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Three Exemplary Studies

Contents

In this chapter, I will provide a selective discussion of three 'classic' CA studies. The general purpose is to deepen readers' understanding of the argumentative structure of CA work. But along the way I also introduce some basic concepts and quote some interesting programmatic statements which were relative frequently made in these early phases of CA's development.

Harvey Sacks' first lecture[1]

According to Schegloff's account (Schegloff, in Sacks, 1992a: xvi–xvii), a major moment in the emergence of CA as a discipline of its own was the 'discovery' by Harvey Sacks of some subtle ways in which callers to a Suicide Prevention Center managed to avoid giving their names. In the edited collection of Sacks' *Lectures*, this 'moment' is represented by the first lecture, given in the fall of 1964, posthumously entitled 'Rules of conversational sequence' (Sacks, 1992a: 3–11).

It begins as follows:

I'll start off by giving some quotations.

(1)   A: Hello
      B: Hello
(2)   A: This is Mr Smith may I help you
      B: Yes, this is Mr Brown
(3)   A: This is Mr Smith may I help you
      B: I can't hear you

A: This is Mr <u>Smith</u>.
B: Smith. (Sacks, 1992a: 3)

These are first utterances in calls to a psychiatric emergency service. According to Sacks, one important issue for the professionals answering calls was to get callers' names. The second case would be the standard form of solving this issue without raising it explicitly. By giving his own name, the call-taker made the caller's name-giving a 'natural' next action: '. . . if a person uses "This is Mr Smith . . ." they have a way of asking for the other's name − without, however, asking the question "What is your name?" ' (4). In case 3, however, a caller seemed to use 'I can't hear you' to avoid giving his name by filling the 'slot' designed by the call-taker for this purpose with a different object, one initiating what later would be called a repair sequence.

There are many interesting elements in this analysis − which, of course, can only be glossed here in a very rough manner. For our present purposes, it is important to note that at CA's very beginning, Sacks' strategy was to compare instances of sequences which were similar in terms of their institutional setting (the psychiatric emergency service), their structural location (a call's opening), and the basic procedures (paired actions), but different in the ways in which these were used. For analysing sequences, the notion of paired actions, later to be developed in the concept of 'adjacency pairs', is a basic one, although it should be noted already that the concept of 'sequencing' is not limited to it. In this first analysis, it is linked with a notion of structural location, as in the following:

> We can say there's a procedural rule here, that a person who speaks first in a telephone conversation can choose their form of address, and in choosing their form of address they can thereby choose the form of address the other uses. (Sacks, 1992a: 4)

And later:

> We can also notice that, as a way of asking for the other's name, 'This is Mr Smith . . .' is, in the first place, not an accountable action. By that I mean to say, it's not required that staff members use it and they don't always use it, but when they do, the caller doesn't ask why. 'This is Mr Smith . . .' gets its character as a nonaccountable action simply by virtue of the fact that this is a place where, routinely, two people speak who haven't met. In such places, the person who speaks first can use that object. [. . .] a call is made; the only issue is that two persons are speaking who presumably haven't met, and this object can be used. (5)

In the first instance of the three, an exchange of hellos, the issue of names does not appear at all. Sacks says that when callers started the call, after being connected with the agent by an operator, they invariably used 'hello' as their first utterance. 'Since such a unit involves no exchange of names, they can speak without giving their name and be going about things in a perfectly appropriate way' (6).

In contrast with these structurally specific issues, an object like 'I can't hear you' can be used any time, any place. Sacks calls it 'an "occasionally usable" device. That is to say, there doesn't have to be a particular sort of thing preceding it' (6).

With the wisdom of hindsight, we can say that this first lecture, even in the incomplete fashion I have discussed it here, has offered a starting point for

analytic themes for much of latter-day CA. In its published form, the lecture has been given the title 'Rules of conversational sequence', and indeed, as I mentioned, the theme of paired actions, one creating a 'slot' for the next, later conceptualized as 'adjacency pairs', has proven to be a very fruitful one. A second theme opened up by this lecture is the complexity of the relation of conversational action to conversational form; 'asking' without using a 'question' to do so having implications of (non-)accountability. Thirdly, we encountered phenomena of repair, although here not yet analysed in those terms. Fourthly, I will just mention that the lecture has demonstrated that openings are a very useful place to study the negotiation of interaction formats – to be followed up in some of Sacks' later lectures, and especially in a number of papers by his 'first colleague' in CA, Emanuel Schegloff, as will be discussed in the next section. As Sacks mentions, some conversational phenomena are basically related to the place at which they occur, while others can be found 'anywhere'. Finally, at the most general level, this first lecture demonstrates what I consider to be CA's basic analytic strategy: take what people are doing, that is saying, not-saying, saying something in a particular manner, at a particular moment, etc., and try to find out the kind of problem for which this doing might be a solution.

