). TCUs, transition relevance places (TRPs) and turn allocation component are described in connection with the rules linking turn construction and turn allocation and in connection with those features of turn-taking in conversation and some mechanisms participants employ to repair turn-taking errors and violations in conversation. The chapter then finishes with an introduction of multi-TCU turns and multi-turn TCUs. Chapter 6 extends the discussion to the role and management of gaps and overlaps in turn-taking, starting with the notion of the transition space and the ways it can be modified by participants for interactional purposes. The manipulation of the transition place is likely to result in the occurrence of gaps and overlaps. While an increased transition space may lead to a silence in the talk, reduced transition space leads to latching and overlap. The interactional significances of gaps and overlaps are further discussed in this chapter, as well as how overlaps are managed by participants in interaction.

Chapter 7 introduces the notions of adjacency pairs and preference organization, which are crucial for understanding conversation as a rule-governed activity. The concept of sequence organization is based on the notion of social action. Speakers cluster turns together in order to develop a course of action (cf. the speech act theory). Minimal sequences, consisting of first part and second pair parts (FPPs and SPPs) as well as types of SPPs are outlined. The organization of sequences is analyzed in terms of preferred and dispreferred actions. The effect of preference organization on turn shape is observed. Particular actions, such as invitations and assessments are discussed, as are the dispreferred first pair parts such as criticism of co-participants. Chapter 8 considers the ways in which sequences can be expanded. Relative to the position of the expansion with respect to FPPs and SPPs, three types of expansion sequences are distinguished: pre-expansion (prior to the articulation of the base FPP), insert expansion (between the base FPP and the base SPP) and post-expansion (following the base SPP). Forms of the three types of expansions and their interactional purposes are elaborated in this chapter as well.

Chapter 9 provides a detailed overview of various types and sequential positions of repair, based on a model proposed by Schegloff et al. (1977): self-initiated self-repair, self-initiated

other repair, other-initiated self-repair, and other-initiated other repair. Liddicoat also mentions repair in a more complex way, considering gaze in conversation. The book offers ample examples of various repair initiators and thorough discussions on the realizations of repair in relation to sequential position. The issue of preference in repair is also discussed: self-repair is preferred whilst other-repair is typically mitigated.

Following the discussion of the three sets of the procedure, the book turns to investigate three areas of conversational difficulty: opening a conversation, closing a conversation and telling a story (Chapter 10 through Chapter 12). Chapter 10 concerns how the opening of a conversation is achieved. The sequential organization and the interactional achievement of conversational openings are discussed. Although openings in face-to-face interaction are briefly analyzed in the end of the chapter, discussions in this chapter are almost exclusively based on openings of telephone conversations. This might be a weak point for this book as it considers conversation in general. Chapter 11 explores how participants negotiate to end conversations. The chapter starts with discussions on terminal sequences and pre-closing sequences which are designed to verify if all relevant mentionables have been uttered. It continues to elaborate various closing implicative environments, i.e., sets of actions after which closing may be a relevant next activity. However, after the closing implicative environments, closure is a common but not an inevitable activity. Not all closing implicative environments move to closing and not all closings succeed in bringing a closing to completion. Moving out of closing is then illustrated in relation to locations for moving out and typical sequences found in moving out. Chapter 12 investigates storytelling in conversation. Noting that the basic organization of conversation produces an interactional problem for the completion of some actions in a single TCU such as telling stories and jokes, the author describes how telling of stories is achieved collaboratively by interlocutors. Conversational practices for introducing stories into interaction are elaborated. It is shown how the legitimacy of a story for a current conversation is established and how stories are constructed. Interesting interactional work also occurs in second stories and in stories of shared experience.

In the last chapter (Chapter 13), the author introduces applying methods and ideas from conversation analysis in three contexts: institutional talk, computer-mediated interactions, and second language acquisition. The chapter shows how institutional settings modify everyday interaction in terms of turn-taking, turn-allocation, and the structures of instructional practices. The chapter also gives some indications of how CA has been used to understand computer-mediated interactions and how CA can be employed in second language acquisition which allows the language learners to be investigated as participants in

interaction. All these three contexts are fascinating areas but yet under-researched to some extent.

Overall, Liddicoat's book provides a thorough and systematic overview of CA. The chapters introduce every aspect of conversation analysis in a logical and step-by-step examination, and how it can be applied in the real world. Despite the necessarily technical vocabulary, it is highly accessible. Each chapter in this revised and expanded edition has a section of Exercises (except for Chapter 1) and a section of Further Reading. In addition, the volume has an accompanying Companion Website, including materials for students, lecturers and practitioners. Thus the book is useful for self-study as well as for the classroom. I would highly recommend it to beginners of conversation analysis, at undergraduate or master level, and their instructors as to anyone in pragmatics, sociolinguistics, sociology and discourse analysis interested in the analysis of conversational data.

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