

Conversation Analysis (CA) as a method for investigating social life

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This session offers a brief introduction to the basic principles of CA and its focus on social actions, and how participants understand one another's actions during interaction. I will outline the methods of CA, including our investigations of the underlying practices (competencies) of talking and reasoning in interaction through collections. It is through collections of phenomena (collections which often have a comparative dimension) that we explore, test and demonstrate that certain practices are systematic in their use and interactional consequences. I'll illustrate our methods through various examples, for instance relating to requesting. And I'll outline the ways in which CA has been applied to understanding the role of interaction in some of the core areas of social life (medicine, media, education, law etc).

1. First, a test. Who are these people to one another?

#1 [TCI(b)13:68:1]

1 Jerry: Wichitaw' Bluepri:nt
2 Linda: Hey Jerry?
3 (.)
4 Linda: .h[h
5 Jerry: [Ye:[s.
6 Linda: [hHi:.. .h[h
7 Jerry: [Hi:..

What is the connection or relationship between Jerry and Linda - are they:
(please tick your choice)

- Friends
- Close friends, intimates
- Lovers
- Colleagues
- Colleagues but 'enemies'
- Spouses
- Strangers
- Other(please specify)

Briefly, give ONE reason for your choice:

.....
.....

2. Now, try that again. When you see what they go on to say, do you think differently?

#2 [TCI(b)13:68:1]

1 Jerry: Wichitaw' Bluepri:nt
2 Linda: Hey Jerry?
3 (.)
4 Linda: .h[h
5 Jerry: [Ye:[s.
6 Linda: [hHi:. .h[h
7 Jerry: [HI:[:.
8 Linda: [He:y- you don'haftuh bring any
9 paper plates I think I'll jus:t use the plates I've
10 go::t,
11 Jerry: Who's thi:s.

Have you changed your mind about who they are to one another? Are they

- Friends
- Close friends, intimates
- Lovers
- Colleagues
- Colleagues but 'enemies'
- Spouses
- Strangers
- Other(please specify)

Again, give ONE reason for your choice:

.....
.....

#3 [TCI(b)13:68:1]

1 Jerry: Wichitaw' Bluepri:nt
2 Linda: Hey Jerry?
3 (.)
4 Linda: .h[h
5 Jerry: [Ye:[s.
6 Linda: [hHi:. .h[h
7 Jerry: [HI:[:.
8 Linda: [He:y- you don'haftuh bring any
9 paper plates I think I'll jus:t use the plates I've
10 go::t,
11 Jerry: Who's thi:s.
12 Linda: ↑Linda.ehh[hhhkhhh
13 Jerry: [↑OH(h):.
14 Linda: ° henh °
15 Jerry: H[i:..
16 Linda: [Wuhdiyou mean who(h)'s[this,
17 Jerry: [heh heh .hh
18 Linda: [.hhhhhhhhhhhh
19 Jerry: [Hm:, huh hu-eh .hu:[:h.
20 Linda: [khh[hh
21 Jerry: [Oh::: yeah fine? En you?

#4 A typical *social* call opening

0	[i]	Summons	Phone rings
1		Answer	J: Hallo
2	[ii]	Identification/ Recognition	B: Hallo Jim?
3			J: Yeah
4			B: 's Bonnie
5	[iii]	Greetings exchange	J: Hi,
6			B: Hi,
7	[iv]	Exchange of <i>How are</i> <i>you's?</i> + responses	How <u>are</u> yuh J: Fine, <u>how</u> 're you, B: Oh, okay I guess
8			J: Oh okay
9			B: Uhm (0.2) what are you doing New Year's Eve...
10			
11	[v]	First topic	

#5 [Holt:Christmas85:4]

1 Joy: °(Eight four eight seven: six oh five)°
2 Les: + Oh ^hello Joyce are ^you going t'the meeting t'ni:ght,
3 (0.2)
4 Joy: .hhh No I'm not Lesley.

#6 [Holt:C85:3]

1 Myr: two eight?
2 Les: Oh hello:, uhm hh Lesley ^Field ~he:re?
3 (0.6)
4 Myr: Sorry?
5 Les: Lesley [Field?
6 Myr: [^Oh hell~o hell~o[: °Lesley yes sorry°
7 Les: [Hello,
8 Les: + Are you thinkin:g of comin:g to the meeting tonight
9 Myr: Do you know I'm: terribly ~sorry. I wz going to ring you...

