CHAPTER 2: CONVERSATION ANALYSIS
COMMENTARY ON ACTIVITIES

Activity 2.3

Prediction (1)
This happens most of the time, so almost any line will count as evidence.

Prediction (2)
Fragment 1
24   PK     Is there anything below that=
25   DN     =>There’s nothing< directly below it °at all.°=
26   PK     =°.pt°=There’s nothing below it.
→ 27   DN     [[°°No.°°]]
→ 28   PK     [[Okay] So (.)) imagine r:oughly about (.)

In L26, with the falling intonation marked by the full stop, PK comes to the end of a
TCU. DN can therefore legitimately self-select and he does so in L27. However, it appears
that PK has also chosen to re-select himself and this therefore results in a very brief (if not
fierce – cf. DN’s quietness) period of competing speakership.

Fragment 2
106  PK    =You know underneath - underneath the word ‘pond’
         there’s not a- a wee mark=
108  DN    =>>Oh is like a<< wa:ve.
         PK    Like a wee wave.=
110  DN    =°Yeah°=
         PK    =↑°Yes↑=°
112  DN    =>So there’s thr[ee-<] there’s THREE waves altogether.
         PK    [Three]
→ 115  DN    [[<°There’s the one wave.°>]]
→ 117  PK    [[There’s three waves aye] it’s it’s like
         (.)) it’s like the moon

In L112, with the falling intonation marked by the full stop, DN comes to the end of a
TCU. PK can therefore legitimately self-select and he does so in L115. However, it appears
that DN has also chosen to re-select himself (L114) and this results in a very brief (again, if
not fierce – cf. DN’s quietness) period of competing speakership.

Prediction (3)
Fragment 3
151  PK    (.)) Okay? Come right round under the pond
          [>until you’re about<]=
→ 153  DN    [°°Yeah°°]
          PK    =(.)) quarter o’ an inch (.)) circling under the pond.
155     Okay?
In L151, ‘Come right round under the pond’ (because of its apparent syntactic, semantic and intonational completeness) represents a possible TRP. Projecting this possible TRP, DN therefore operates under Rule 1b and self-selects. However DN’s projection of the end of the TCU was misguided as PK has yet more to add (PK clearly building the addition as a mere continuation of the ongoing TCU). Hence the brief overlap.

Activity 2.4
Here are some examples:

Fragment 4

<p>| | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>PK</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>Dale.</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>(.)</td>
<td>Right Dale. (1.0) To the right of your map roughly approximately,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DN</td>
<td>°Aha°</td>
<td>PK</td>
<td>say seven inches down or eight inches down,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→</td>
<td>DN</td>
<td>[&gt;[°°Yeah°°]&lt;]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>PK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overlap? Yes. Because of Prediction (2) above? No.
Initially you may have assumed that because of the double brackets, this was just another case covered by Prediction (2) above. That would have been reasonable – if it had not been for the comma at the end of L8! Because this comma indicates a fall–rise intonation, this seems to indicate that PK has perhaps not finished his turn. Thus, because PK has not reached a TRP, this simultaneous talk is not covered by the turn-taking rules. Sometimes complex TCUs are delivered in smaller non-TCU-sized instalments with continuing intonation inviting confirmation of the receipt of each instalment so that the speaker can continue – just think of getting telephone numbers from directory enquiries as in this example:

Example 1:
Switchboard: What name please?
Caller: York St John University fax number.
Switchboard: That’s zero one, (.)
Caller: Aha?
Switchboard: nine zero four, (.)
Caller: Mhm?
Switchboard: nine one two, (.)
Caller: Yeah?
Switchboard: five one two.
Caller: Thanks.

Surely, this is what is going on in fragment 4: DN’s ‘>°°Yeah°°<’ in L9 confirms receipt of PK’s instalment in the prior line. It is not an attempt to take the floor, but rather acts as a backchannel acknowledgement token (or continuer) – in essence, a ‘please continue’ signal. Although there is no TRP, there is an expectation (set up by the similar sequential organization of lines 5–7) that DN might select himself to speak. The simultaneous talk is therefore not interruptive, but rather overlap, and the choice of [ ] rather than [ ] was an attempt to signal this complex case of expectation of DN self-selecting despite there being no apparent TRP in PK’s turn.
Fragment 5
60 PK nice circle round (.) until you stop (.) roughly about— a— about an inch above (.) the letter ‘house’ — the letter ‘h’ (1.1) °where it says ‘house’. Okay?°
DN Okay yeah.
→ PK Now [you stop there.]
→ 65 DN [Right >what by the left<] chimney (X)
PK Hmm?
DN Near the left chimney
PK °°.pt°°=(.hh) No jus: above the left chimney
→ [>but it’s above<] the left chimney=
→ 70 DN [°°Yeah°°]
PK °°Yeah°°]
DN =you’d be stopping somewhere roughly about an inch and a half °°off. Okay?°°

Lines 64–65: interruption. In L64, PK cannot have finished his turn after ‘Now’ — as Schiffrin (1987: 266) says, the function that now has is ‘displaying attention to what is coming next [ … focusing] on the speaker, and on upcoming talk’. Thus, DN’s turn in L65 is an attempt to take the turn from his partner. Here he is successful: PK stops talking and DN gets a complete TCU.

