Inclined to better understanding—The coordination of talk and 'leaning forward' in doing repair

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Abstract

This paper advocates an approach to CA studies of talk and body movements that focuses on the employment of various resources observable as methods for interaction that are sequentially consequential. It aims to demonstrate such an approach by analysing the combination of talk and the body movement 'leaning forward' in specific interactional environments. These environments are characterized by extended repair sequences, i.e. by troubles in understanding an action *and* by troubles in achieving a common understanding through repair. The paper shows how a combination of talk and the body movement 'leaning forward' is used as means to construct a repair in this local context. The components are ordered in specific ways. The use and the ordering of them are sequentially consequential and oriented to by the co-participant, who may construct his subsequent action by employing similar components and ordering them in similar ways. The paper also aims at discussing if and how a CA analysis can ascertain that a speaker is for instance relying upon both body movement and talk in a prior turn and not simply upon the talk in it if he restricts himself to deploying the component talk in the construction of his subsequent turn.
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1. Introduction

Conversation Analysis (CA) studies were founded as an approach to the study of how members of society methodically accomplish recognizable and understandable social structures in and of interaction (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984; Jefferson, 1995; Maynard and Clayman, 1991). CA and the studies it has occasioned have revealed that members as participants in interaction do not only rely upon language to achieve intersubjective understanding of the social activities that they are engaged in structuring. They also draw upon other resources such as speech perturbations (Schegloff et al., 1977), gaps and pauses (Lerner, 2004), gazes (Kendon, 1990; Sidnell, 2006), gestures (Goodwin, 1980, 2000a; Mondada, 2007; Streeck, 1993; Heath and Luff, 2011), bodily movements (Mondada, 2009; Lerner et al., 2011; Streeck, 2002, 2003) and material objects (Hindmarsch and Heath, 2000; Koskela and Arminen, 2012; Streeck, 2011; Wilkinson et al., 2011). These studies aim at describing in detail how various actions are used as recognizable methods and how materials used figure together to constitute sense-making actions for interaction (Streeck et al., 2011).

It is a crucial and an inherent part of CA studies that participants' responses to the use of actions and methods as described by the analyst should be treated empirically (Schegloff, 1997). In this vein, the present paper advocates an approach to the study of the use of various materials in the construction of action that does not restrict itself to describing

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occurrences of different modalities or ''communicative modes'' (Norris, 2004), such as ''semiotic'' choices and meaning as arising from the interaction of chosen semiotic signs (cf. Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001). This is a common assumption of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) (O'Halloran, 2011), including Multimodal Interaction Analysis (Norris, 2004). I advocate an approach that aims to describe the use of diverse materials that are demonstrably oriented to as (part of the) methods for interaction. I advocate a description of such methods that are sequentially consequential (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973:296).

2. The paper's purpose and use of data

The paper has two purposes. Firstly, it aims to *describe* the coordination of talk and the bodily movement 'leaning forward' (sections 6.1 and 6.2) as a method for coming closer to an understanding of some prior talk that is being treated as troublesome in some way, i.e. is being repaired (Schegloff, 1992; Schegloff et al., 1977).[1]

The paper is based on analyses of nine examples in which this method is employed and in which there is evidence of sequential importance of its use. Secondly, the paper will *discuss* the use and treatment of various materials as (elements of) methods and actions employed for interaction (sections 6.3 and 7). According to Goodwin (2012), a subsequent response action is built from transformations of the materials provided by the prior action. The analyses of talk and the bodily movement 'leaning forward' as described above support this. But, the paper will discuss if and how a CA analysis can ascertain that a speaker is, for instance, relying upon both body movement and talk in a prior turn and not simply upon the talk in it even if he restricts himself to deploying the component talk in the construction of his subsequent turn.

Out of the nine examples of combining talk and the bodily movement 'leaning forward' in sequences of repair, the paper will restrict itself to presenting three examples. Seven of the examples stem from a corpus of interactions between or with communicatively challenged individuals: children, preadolescents, adolescents and adults. Of course, a communicative impairment *may* occasion the trouble in understanding in the concrete instances in the examples. In that sense, it may occasion the emergence of the structure of the repair sequence under investigation in the specific case. However, it does not account for the structure as a generally recognizable one nor the ways in which the repair actions are carried out in recognizable ways. Both structure and methods have namely been found in two other examples one of which will be presented in the paper. In these examples, the co-participants are boys interacting with adults.

3. Transcriptions

The data used for the paper were videotaped and transcribed partly in accordance with the transcription conventions developed by Gail Jefferson (1974) (see Appendix A). Additionally, symbols have been used to indicate the co-occurrence of resources for interaction (/ /) in building a turn as exemplified below (lines 1 and 3):

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1      A:      der står /sådn [stOR træstam/me]         ]  ]  ]
2              mutual gaze with B
3                    /shakes his head      /
4              there is a sort of a big tree trunk
5      B:      mutual gaze with A
6      D:                    [med °crossern° ]
7              mutual gaze with C
8              with the dirt bike
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As A initiates his turn 'der står sådn stOR træstamme' (*there is a sort of a big tree trunk*), he holds mutual gaze with B (lines 1–2). This is maintained during the production of the Turn Constructional Unit, TCU (Sacks et al., 1974).

Furthermore, he shakes his head as he initiates 'sådn' (*sort of*) and terminates this movement just prior to the termination of 'træstamme' (*tree trunk*) (/ /) (lines 1 and 3).

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[1] For matters of clarification, this paper understands practices by which turns are recognizably composed as *actions* whether these are realized through talk and/or body movements. In this vein, this paper refers to actions-in-interaction.