#7 [Field:2:11] ((opening unrecorded))

1 Les: Oh hello Dianne (.) Can I speak, t'((mock affected)) Mis:ter
2 Fiel:d plea:se,
3 Dia: Certainly. ((smile voice)) Just a minute Lesley,
4 Les: Thank you:?
5 ((ca. 4 seconds)) ((opening unrecorded))
6 Les: Oh hello: (.) uh:m- (.) You asked me t'ring about twel[ve.
7 Ski: [Oh:
8 yeh: yeh.
9 (1.5)
10 Ski: I:m a bit tied up,
11 (0.4)
12 Les: Sorry?
13 Ski: I'm a bit tied up at the moment,
14 Les: .hh Oh yes alright well can you get the ham at lunch time?

3. The trouble 'called' can get into: claiming vs displaying recognition

#8 [Holt:SO88:1:10:1]

1 Les: He↑llo?
2 (0.7)
3 Mar: Hello↑:?
4 + (.)
5 Mar: + How'r ↓you.
6 Les: .k.hh Oh fine, how're you.h
7 (.)
8 Mar: + D'y'know who it i:s,
9 Les: + No:?
10 Mar: hh-hh-[hh-]heh heh]
11 Les: [hhe]h hih hih

Try-marked name, subsequently confirmed (and *only* confirmed)

From #3

1 Jerry: Wichitaw'Bluepri:nt
2 Linda: + Hey Jerry?
3 (.)
4 Linda: .h[h
5 Jerry: [Ye:s.

#9 [UTCL:D8:3] (from Hopper 1992:64)

1 Pat: Hello:?
2 (0.3)
3 Jon: + Pat?
4 Pat: Yep
5 (0.2)
6 Jon: Jon what are you up to

The 'theory' of Conversation Analysis (CA)

- Social actions
- (Turns in) sequences
- Turn design - constructed by reference to some 'place' in talk
- Displaying an analysis of the prior (turn at) talk
- Essential vehicle for the construction of intersubjectivity

4. Repair and intersubjectivity

#10 [Doctors out-of-hours calls: 1:1:13] (From Drew 2006)

1 Clr: =Eh: my wife has uh: just fainted, 'hh She:'s (0.7) been
2 to:: the doctor's a:nd eh: our doctor at ((omitted)) gave
3 'er: 'hh some painkillers because he said she had a:um: a
4 virus in the bowel,
5 (0.2)
6 Doc: R:ight,
7 Clr: Eh: she's been in be:d, and she had a sort'v fainting spell
8 Dc?: 'hhhh
9 Doc: [((gulp))
10 Clr: [She wen' u- into a cold sweat. a:nd blacked
11 ou[t for a(b-) period.]
12 Doc: ['h h h h h h]
13 Doc: 1-> hhHow long was tha:t,
14 Clr: 2-> E:hm, tha'was abou' half an hour ago,
15 Doc: 3-> How long was she actually blacked out [for, though.
16 Clr: [E:hm I'm not
17 quite sure 'cause (.) I went in a bit later and she told me,
18 t'hh a:nd she: asked me to:: see 'er tuh the toilet,
19

#11 [ENT Oncology]

1 Dr: An' then he'll get you back after tha:t, (0.3) to star:t your
2 treatm'nt
3 (0.9)
4 Pt: 1-> Uh yeah 'n how long d'z trea'm'n last Doctor,
5 Dr: 2-> Between four an' six weeks,
6 (.)
7 Pt: 3-> No I mean ih-ih-ih in-in-in (.) ih-in timewi:se ü- per
8 da(:y.=
9 Dr: =OH:. (.) Ten minutes,
10 Pt: 'Zat all?
11 Dr: ihYeah.
12 (0.5)
13 Dr: Very quick
14 (0.6)
15 Pt: W'l oo-why can't they give you fu:ll treatment in one day
16 then?

5. Two request forms - modal verbs, and *I was wondering if...*

#12 [Field:SO88:2:8:1] (Gordon's parent's are driving up to visit him)

1 Les: Hello:?
 2 (0.3)
 3 Gor: It's Gordon.
 4 Les: .hhhh Oh Gordon. Shall I ring you back darling,
 5 Gor: Uh:: ↓no y- I don't think you can,
 6 (0.3)
 7 Gor: + But uh: just to (0.3) say (.) Could you bring up a
 8 letter.
 9 (.)
 10 Gor: When you come up,
 11 Les: °hee-a-awh°
 12 (0.2)
 13 Gor: U[h:m
 14 Les: [°w-°
 15 (0.4)
 16 Gor: It's: it's the one which will say that the: County
 17 Council will- (0.3) pay: for m:e to have tuition.