Schegloff's 'sequencing in conversational openings'

Emanuel Schegloff's paper 'Sequencing in conversational openings' (1968) is, as far as I know, the first published paper that represented CA as it later would be known. Its first sentence reads:

> My object in this paper is to show that the raw data of everyday conversational interaction can be subjected to rigorous analysis. (Schegloff, 1968: 1075)

The analysis is based on some 500 instances of the openings of telephone calls to a 'disaster centre'. Overseeing his materials, Schegloff reports that he had formulated:

> A first rule of telephone conversation, which might be called a 'distribution rule for first utterances,' [which] is: *the answerer speaks first*. (1076)

Then he looked for exceptions:

> One case clearly does not fit the requirements of the distribution rule:
>
> #9 (Police makes call)
> Receiver is lifted, and there is a one second pause
> Police: Hello.
> Other: American Red Cross.
> Police: Hello, this is Police Headquarters . . . er, Officer Stratton [etc.]. (1079)

This one deviant case was used to trigger a deeper analysis of all cases in terms of a basic device called the 'summons – answer sequence'. In the routine case, the

telephone ring functions as the summons, to which the opening utterance, such as a 'Hello' or an identification, is the answer. In the deviant case, this answer is not readily forthcoming, therefore the summons is repeated in a different form, the caller's first 'Hello' in case #9 above.

Schegloff focuses his subsequent discussions on various properties of the summons – answer (SA) sequence, including its 'non-terminality' (something should follow) and 'non-repeatability' (once a summons is answered, one shouldn't make another), and on its functionality in arranging the conversational interaction. Especially important for my purposes is his discussion of 'conditional relevance':

> By conditional relevance of one item on another we mean: given the first, the second is expectable; upon its occurrence it can be seen to be a second item to the first; upon its nonoccurrence it can be seen to be officially absent – all this provided by the occurrence of the first item. (1083)

Schegloff adds 'the property of immediate juxtaposition' to this, suggesting that the second item should be produced in 'next position', whatever 'next' will be in the circumstances, and for some type of sequences allowing other items to be 'inserted' between the two primary ones (cf. also Schegloff, 1972).

In the paper's last paragraph, Schegloff summarizes the general import of SA sequences as follows:

> [. . .] conversation is a 'minimally two-party' activity. That requirement is not satisfied by the mere copresence of two persons, one of whom is talking. It requires that there be both a 'speaker' and a 'hearer.' [. . .] To behave as a 'speaker' or a 'hearer' when the other is not observably available is to subject oneself to a review of one's competence and 'normality.' Speakers without hearers can be seen to be 'talking to themselves.' Hearers without speakers 'hear voices.' [. . .] SA sequences establish and align the roles of speaker and hearer, providing a summoner with the evidence of the availability or unavailability of a hearer, and a prospective hearer with notice of a prospective speaker. The sequence constitutes a coordinated entry into the activity, allowing each party occasion to demonstrate his coordination with the other, a coordination that may then be sustained by the parties demonstrating continued speakership or hearership. (1093)

In this paper, we again encounter the notion of paired actions. And again, we see it being tied to a specific structural location, the opening exchanges of a call. In contrast to Sacks' analysis, discussed above, the fact that all the calls were made to or from a specific institutional agency is not given any special attention in the analysis. It is, so to speak, an analytically arbitrary setting, as are, for the most part, the series of group therapy sessions, fragments of which are discussed throughout Sacks' *Lectures*.

For general interest, let me just mention here that in subsequent lectures (Sacks) and papers (Schegloff), several aspects of openings have been analysed in greater depth. Sacks has on several occasions discussed issues related to what he called 'the reason-for-a-call' as being quite often a primary topic just after the opening exchanges. Calling someone is, for non-intimates, an accountable action which has to be accounted for 'by and large on the first opportunity to talk after greetings' (Sacks, 1992a: 73; see also 773ff. and some later discussions in 1992b).

