

Reprinted From:
STUDIES IN THE ORGANIZATION
OF CONVERSATIONAL INTERACTION
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New York San Francisco London

chapter 1

*A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn Taking for Conversation**

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INTRODUCTION

Turn taking is used for the ordering of moves in games, for allocating political office, for regulating traffic at intersections, for the servicing of customers at business establishments, for talking in interviews, meetings, debates, ceremonies, conversations, etc. (these last being members of the set of what we shall refer to as "speech exchange systems"). It is obviously a prominent type of social organization, one whose instances are implicated in a wide range of other activities. For socially organized activities, the presence of "turns" suggests an economy, with turns for something being valued, and with means for

* This chapter is a variant version of "A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation," which was printed in *Language*, 50, 4 (1974), pp. 696-735. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference on "Sociology of Language and Theory of Speech Acts," held at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research of the University of Bielefeld, Germany. We thank Dr. Anita Pomerantz and Mr. Richard Faumann for pointing out to us a number of errors in the text.

allocating them affecting their relative distribution, as they do in economies. An investigator interested in the sociology of some sort of activity that is turn organized will want to determine, at the least, the shape of the turn-taking organization's device, and how it affects the distribution of turns for the activities it operates on.

For the investigator of turn-taking systems per se, it is not surprising that there are various ways that turn-taking systems can be workably built. Since they are used to organize sorts of activities that are quite different from one another, it is of particular interest to see whether, how, and how much operating turn-taking systems are characterizable as adapting to properties of the sorts of activities in which they operate. And, once again, an investigator interested in some sort of activity that is organized by a turn-taking system will want to determine whether, how, and how much the sort of activity investigated is adapted to, or constrained by, the particular form of turn-taking system operating on it.

The subject of this report is the turn-taking system for conversation, and the foregoing are among the questions it will be addressed to. Others¹ have noted that the organization of taking turns at talk is one type of organization operative in conversation and have located a range of interesting features and details of that sort of organization. However, no account of the systematics of the organization of turn taking for conversation is yet available. Here, on the basis of research using audio recordings of naturally occurring conversations, we attempt to characterize, in its simplest systematic form, the organization of turn taking for conversation, and to extract some of the interest that organization has.

Aspects of the organization we are calling turn taking have forced themselves on investigators of "small group" behavior, who in addressing problems concerning the distribution of talk among participants in small groups,² or the kinds of "acts" that form up sequences in small group sessions,³ were addressing problems conditioned in central ways by the turn-taking system, although they were not for the most part addressed in that way. Students of "interview" behavior and such two-party conversation as approximates it in form,⁴ in concerning themselves with the distribution of talk among the parties, the distribution of silences, the sequences in which the talk shifted from one to another or was retained by a single party and the way such transfer or retention were coordinated were also dealing with questions on which turn taking has a central bearing, but which were only peripherally attacked in turn-taking terms, or were unsatisfactorily accounted for because of weaknesses in the turn-taking models explicitly or implicitly employed. In anthropology, some investigators⁵ have explicitly taken note of aspects of turn organiza-

tion, but the observations were, for the most part, in the service of other interests, for example, stratification and the legal system, and little effort was directed at either gathering or attending materials in sufficient detail to permit appreciation or treatment of turn taking as a central phenomenon in its own right.⁶ In all these domains of inquiry, what has attracted investigators' attention has been some particular outcome or product of the operation of turn taking, interpretably relevant to some other problem, but not the organization and operation of the system that allowed or produced such an outcome. Those approaches which have addressed turn taking head on, and with proper appreciation of the depth of its implications and the detailed character of its organization have been largely programmatic or only beginningly empirical; in any case, no systematic account is available.⁷

For the last half dozen years we have been engaged in research, using tape recordings of natural conversation, that has been increasingly directed to extracting, characterizing, and characterizing the interrelationships of, the various types of sequential organization operative in conversation. The disciplinary motivation for such work is sociological.