#13 [Field:SO88(II):1:6:1]

1 Dan: I w'z just um ringing up to say °(that)° (0.3) I could
 2 (0.3) Sorry I've kept the book for so long but I could
 3 drop it in um (0.7) what day is it today. Friday. I c'd
 4 prob'ly drop it in on Sunday.
 5 (.)
 6 Les: .hh Well the only trouble is Dana we're going off to
 7 Kent t'see my mother f:uh- until: uh:m .tch .hh
 8 We:dneday an' we would love to s: no Tuesday we'd love
 9 to see you.
 10 (0.2)
 11 Les: .hh[h
 12 Dan: [Mmhm, ?
 13 Les: + So can you: drop it in a little bit later in the week,

#14 [Out-of-hours calls to doctor:1:2:4]

1 Clr: I b- I been takin' Paraceetmols for last week.
 2 (.)
 3 Doc: Right,
 4 Clr: (I mean) get rid of the pain, it's gone away fer an hou:r,
 5 (0.2)
 6 Clr: an' comin' ba:ck, I been tryin' ta stand (it)/(up) 'cause you
 7 only (dropped tame) (.) every [four hours didn't you. (Every]
 8 Doc: ['m h h h h h mt]
 9 [four)
 10 Doc: [Yes,
 11 Clr: + So what i-is that the mo- I wonder if you could (not) give
 12 (us) some pain killers or:.
 13 (0.5)
 14 Clr: (I try an' see-) (.) I know you hang on for Monday but I tell
 15 ya the pain is really (.) bad y'knowwh't I mea' ((sniff))

#15 [Rahman:1:2:JT] (Call to opticians)

1 Desk: Hello Goodzwin,
2 Jen: Ehm good morning. Eh it's Missiz Rah:man here, I ca:llled
3 in on Thursday to see if uh I c'd make an appointment t'see
4 Mister (Thordly,)
5 (1.2)
6 Jen: + An', I haven't heard anything'n I w'z wondering if: uh:m
7 I c'd possibly see him one day next week?
8 (0.8)
9 Desk Uh:m I'll j's check his diary c'n you hold a minute please

#16 Field:2:2:l (Call to a bookshop)

1 Les: ...lly an' ordered a boo:k [.hhh an you said you'd
2 Jon: [yeah
3 Les: ho:ld it for me
4 Jon: Okay,
5 Les: An' (.) I wz s'posed tuh be comin' in around Easter well I
6 + haven't managed to get i:n a:nd I wondered if you could se:nd
7 it to me if you've still go:t it.
8 Jon: What name is it please.
9 Les: File:ld. Missiz Field.

#17 [Field:l:3] (Call to a grocers)

1 Les: .hh Mister Bathwick (.) uh:m I did ask if you could do me an
2 order on Thu:rsday if I came in an'got it ready:,
3 Bat: (Correct.)
4 (.)
5 Les: .hh Uh this is Leslie Field h[ere,].hh]=
6 Bat: [Yes |yes]=
7 Les: =uhm (.) but you know I'm a relief teacher I've been asked
8 t'teach on Thursda:y.
9 Bat: [Mmhm,=
10 Les: =.hh An' (.) I'm coming in t'morrow: or I could pop in
11 Les: + quickly on Wednesday, I wonder .hhh a:re you able t'do: (.)
12 deliver another da:y (.) o:r: w-what d'you think.
13 (0.4)
14 Bat: It would be very difficult to deliver another da:;y,
15 Les: Yes.
16 Bat: Uh:m
17 Les: + .hh Well if I could (0.2) Is it possible for me t'leave'n
18 order with you.=
19 Bat: =That's perfectly alright.

#18 [Heritage:III:l:2] (Dorothy is Edgerton' elderly mother)

1 Dor: I want you to telephone (0.3) the clinic tomorrow, (0.9) and
2 u speak to: (0.2) Doctor Pemberton's (0.3) secretary (1.0)
3 en tell him, (0.4) that u-I've got (0.3) a very ba:d (.)
4 hand.
5 (1.0)
6 Dor: And uh: (0.7) it's all swollen and (0.3) very (.) hot.
7 + (0.4) eh: en I do:n't want (). But (.) can'e:
8 (0.3) give (). (0.3) eh-ah- some idea of what (0.2) I
9 can bu:y in the way of a ().
10 (1.0)
11 Edg: Alright which ha:nd is it.