From Schegloff's later work on openings, I want to note his analysis of 'Identification and recognition in telephone conversation openings' (1979a) and some further work on the systematics of its sequential organization in 'The routine as achievement' (1986). These analyses have been challenged in terms of cultural variation, suggesting that Schegloff's cases were 'typically American', but this largely seems to miss their major analytic points.[2]

In Schegloff's 'classic' (1968) study also, the basic analytic strategy is taking what people are doing and finding out the kind of problem for which this doing might be a solution. The 'problem' here is a very fundamental one, how to start an occasion of talk-in-interaction, while the circumstances are more particular, that is restricted to two-party telephone conversations. The analytic ramifications, however, are very general indeed, having to do with issues of availability and initiative.

Schegloff and Sacks on 'opening up closings'

In 1973 Schegloff and Sacks published a paper together which can be seen to offer a nice complement to Schegloff's previously discussed one, in that it dealt with 'the other end' of conversations, closings. As they say, 'the unit "a single conversation" does not simply end, but is brought to a close' (289). What they try to do is 'to provide a technical basis' for this work of bringing 'a conversation' to a close. Although the paper was published in 1973, it takes the general concept of a 'turn-taking machinery' as a starting point, which was extensively discussed in another paper, published a year later, in 1974.

Although the authors start from the sequential organization of turns, they do note that a more complete solution of the closing problem 'requires reference to quite different orders of sequential organization in conversation – in particular, the organization of topic talk, and the overall structural organization of the unit "a single conversation"' (289).

The paper, therefore, offers an interesting 'bridge' between the turn-by-turn analysis of conversation, for which CA is best known, and considerations of more encompassing organizational levels.

In the introduction to the paper, Schegloff and Sacks make some general programmatic statements which are worth quoting at some length. They write:

> This project is part of a program of work [. . .] to explore the possibility of achieving a naturalistic observational discipline that could deal with the details of social action(s) rigorously, empirically, and formally. For a variety of reasons [. . .] our attention has focused on conversational materials; [. . .] not because of a special interest in language, or any theoretical primacy we accord conversation. Nonetheless, the character of our materials as conversational has attracted our attention to the study of conversation as an activity in its own right, and thereby to the ways in which actions accomplished in conversation require reference to the properties and organization of conversation for their understanding and analysis, both by participants and by professional investigators. This last phrase requires emphasis and explication. (289–90)[3]

One might say that this quote illustrates again, as some of the earlier cited ones, that in this early phase, CA was conceived by its originators as basically a

sociological, rather than a linguistic, enterprise, concerned with the explication of action in organizational terms, rather than with 'language use'. In later phases, the articulation of CA in terms of a *grammar* has become more prominent, without, thereby, losing its interest in *action* (cf. Ochs et al., 1996). The statements following the ones quoted above emphasize a basic interest in the orderliness of action:

> We have proceeded under the assumption (an assumption borne out by our research) that in so far as the materials we worked with exhibited orderliness, they did so not only for us, indeed not in the first place for us, but for the coparticipants who had produced them. If the materials (records of natural conversations) were orderly, they were so because they had been methodically produced by members of the society for one another, and it was a feature of the conversations that we treated as data that they were produced so as to allow the display by the co-participants to each other of their orderliness, and to allow the participants to display to each other their analysis, appreciation and use of that orderliness. Accordingly, our analysis has sought to explicate the ways in which the materials are produced by members in orderly ways that exhibit their orderliness, have their orderliness appreciated and used, and have that appreciation displayed and treated as the basis for subsequent action. (290)

In other words, the orderliness studied by CA is conceived of as a produced orderliness and one produced by the interactants themselves. Therefore, CA's interest is with the local production of order and with 'members' methods' for doing so.