Our concern with the organization of turn taking has the following base. First, the fact of turn taking and that it must be organized, was something that the data of conversation made increasingly plain: such facts as that one party talks at a time overwhelmingly, though speakers change, though the size of turns varies, though the ordering of turns varies; that transitions seem finely coordinated; that there are obviously techniques for allocating turns that are used and whose characterization would be part of any model that would describe some turn-taking materials; that there are techniques for the construction of utterances relevant to their turn status that bear on the coordination of transfer and on the allocation of speakership; in short, a body of factual material accessible to rather unmotivated inquiry exposed the presence of turn taking and the major facets of its organization. Focusing on facts such as these, rather than on particular outcomes in particular settings, leads to an investigation of the organization of turn taking per se, and not its application and consequences in particular contexts, although the more formal understanding of turn taking illuminates more particular findings.

Reason began to appear for taking seriously the possibility that a characterization of turn-taking organization for conversation could be developed that would have the important twin features of being context-free and also capable of extraordinary context sensitivity.⁸

We look for such a type of organization for the following reasons. First of all, a problem for research on actual conversation is that actual

conversation is always "situated," always comes out of, and is part of, some real sets of circumstances of its participants. But there are various reasons why one does not want to have to know or characterize such situations for particular conversations in order to investigate them. And the question then becomes: What might be extracted as ordered phenomena from our conversational materials which would not turn out to require reference to one or another aspect of situatedness, identities, and particularities of content or context.

One reason for expecting the existence of some such type of organization is as follows. Since conversation can accommodate a wide range of situations, since it is a vehicle for interactions in which persons in varieties of identities and varieties of groups of identities are operating, since it is sensitive to the various combinations, and since it is capable of dealing with a change of situation within a situation, there must be some formal apparatus that is itself context-free, that by virtue of the ways in which it is context-free can in local instances of its operations be sensitive to, and exhibit its sensitivity to, various of the parameters of social reality in a local context. Some aspects of the organization of conversation must be expected to have this context-free, context-sensitive status, for, of course, conversation is a vehicle for interaction between parties with any potential identities, and with any potential familiarity. It began to look to us as if the organization of *turn taking* for conversation might be such a thing. That is to say, it appeared to have an appropriate sort of general abstractness and local particularization potential.

In sum, turn taking seemed a basic form of organization for conversation in this sense of basic, that it would be invariant to parties such that whatever variations the parties brought to bear in the conversation would be accommodated without change in the system, and that it could be selectively and locally affected by such social aspects of context. Depiction of an organization for turn taking should fit the facts of variability by virtue of a design that allowed it to be context-sensitive, but should be cast in a manner that requires no reference to any particular context, and nonetheless captures the most important general properties of conversation.

A model, to merit serious consideration, would, it seems to us, have to be capable of accommodating (that is, either be compatible with, or allow the derivation of) the following facts, which seemed grossly apparent to relatively unmotivated examination of conversational materials.⁹ In any conversation:¹⁰

1. Speaker change recurs, or, at least, occurs (cf. p. 15).
2. Overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time (cf. p. 15).

3. Occurrences of more than one speaker at a time are common, but brief (cf. pp. 15-17).
4. Transitions from one turn to a next with no gap and no overlap between them are common. Together with transitions characterized by slight gap or slight overlap, they make up the vast majority of transitions (cf. p. 18).
5. Turn order is not fixed, but varies (cf. pp. 18-19).
6. Turn size is not fixed, but varies (cf. pp. 19-20).
7. Length of conversation is not fixed, specified in advance (cf. p. 20).
8. What parties say is not fixed, specified in advance (cf. pp. 20-21).
9. Relative distribution of turns is not fixed, specified in advance (cf. pp. 21-22).
10. Number of parties can change (cf. pp. 22-25).
11. Talk can be continuous or discontinuous (cf. pp. 25-27).
12. Turn-allocation techniques are obviously used. A current speaker may select a next speaker (as when a current speaker addresses a question to another party); parties may self-select, in starting to talk (cf. pp. 27-33).
13. Various "turn-constructural units" are employed. Turns can be projectedly "one word long," or, for example, they can be sentential in length (cf. pp. 33-38).
14. Repair mechanisms for dealing with turn-taking errors and violations obviously are available for use. For example, if two parties find themselves talking at the same time, one of them will stop prematurely, thus repairing the trouble (cf. pp. 39-40).