#19 [Heritage:III:l:4] (...after which Edgerton calls the doctor, and speaks to the receptionist)

1 Edg: Uh:m: (0.3) my ^mother phoned the other da:y she's staying
2 with: a: uh a daughter of hers in Amuhshum: (0.4) to sa:y
3 that um: (.) hh (0.3) she's having a problem: u-with uh
4 her right ha:nd, (0.3) uh it is: terribly swollen en
5 rather painful particularly the thu:mb:..
6 (0.7)
7 Edg: Uh: now (.) uh y-you you w'I remember perhaps that she's
8 had a circulatory problem for some ti:me.
9 (0.4)
10 Edg: Uh:: and she is takin:g uh: some pi:ll:s which: Doctor
11 Pembert'n prescribed for her a few weeks ago: for a (.)
12 fo:r uh:m hhh a: problem she had in one of her feet.
13 (0.5)
14 Edg: + Uh::m (0.2) Now she is wond'ring whether the doctor would
15 uh would °eh° (.) °°well°° give he:r h an indication of
16 uhm:: (.) hh of a-a-a a sort of: uh medicine that she c'n
17 bu:y from: the chemist. She doesn' want any more pills.
18 (0.6) if this is °possible.°

Calls to the Emergency Services (London police)

#20 [MPS: NSY:19] (Police emergency call)

1 Com: Police eme:rgency can I help you?
2 (0.5)
3 Ca: + Yeah hi .hhh e:rm could we have uh police patrol car tuh report
4 to: (0.8) er New Crane Wha:rf in Wapping.
5 Com: New Cre:am Wharf.
6 Ca: New Crane Wharf,
7 (0.8)
8 Ca: In Wapping.
9 (1.8)
10 Ca: ((To someone off phone)) (Derek) get to the do:or. (1.1)
11 Ca: Shut this [do:or. [Shut the door don't Shut the door
12 A: [() [Please John don't don't don't (.) don't.
13 Ca: Don't open the door John.
14 A: Don't op- (.) open the door [(John)
15 Ca: + Can we have uh
16 Com: Yeah what wa[s-
17 Ca: [()
18 Com: Yea[h sorry=
19 Ca: [Thi-
20 Ca: =There's uh woman here that's (0.5) claims she's
21 been raped she's panicked. The bo:yfriend's
22 outside .hh[h
23 Com: [Right [okay-
24 Ca: [This is the security lodge here.

#21 [MPS: NSY:1]

1 Com: Hello there this is the police?
2 Ca: + Hello (0.5) er: could we have somebody to: .hh Stanford Ro:ad
3 Cottersmore Cou:rt er: urgently please.=I'm the porter in uh
4 block uv flats there in Cottersmore Co:urt.
5 Com: S- Sorry what's the name of the cuh-Court.

More on *contingency* and *entitlement*: compare the imperative and *Can I..?* forms in #22 with *Do you think I could...?* in #23

#22 [Porch Dinner: 4.45]
 1 Sus: + Pass me the Wishbo[ne,
 2 Kat: [SHHHH WHA:T?
 3 Dwa: °Oh °
 4 (0.7)
 5 Mat: I: don't think anybody gonna, pick me up I: think I've been let
 6 DO:wn.
 7 Fra: NO::::=
 8 Kat: =UH HEH UH HEH
 9 Fra: We'll bring you dessert over Matt
 10 (0.6)
 11 Sus: + Pa- may >I have a< c- c'n I have the gravy Ross?

#23 [Heritage:0I:Call 14] (Jane called earlier to invite Edgerton and his wife over for Christmas drinks. Edgerton declined; they've only just returned from another drinks party and his wife is tired)
 1 Edg: Hello:?
 2 Jan: Hello Edgerton.hh
 3 Edg: Yes[().
 4 Jan: [It's ME ag(h)ain.h.h[hh
 5 Edg: [°Yes.°=
 6 Jan: =Uhm .hh ↑look I ↑left a book.h (.) uh:m in the dra:wing
 7 + room. .hh Uh::,hh yihknow the (luh si:ne) book. D↑ju tthink
 8 + I could just pop over'n come'n get it.
 9 (1.0)
 10 Edg: Yes why not?
 11 Jan: Yes you sure?h
 12 Edg: °Mh?°
 13 Jan: Ehz ed- (0.7) I mean I'll be in'n out. Okay?
 14 Edg: Ye:ehkay,
 15 Jan: Uh- Margo's gunnuh drive me b't I'll tell her t'stay in
 16 the ↓car s[u:
 17 Edg: [Right,=
 18 Jan: =<I(h)lene[won't have to[↓worry.
 19 Edg: [↓Right [Ri:ght right ↓right right.↓
 20 (.)
 21 Edg: °Ri[ght.°
 22 Jan: [O:↑khay? ...((Straight to closing))

In General Practice/Primary Care, patients don't normally make (overt) requests. But some patients do - frequent attenders, or 'heart sink' patients.