After some remarks on the data used, to which I will return later, Schegloff and Sacks develop a further specification of their 'problem'. At first, they locate the problem of closing work on the level of 'the overall structural organization of single conversations' (292), but they say that many features at that level, especially the organization of 'topic', are still unclear. The concept of 'a conversation' presupposes a concept of 'conversational activity', although not all conversational activities take place in single 'conversations'. Therefore, the specification of the closing problem starts from a discussion of the basic features of 'conversational activities':

> [. . .] two basic features of conversation are proposed to be: (1) at least, and no more than, one party speaks at a time in a single conversation; and (2) speaker change recurs. The achievement of these features singly, and especially the achievement of their cooccurrence, is accomplished by coconversationalists through the use of a 'machinery' for ordering speaker turns sequentially in conversation. (293)

They then give a summary account of the 'turn-taking machinery', stressing among other things its 'local' functioning, its 'normative' character, and the fact that it provides for the location and repair of occasions of 'failure' to achieve the two basic features. One kind of example of this last mentioned aspect is that a moment of non-speech can often be observed to be attributed by the participants as 'someone's silence'. The turn-taking machinery, then, provides for the orderliness of an indefinitely ongoing conversation, not for its orderly closing. On the basis of this argument, the authors propose 'an initial problem concerning closings':

HOW TO ORGANIZE THE SIMULTANEOUS ARRIVAL OF THE CONVERSATIONALISTS AT A POINT WHERE ONE SPEAKER'S COMPLETION WILL NOT OCCASION ANOTHER SPEAKER'S TALK, AND THAT WILL NOT BE HEARD AS

> SOME SPEAKER'S SILENCE. [. . .] Again, the problem is HOW TO COORDINATE
> THE SUSPENSION OF THE TRANSITION RELEVANCE OF POSSIBLE UTTER-
> ANCE COMPLETION, NOT HOW TO DEAL WITH ITS NONOPERATION
> WHILE STILL RELEVANT. (294–5; capitals in the original)

The question, then, is how 'the transition relevance of possible utterance comple-
tion' can be lifted, for which 'a proximate solution involves the use of a "terminal
exchange" composed of conventional parts, e.g. an exchange of "good-byes"
(295). Such a terminal exchange is presented as a member of a class of utterance
sequences, which is called 'adjacency pairs'. Although Schegloff and Sacks do not
provide an extensive discussion of this concept in general, the specifications they
do give can still be considered to be the 'classic' treatment of this most important
concept. I will, therefore, provide extensive quotations:

> Briefly, then, adjacency pairs consist of sequences which properly have the following features:
> (1) two utterance length, (2) adjacent positioning of component utterances, (3) different
> speakers producing each utterance.

The component utterances of such sequences have an achieved relatedness
beyond that which may otherwise obtain between adjacent utterances. That relat-
edness is partially the product of the operation of a typology in the speakers'
production of the sequences. The typology operates in two ways: it partitions
utterance types into 'first pair parts' (i.e. first parts of pairs) and second pair
parts; and it affiliates a first pair part and a second pair part to form a pair type.
'Question–answer', 'greeting–greeting', 'offer–acceptance/refusal' are instances of
pair types. A given sequence will thus be composed of an utterance that is a first
pair part produced by one speaker directly followed by the production by a
different speaker of an utterance which is (a) a second pair part, and (b) is from
the same pair type as the first utterance in the sequence is a member of. Adjacency
pair sequences, then, exhibit the further features (4) relative ordering of parts (i.e.
first pair parts precede second pair parts) and (5) discriminative relations (i.e. the
pair type of which a first pair part is a member is relevant to the selection among
second pair parts). [. . .]
   A basic rule of adjacency pair operation is: given the recognizable production
of a first pair part, on its first possible completion its speaker should stop and a
next speaker should start and produce a second pair part from the pair type of
which the first is recognizably a member. (295–6)

These quotes largely speak for themselves, but note especially the remarks on
'achieved relatedness' and 'the operation of a typology' which have a wider
relevance than the concept of adjacency pairs by itself.
   Schegloff and Sacks remark that adjacency pairs (APs) provide for a 'close
ordering' of utterances which makes their use relevant for specific purposes, that
is the creation of specific 'sequential implications', limiting what can orderly be
done in next position, and for specific organizational tasks, such as opening or
closing a conversation. 'Close ordering is [. . .] the basic generalized means for
assuring that some desired end will ever happen' (297).[4] They further remark that
two utterances are needed for such general organizational tasks, because:

> What two utterances produced by different speakers can do that one utterance cannot is: by an adjacently positioned second, a speaker can show that he understood what a prior aimed at, and that he is willing to go along with that. Also, by virtue of the occurrence of an adjacently produced second, the doer of a first can see that what he intended was indeed understood, and that it was or was not accepted. Also, of course, a second can assert his failure to understand, or disagreement, and inspection of a second by a first can allow the first speaker to see that while the second thought he understood, indeed, he misunderstood. It is then through the use of adjacent positioning that appreciations, failures, corrections, etcetera can be themselves understandably attempted. Wherever, then, there is reason to bring attention to the appreciation of some implicativeness, 'next utterance' is the proper place to do that, and a two-utterance sequence can be employed as a means for doing and checking some intendedly sequentially implicative occurrence in a way that a one-utterance sequence can not. (1973: 297–8)

What we read here is another elaboration of what Heritage later called 'an architecture of intersubjectivity' (1984a: 254), an organizational template for the achievement of mutual understanding (see also: Heritage, 1995: 398; Sacks et al., 1978: 44; Schegloff, 1992a).

Schegloff and Sacks argue that although a 'terminal exchange' – like both speakers saying 'goodbye' – can be said to do the actual job of closing a conversation, this 'solution' is only a proximate one. It leaves open the issue of when such an exchange can be started. Therefore, they

> try to develop a consideration of the sorts of placing problems their use does involve. First, two preliminary comments are in order. (1) Past and current work has indicated that placement considerations are general for utterances. That is, a pervasively relevant issue (for participants) about utterances in conversation is 'why that now', a question whose analysis may (2) also be relevant for finding what 'that' is. That is to say, some utterances may derive their character as actions entirely from placement considerations. (1973: 299)

These observations are, of course, basic to the CA enterprise, with 'answers' being a most telling example – one only knows that a 'yes' does 'answering' by its placement following a '(yes/no-)question'. Terminal exchanges, it is suggested, may to a significant extent also depend on 'placement' for achieving their meaning as such. 'Answers', however, are placed in terms of a strictly 'local' level of organization, the one concerning adjacent utterances. The adequate placement of 'terminal exchanges' has to be considered on a more encompassing level, for which the authors use the concept 'section'; that is, 'their placement seems to be organized by reference to a properly initiated closing SECTION' (300; capitals in the original).

> The aspect of overall conversational organization directly relevant to the present problem concerns the organization of topic talk. [. . .] If we may refer to what gets talked about in a conversation as 'mentionables', then we can note that there are considerations relevant for conversationalists in ordering and distributing their talk about mentionables in a single conversation.[5] [. . .]
>
> A further feature of the organization of topic talk seems to involve 'fitting' as a preferred procedure. That is, it appears that a preferred way of getting mentionables mentioned is to employ the resources of the local organization of utterances in the course of the conversation. That involves holding off a mention of a mentionable until it can 'occur naturally', that is, until it can be fitted to another conversationalist's prior utterance, allowing this utterance to serve as a sufficient source for the mentioning of the mentionable [. . .]. (301)

Such a 'natural' occasion to mention something may, of course, not arrive at all:

> This being the case, it would appear that an important virtue for a closing structure designed for this kind of topical structure would involve the provision for placement of hitherto unmentioned mentionables. (303)

Against this background, Schegloff and Sacks develop the idea that by using topically empty objects like 'We-ell. . .', 'O.K.. . .', 'So-oo', etc. (with downward intonation), speakers may 'pass' their turn to contribute to further topical devel-opment and in so doing offer their conversational partner(s) a set of alternatives, including further topical contributions, starting a new topic, or likewise passing such opportunities, for example by reciprocating with a similar object. It is in the last instance that the topic and the conversation itself may be said to be 'finished'. Therefore, Schegloff and Sacks call such objects 'possible pre-closings'. They may, if the participants 'agree', open up a proper 'closing section'. Whether they do may depend, again, on their placement 'at the analyzable end of a topic'. There are several ways in which topic talk can be closed off: some depend on the type of topic, such as 'making arrangements', others can be used more generally, such as 'Okay?', 'Alright', or 'one party's offering of a proverbial or aphoristic formulation of conventional wisdom' which concludes the topic in an 'agreeable' fashion (306). Furthermore, some encounters have an overall property of what Schegloff and Sacks call 'monotopicality', which makes a closing of the conversation relevant as soon as the major topic is closed, while for others the number of topics is not so predefined.

