Reformulating place[☆]

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Abstract

This report examines what can be accomplished in conversation by reformulating a reference to a place using the practices of repair. It is based on an analysis of a collection of place references situated in second pair parts of adjacency pairs taken from a wide range of field recordings of talk-in-interaction. Not surprisingly, place references are sometimes reformulated so as to indicate a misspeaking or in pursuit of recipient recognition. At other times, however, we show that place references can be reformulated to more adequately implement the action of a turn in prosecuting the course of action of which it is a part. In these cases repairing a place reference can target a source of trouble associated with implementing the action of a turn at talk, and thus reformulating place can serve as a practical resource for accomplishing a range of interactional tasks. We conclude with a more complex case in which two reformulations are deployed in responding to a so-called 'double-barrelled' initiating action.
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1. Introduction

When a speaker in conversation refers to a person, place, time, event or object, the expression they use can be understood as having been selected from among a range of alternative formulations, and so the question for co-participants and analysts alike is 'why <u>that one</u> now?'. In some of his earliest work, Sacks (1972a, 1972b, 1992) observed that because there is always more than one correct membership category to choose from when referring to a person

categorically, the use of one or another membership category by a speaker cannot be based simply on its correctness. The same can be said for place formulations, which can be selected for this particular recipient or for ''the activities being enacted by the utterance'' (Schegloff, 1972:96). That is, place formulations can be selected as part and parcel of the formation of action in a turn at talk.

Previous conversation analytic research in this area has, for the most part, focused on references to persons, and much of the analytic leverage for such examinations is derived from the use of routine or so-called 'unmarked' ways for referring to persons such that nothing more than referring is being done. 'Reference simpliciter' (Sacks and Schegloff, 1979; Schegloff, 1996) includes such practices as the use of ''I'' for speaker self-reference, the use of a name for a known-to-be-known-in-common non-present person, and the use of ''he'' or ''she'' for locally subsequent reference to that non-present person. Departures from these routine ways of referring to persons, through the selection of 'recognizably alternative' formulations to them, invite inspection for what is being done beyond referring, as when a speaker refers to themselves, not as ''I,'' but as ''the woman he fell in love with'' (Land and Kitzinger, 2007; Hepburn et al., 2012), when a known-in-common party is referred to not as ''Aunt Alene'' but as ''your sister'' (Stivers, 2007), or when a person previously mentioned by name is nonetheless referred to again by name (Schegloff, 1996). These noticeable departures from reference simpliciter can be interactionally salient as speakers tailor their formulations for the action of their turn at talk, such that the formulation is itself integral to the formation of the action that the turn implements.

As Lerner and Kitzinger (2007) have demonstrated, another method for gaining analytic leverage in exposing how speakers select formulations from among alternative correct formulations – and thereby exposing how these contribute to the formation of action – is by examining how formulations are re-formulated. For example, on some occasions of self-reference either ''I'' or ''we'' can be correctly employed as a routine formulation and only the reformulation itself makes visible that one formulation is being specifically selected over a now overtly rejected (or at least abandoned) alternative (Lerner and Kitzinger, 2007). Likewise categorical references to non-present persons are sometimes replaced with different categorical references (e.g. from ''men'' to ''detainees''), thereby exposing the selection of one formulation over another (Lerner et al., 2012).

Prior research (Lerner and Kitzinger, 2007; Lerner et al., 2012) has shown that reformulating a person reference can be used to tailor that reference for the action of the turn. In the present report we expand this line of work by investigating the reformulation of place references in conversation. This report is not focused on describing how formulating is done per se; rather it aims to show how place formulations – as an interactional resource – can be used to contribute to the action of a response and thereby to the course of action of which it is a part.

2. Data and method

This study is conversation analytic in its approach and aims. Thus it is an empirical study of the methodical procedures used by participants in organizing talk and other conduct in interaction and is based on detailed, systematic inspection of field recordings of talk-in-interaction. Our data are drawn from a large collection of recordings of conversations – mostly in English (British, USA, New Zealand, Australian standard and Aboriginal), but also in Polish and Spanish, some collected by individual members of our research team, some taken from established data corpora commonly used by conversation analysts. These conversations include some that took place over the phone (audio-recordings) and others that occurred during co-present interaction (video-recordings). We have data from personal encounters (e.g. family meal times, friends chatting) as well as from service encounters (e.g. helpline calls, emergency calls). We have transcribed our data extracts using the notation first developed by Jefferson (2004).

As part of the broader research project from which the findings reported here are drawn, we have compiled a sub-collection of place formulations. The original formulations in this sub-collection come in turns at talk produced in response to a sequence-initiating action – i.e. in a response to the first pair part of an adjacency pair (e.g. after a question such as: ''where are you planning to have your baby?'' or ''where is the piano lesson?''). For the analysis presented here, we selected only those cases in which speakers, in the course of responding to an adjacency pair first pair part (or in its aftermath), reformulate their place reference and do so using the practices of repair (either self-initiated or other-initiated). This repair results in two (or more) successive formulations aiming at more or less the same place referent (the one made relevant by the sequence-initiating action to which it is responsive).[1]

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[1] Subsequent formulations of a place reference need not be the result of a repair operation (as can be seen in lines 2–3 of Extract 2 and lines 2–4 of Extract 3), but in this report we focus on cases where the progressivity of a turn's talk is suspended so as to reformulate the reference through repair – that is, we center our discussion on cases where formulating place becomes a focal concern.