#24 [Request format: 201 (Frequent attender)] (from Ariss 2005)
 1 Dr: Er::m: (0.3) °° Yeh what's been happening°
 2 Pt: + ↑We need to make me tummy stop hurting plea::se.
 3 Dr: Alright
 4 (0.4)
 5 Pt: Hm hm cuz it does. (.) ERM .I've been back to the hospital and
 6 they've said, t[hat it's fine .hh
 7 Dr: [Yeh
 8 (.)
 9 Pt: Just got a couple uh gall stones...

#25 [High School Truancy Office] (Off = Truancy Officer)

1 Mom: Hello:
2 Off: .hhh Hello is this Missus Fieldwald?
3 Mom: Yes it is:
4 Off: .hhh This is Miss Medeiros from Redondo High School calling?,
5 Mom: Mm hm::,
6 Off: .hhh Uh I was calling about Michelle she has a couple a:bsences:
7 since o::h las:t Thu:rsday,
8 (.)
9 Off: She's been reported absent (.) all day last Thursday,
10 (.)
11 Mom: Uh huh well she hasn' been home i:ll.
12 (0.5)
13 Off: We:ll, (.) she was absent Thursday, Friday, (1.0) .hh an' again
14 today.
15 Mom: Are these all day absences? er are they (.) jus'
16 certain periods.
17 Off: Uh::: hhhhh .hhhhh (0.8) Well let's see it looks like
18 first second (.) third and fourth period for last Thursday 'n
19 Friday, .hhh an' here's sixth period an so it's- (.) we'd have to
20 assume that it's an all day a:bsence, yes.
21 Mom: Uh hmm,
22 Off: .hhh And u:hh (0.8) you don't kno:w that she's been
23 home ill, huh?
24 Mom: No:: not to my knowledge I (.) I'm stay at home so
25 (0.5)
26 Off: [[Mm hm
27 Mom: [[.hhhh I would know if she was out.
28 Off: Yea:h. Well, u::h the- obviously she's not going to
29 her cla:sse:s an' we need tuh find out where she is:
30 going would you: talk t' her tonight 'n .hhh send her
31 into the attendance office tomorrow morning so that we
32 c'n straighten these out.
33 Mom: Mmmkay[: I'll see what she says about it
34 Off: [Uh:: we have a new-
35 Off: .hhh Okay:. We have a new uh:: detention system now
36 (.)
37 Off: that if they don' clear the:se, they'll become truants.
38 (.)
39 Off: .hh A:nd she will need to come in en clear them up.
40 (.)
41 Mom: Nnk[ay
42 Off: [Okay?
43 Mom: Do: I have tuh get back t'you 'r (.) jus' sending her
44 is that enough.
45 Off: .hhh Well if you c'n excu:se any of these with a
46 note saying yes she's been home ill er at the
47 doctor's or whatever .hhhh uh:: (.) just send a note
48 but othe[rwise you don' need tuh come in
49 Mom: [(Yeah)
50 Mom: Okay then
51 Off: Mka[y
52 Mom: [I'll talk tuh her about it en (.) we'll get back
53 tuh you.

- 1 Off: O;kay
 2 Mom: A[lright
 3 Off: [Thank you
 4 Mom: Mb'bye
 5 Off: Bye bye

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Transcription conventions

Co:/Pt:	speaker labels (Co: = counsellor; Pt: = patient)
=	links talk produced in close temporal proximity, ie. 'latching'
° °	encloses talk which is produced quietly
<u>underline</u>	used to mark words or syllables which are given special emphasis
s:::	extending or prolonging the sound; the more colons, the longer the sound
.hhh	inbreath, each 'h' indicating one tenth of a second
hhh.	outbreath, each 'h' indicating one tenth of a second
(h)	indicates aspiration, usually laughter, while speaking
[]	encloses talk produced in overlap i.e. when more than one speaker is speaking
(word)	parentheses indicate transcriber doubt
(this/that)	alternative hearings
((description))	description of what can be heard, rather than transcription e.g. ((shuffling papers))
cu-	the hyphen (dash) indicates sound 'cut-off'
(0.2)	silence in seconds
(.)	silence of less than two tenths of a second
^ or ↑	mark a raise in pitch; reverse arrows indicate fall in pitch