Lines 69–70: overlap. The reasons are similar to those in fragment 4. In L70, DN is not attempting to take the floor. He is just saying ‘please continue’. The reason that this fragment uses a single [ is that here there is not such a strong expectation that DN might take a turn.

Fragment 6
130 PK =Okay. So: (.) whe— where you left off (.) above the word house
DN Yeah
132 PK (0.7) circle up, okay?
DN Yeah
→ 134 PK And round [to your le]ft (.) very gently
→ DN [°relative to°<]
136 DN °Yeah.°

Interruption. In L134, PK says ’And round’, but that clearly doesn’t constitute a complete TCU and so, as there is no TRP, DN’s ‘relative to’ counts as an interruption even though it is not a particularly strong one (in that DN quickly drops out and apparently does not pursue his turn to completion).

You may have found a couple of cases where it is hard to determine whether the simultaneity counts as overlap or interruption:

Fragment 7
82 PK Right. (0.8) Now (1.3) you should be approximately roughly (0.9) what say three and a half inches from the top o’ your (.) map?
→ 84 DN °Aha yeah° °°I’m [a bit more maybe°°]
→ PK °°Okay?] That’s good.°
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(1.2) Now before we start circling down-round to your left,

Interruption? Yes and no. In L85, PK is trying to take the floor while DN is in mid TCU – so yes, it appears to be interruption. That said, DN is uttering this TCU very quietly. It is therefore possible that PK hasn’t heard it – in which case as far as he is concerned it isn’t even simultaneous talk. If this is the case, then we might prefer to analyse the simultaneity as a case not of violative interruption, but of innocent overlap.

An alternative analysis (which also yields an overlap conclusion) is that the simultaneous talk occurs very close to a TRP (the one after “Aha yeah” in L84). It is therefore possible that PK believes he is entitled to self-select non-interruptively – it’s just that he starts a little bit too slowly and in this way DN’s extension to his turn has the effect of making PK appear to be in violation of the one speaker at a time convention when he probably had no such intention. In other words, this could just be a case of a slightly mistimed Prediction (2) overlap.

Activity 2.5

Lapses

Lapses occur due to the non-application of Rule 1 – in other words when talk is suspended.

There are no lapses in this data.

A typical place to hear a lapse in Britain is in front of the fire after a large Christmas dinner. Often the effort to interact will seem just so overwhelming that everyone will temporarily suspend all talk. Elsewhere, Fasold (1990: 40f.) reports that lapses are common in a Lapp community (no pun intended) in northern Sweden as well as among some Native American groups.

Gaps

Gaps occur before the application of 1b – in other words before someone else self-selects:

Gaps can also occur before the application of 1c – in other words before self-reselection:
**Attributable silences**

Attributable silence occurs after the application of Rule 1a – in other words, it is the silence between the end of the turn where current speaker selects next speaker and the turn where next speaker starts speaking.

**Activity 2.6**

There are many examples of silence within a turn. Here are just the first few of them:
In fragment collection 13, the silences occur at a point where the utterance is clearly incomplete: syntactically, semantically and intonationally. If the TCU is still on-going, a TRP cannot have been reached and thus it is not a place where it is relevant for there to be a transition of speakers.

What might these silences exist for: what interactional tasks are they trying to accomplish?

This is actually a much harder question to answer than at first it may appear, depending on which silences you have found. For example it is tempting to initially claim that silences occur to allow the speaker some thinking time. While that is likely to be one task silences can serve (as in lines 20 and 28 – take away just the silences in these turns and you are left with something that is perfectly well-formed), that might be only part of the answer.

Silences might also allow the speaker to somehow signal a ‘repair’ of their utterance (as in lines 15 and 33 where the on-going TCU has been altered after the silence – take away the silences in these turns and you are left with something that is ungrammatical).

Other silences might indicate emphasis, or grammatical punctuation (for example in delivering lists, telephone numbers, or even larger chunks of talk). They might even perhaps indicate that the speaker has just been distracted mid-utterance. In short, silence can be multi-functional.

What is remarkable about the various functions of silence (including inter-turn silence) is that, as Levinson (1983: 329) notes:

silence has no features of its own: all the different significances attributed to it must have their sources in the structural expectations engendered by the surrounding talk. So sequential expectations are not only capable of making something out of nothing, but also of constructing many different kinds of significance out of the sheer absence of talk. If conversational organization can map ‘meaning’ onto silence, it can also map situated significance onto utterances – and in fact it can be shown to regularly do so.

In other words, it is not just what happens (or, in the case of silence, doesn’t happen) in talk that is important, but also where it happens in the wider sequential organization of talk.