The issue, then, is how the development of the conversation provides a WARRANT for its closing, that is explaining the 'why that now', the exchange of 'O.K.'s being one kind of such closing warrants:

> The floor-offering-exchange device is one that can be initiated by any party to a conversa-tion. In contrast to this, there are some possible pre-closing devices whose use is restricted to particular parties. The terms in which such parties may be formulated varies with conversa-tional context. (309–10)[6]

It is noted that closings are often proposed in reference to the other party's inter-ests, which – in telephone conversations – are often different for callers and called, and which may also be related to specific materials elaborated in the conversation itself. Interest of the speaker may also be invoked, of course, as in 'I gotta go', which does not need to be placed at an analysable topic end, but can be done as an interruption ('I gotta go, my dinner is burning'). So, the option of closing the conversation can be initiated at any moment, even at the very beginning, before it really has been started, by using what the authors call a 'pre-topic closing offer-ing' like 'Are you busy?' or 'Were you eating?'

In short, the solution of the closing problem requires not just a proper termi-nal exchange, but also an adequate preparation for such an exchange, that is a properly initiated 'closing section'. That section can contain much more than a minimal terminal exchange, including forward-looking 'making arrangements' and backward-looking reinvocations and summaries of the conversation about to

be closed. That it is, for participants, a section with a recognized function, as 'collaboration on termination of the transition rule' (322), is demonstrated by the fact that 'new' topical material tends to be brought in using specific 'misplacement markers', like 'by the way'. These seem to claim that the 'porousness' of a closing section will not be abused to lengthen the conversation unduly. Finally, a closing section may also be so organized as to accommodate various practical actions related to departure, such as gathering one's belongings etc:

> [. . .] to capture the phenomenon of closings, one cannot treat it as the natural history of some particular conversation; one cannot treat it as a routine to be run through, inevitable in its course once initiated. Rather, it must be viewed, as must conversation as a whole, as a set of prospective possibilities opened up at various points in the conversation's course; there are possibilities throughout a closing, including the moments after a 'final' good-bye, for reopening the conversation. Getting to a termination, therefore, involves work at various points in the course of the conversation and of the closing section; it requires accomplishing. For the analyst, it requires a description of the prospects and possibilities available at the various points, how they work, what the resources are, etc., from which the participants produce what turns out to be the finally accomplished closing. (324)

The above discussion has done no more than sketch the bare outline of an extremely rich argument. Moreover, the authors at various points remark that they can only offer a very restricted treatment of some of the issues they touch upon. In other words, rather than 'closing' the issue, the paper has really opened up some of the most important areas of conversational interaction for further research. Apart from the core issues of closing in relation to topic organization,[7] many other themes that are basic to the CA enterprise were elaborated, or at least put on the agenda in this paper. I would like to single out three of these for special attention: (1) the issue of 'placement' in relation to both local and more encompassing levels of organization; (2) the notion of alternatives chosen by participants or offered to their interactional partners; and (3) the continuous negotiability of (inter)action, or, more precisely, the interactional flow.

 At the end of my earlier discussions in this chapter, I suggested that a 'problems and solutions' framework had been used in those studies. In those studies, the 'doings', the actual interactional phenomena, provided the starting point for the analysis. In the third classic CA study, the focus has shifted more to the 'problems' side of the argument, although data inspection has undoubtedly provided the starting point here as well.

Discussion

The purpose of this chapter has been to broaden the reader's understanding of CA through a summarizing discussion of some of its earliest achievements. I included quite a number of quotations, especially in the last section, to catch some of the flavour of this early work and to stress some of the basic methodological considerations and specific concepts of CA. Finally, I have presented here some of the fundamental resources I will use in the rest of the book.

What CA offers is an ability to elucidate the procedural bases of (inter)actions, in the sense that generalized 'organizations' and 'devices' can be used to analyse a field of local possibilities for action, depending on what happened before and various contextual particulars, and thereby to provide for the sense of the actions under consideration. As Schegloff has written in a later paper:

> [. . .] the locus of order here is not the individual (or some analytic version of the individual) nor any broadly formulated societal institution, but rather the *procedural infrastructure of interaction*, and, in particular, the practices of talking in conversation. (1992a: 1338)