Activity 2.7

1 1–1, 2–2, 3–3 … should all naturally ‘fit’ together quite happily.
2 With just some occasional tweaking, 1–2, 2–3, 3–4 … should also seem to ‘fit’. This shows that first pair parts have possible alternative second pair parts.
   In the first pair (1–2), your friend should offer a business-like formal handshake. If others don’t seem to work you might need to experiment with different intonations: annoyed, condescending, excited, fearful, grateful, incredulous, imploring, mysterious, neutral, sarcastic, and so on.
   NB: while the words from the second column ‘fit’, they don’t necessarily belong to the same type as before. For example, while 10–11 fit together, ‘I only have postage stamps left’ is clearly not an example of compliance here.
3 1–3, 2–4, 3–5 … should all sound very odd.
   This shows that while there are always possible alternative second pair parts, the possibilities are limited – it is not a case of ‘anything goes’.
Activity 2.8

Adjacency pairs are such a common occurrence in spontaneous talk that they should be easy to find. Here are just a few. You may have uncovered others.

03 PK First name again? Part 1: Question
04 DN Dale. Part 2: Response

04 DN Dale. Part 1: Response
05 PK ↓Dale.↓ Part 2: Acknowledgement

10 PK have you got a ↑starting↑mark. Part 1: Question
11 DN Yeah I’ve got a- a starting mark Part 2: Response

13 PK It’s just below the house= Part 1: Check
14 DN °Aha° Part 2: Clarification
14 DN °Aha° Part 1: Response
15 PK Okay. Part 2: Acknowledgement

148 PK And start to dip down, (.) Part 1: Instruction
149 under the pond and pass it by quarter of an inch. Part 2: Compliance
150 DN °Yeah°

Activity 2.9

Although there are four questions and four responses in Example 2, only the fourth pair (Q4–R4) displays strict adjacency, as can be seen here:

Example 2a: Mair’s Deli

Archie: Can I have a sandwich to take away please? Q1
Eric: What would you like? Q2
Archie: What would you recommend? Q3
Eric: Are you a vegetarian? Q4
Archie: Yes. R4
Eric: Well the vegetarian cajun pâté is good. R3
Archie: Okay I’ll have one of those then! R2
Eric: Right, that’ll be £3.20 please. R1

Each time a new pair is started before the previous first pair part has received its second pair part we say that the new pair is embedded or inserted within the first pair. This type of sequence is thus known as an insertion sequence. In the Mair’s Deli example there are three insertion sequences inside the Q1–R1 pair, two insertion sequences within the Q2–R2 pair and one within Q3–R3.
Activity 2.10

While they are not as common as adjacent pairs, there are also insertion sequences in Extract 2.2. Here is one that we found (with Pair B inside Pair A):

11 DN I’ve got a starting mark  
12 and it’s just below a house.  
13 PK It’s just below the house=  
14 DN °Aha°  
15 PK Okay.  

And just to show that even within real talk there are insertion sequences within insertion sequences:

45 PK okay?  
46 DN (0.8) >Oh d’y’you say there’s another house.<  
47 PK °Hmm?°  
48 DN >Did you say there was another house<  
49 PK >No no it’s just the one hou- [no X]  
50 DN °Right°  

There are other embedded sequences, but they are more complex than necessary for current purposes.

Activity 2.11

Here are a couple of examples of chaining which were first seen (in their component parts) in the commentary to Activity 2.8. Again, you may have uncovered others.

03 PK First name again?  
04 DN Dale.  
05 PK Dale.↓  
13 PK It’s just below the house=  
14 DN °Aha°  
15 PK Okay.  

Chaining and insertion sequences can work in conjunction to generate really quite tightly organized and often very complex sequences of talk. Below you can see the structures of a couple of examples:
10  PK  have you got a
    ↑starting↑mark.  A Part 1: Question
11  DN  Yeah I’ve got a-
    a starting mark  A Part 2: Response
12      and it’s just below
    a house.  B Part 1: Explanation
13  PK  It’s just below
    the house=
14  DN  =°Aha°  C Part 1: Check
15  PK  Okay.

This fragment is very interesting because it demonstrates that just as it is possible for a second pair part to simultaneously act as the first pair part of a new inserted sequence (as in L14, where C2=D1), it is also possible for a second pair part to simultaneously act as the second pair part to a prior previous first (as in L15, where D2=B2). A similar case can be seen in L80 in the fragment below:

74  PK  Now (.) bring your
75      route approximately up about
76      another ↑inch↑ in a-
77      er roughly an inch an’ a half
78      in from the edge o’ yer
    map, going north.  A Part 1: Instruction
78  DN  °Yeah.°  A Part 2: Acknowledgement
    Straight up  B Part 1: Check
79  PK  °Straight ↑up↑
    Ok[ay?]  C Part 1: Alignment
80  DN  [Okay]  C Part 2: Agreement =
    A Part 2: Acknowledgement ctd.