A final comment will concern the use of data in these studies. How did Sacks use his data in his first lecture? The first three instances he quoted were his primary objects of analysis, which he discussed in a comparative fashion. I will call this his 'focal' observations. But he also referred to general regularities and possibilities that are not supported by concrete instances. He talked about how things 'regularly' happen (or rarely, or always, etc.), as regarding callers being reluctant to give their names. I would call these 'specific background observations', that is references to instances which the analyst knows of, could provide, but does not do so explicitly. Later in the lecture, Sacks also referred to some cases which he did cite, for instance to demonstrate that repair initiators like 'I can't hear you' are being used throughout conversations. This I would call 'supportive observations'. He also seemed to refer now and then to knowledge that any competent member is assumed to have on the basis of his or her own experience, for instance concerning non-acquainted persons exchanging names at the start of a call. I would call these 'general background observations'. Finally, he used some 'ethnographic' information, things he learnt from being in the field and talking with professionals, such as the importance of getting clients' names.[8]

The interesting thing about the choice of the three focal instances is that (1) and (2) are depicted as routine or regular, that is where the devices chosen are 'working' properly, while (3) is a deviant case in which these routines break down. It is the contrast between the routine and the deviant that does the trick here. It is used to open up the field for analysis. By comparing instances with each other, and with general experiences and expectations, their formatted properties, sequential placement, and local functionality can be related and explicated.

In Schegloff's analysis of openings, a similar strategy is used, in the sense that his 500-item corpus provides a strong basis for the formulation of his 'first rule', while the one exception to this rule occasions a deeper consideration of the *logic* of opening sequences, which has a much wider relevance than the cases under consideration.

In Schegloff and Sacks' 'closings' paper, finally, the argument starts on a 'theoretical' rather than data-based 'empirical' note. Data extracts are cited only later in the paper, when various 'solutions' to the closing problem are discussed. The authors refer to reasons of space to account for this, especially given the fact that it is not the short 'terminal exchanges' themselves that they are interested in, but rather the more elaborate exchanges that lead up to the possibility of closing the conversation.

In rough summary, in these papers, data excerpts have different functions: in the first two instances, to ground the problem to be discussed; in the last, to elaborate

on some of the solutions available once a problem has been formulated in general terms.

EXERCISE

For this chapter, my suggestion is to read one of the classic CA papers, mentioned in the recommended reading section below, either one discussed in this chapter (marked with a *) or one not discussed in this chapter. Analyse the paper's argument in detail and pay special attention to its data treatment.

The specified suggestions for the different options are similar to the ones for Chapter 1 (page XX). For the collective options, C and D, again take care to select different papers. Compare the various papers in terms of whether they are based on a broad range of data, or one or a few fragments analysed in depth, and what this entails for the convincingness of the overall argument.

RECOMMENDED READING

The following titles represent a limited and personal selection of classic pieces in 'pure' CA: Button (1990); Goodwin (1979); Heritage (1984b); Jefferson (1985a; 1990); Pomerantz (1980); *Sacks (1992a: 3–11); *Schegloff (1968; reprinted in Gumperz and Hymes 1972: 346–80); Schegloff (1982; 1987a; 1988b);*Schegloff and Sacks (1973).

Note: The titles marked with a * have been discussed in this chapter.

Notes

1. For an accessible general introduction to Harvey Sacks' work, see David Silverman's *Harvey Sacks and conversation analysis* (1998).
2. For more extensive discussions and references regarding these issues, and telephone conversation generally, see Robert Hopper's (1992) book on the subject (openings are discussed on pages 51–91) and Luke and Pavlidou (2002), which has a reflective chapter by Schegloff.
3. They add a footnote here, with the text: 'Here our debts to the work of Harold Garfinkel surface. Elsewhere, though they cannot be pinpointed, they are pervasive.'
4. It may be noted that such a functionality of close ordering has been most clearly elaborated in later publications about 'repair', namely Schegloff (1979b; 1987b; 1992a) and Schegloff et al. (1977).
5. At this point, there is a short discussion about the special issues regarding 'first topics', often considered as 'reason-for-the-call'. For more extensive treatments, see Sacks (1992a; 1992b).
6. I will return to issues of 'interactions and their contexts' later in the book; see especially Duranti and Goodwin (1992).
7. Graham Button, in collaboration with Neil Casey, has published a number of thoughtful papers on the organization of closing (Button, 1987b; 1990; Button & Casey, 1984; 1985; 1989). See also Davidson (1978) and Jefferson (1973).
8. Cf. the section on 'ethnographic' information in Chapter 5.