With the aim of at least exposing the interest of this area, we shall here offer and consider such a simplest systematics for the organization of turn taking in conversation as does come to terms with the above list.¹¹ It having been offered, we shall then proceed to show how it deals with the obvious facts, with others that are rather finer, and thereafter proceed to consider its structure and import. With regard to its import, we offer two comments now on the potential interest of some such model: (a) When such facts as those listed above are compared with such as obtain for various of the other speech-exchange systems, such as meetings, interviews, debates, or ceremonies, differences are readily noted. The size of turns and the ordering of turns, in debates, for example, are obviously prespecified. Those differences suggest that different turn-taking systems are involved. Conversation obviously occupies a central position among the speech exchange systems. Perhaps its turn-taking system is more or

less explanatory of that centrality. (b) Turns are valued, sought, and avoided. The social organization of turn taking distributes turns among parties. It must, at least partially, be shaped as an economy. As such, it is expectable that, as other economies do, its organization affects the relative distribution of that whose distribution it organizes. Until we unravel its organization, we shall not know in what those effects consist and where they will turn up. But, as all sorts of scientific and applied research use conversation now, they all employ an instrument whose effects are not known. This is perhaps unnecessary.

A SIMPLEST SYSTEMATICS FOR THE TURN-TAKING ORGANIZATION OF CONVERSATION

The turn-taking system for conversation can be described in terms of two components and a set of rules.

Component 1—Turn-Constructional Component

There are various unit-types with which a speaker may set out to construct a turn. Unit-types for English include sentential, clausal, phrasal, and lexical constructions.¹² Instances of the unit-types so usable allow a projection of the unit-type under way, and what, roughly, it will take for an instance of that unit-type to be completed.¹³ Unit-types that lack the feature of projectability may not be usable in the same way.

For the unit-types a speaker employs in starting the construction of a turn's talk, the speaker is initially entitled, in having a "turn," to one such unit. The first possible completion of a first such unit constitutes an initial transition-relevance place. Transfer of speakership is coordinated by reference to such transition-relevance places, which any unit-type instance will reach.

Component 2—Turn-Allocational Component

Turn-allocational techniques are distributed into two groups: (a) those in which next turn is allocated by current speaker selecting a next speaker; and (b) those in which a next turn is allocated by self-selection.¹⁴

Rules

The following seems to be a basic set of rules governing turn construction, providing for the allocation of a next turn to one party, and coordinating transfer so as to minimize gap and overlap. For any turn:

1. At initial turn-constructural unit's initial transition-relevance place:

- (a) If the turn-so-far is so constructed as to involve the use of a "current speaker selects next" technique, then the party so selected has rights, and is obliged, to take next turn to speak, and no others have such rights or obligations, transfer occurring at that place.
- (b) If the turn-so-far is so constructed as not to involve the use of a "current speaker selects next" technique, self-selection for next speakership may, but need not, be instituted, with first starter acquiring rights to a turn, transfer occurring at that place.
- (c) If the turn-so-far is so constructed as not to involve the use of a "current speaker selects next" technique, then current speaker may, but need not, continue, unless another self-selects.¹⁵

2. If, at initial turn-constructural unit's initial transition-relevance place, neither 1(a) nor 1(b) has operated, and, following the provision of 1(c), current speaker has continued, then the Rule-set (a)–(c) reapplies at next transition-relevance place, and recursively at each next transition-relevance place, until transfer is effected.

The ordering of the rules serves to constrain each of the options the rules provide. The fact that 1(a) is the first applying rule does not entail that its option is free of constraints imposed on it by the presence, in the set, of rules which *would* apply if 1(a) did not. Thus, for example, given the applicability of Rule 1(b)'s option if Rule 1(a)'s option has not been employed, for Rule 1(a)'s option to be methodically assured of use it needs to be employed before initial unit's initial transition-relevance place. Thereby, the operation of Rule 1(a)'s option is constrained by Rule 1(b)'s presence in the set, independent of Rule 1(b)'s option actually being employed. Similarly, for Rule 1(b)'s option to be methodically assured of application given the presence in the set of Rule 1(c), it will need to be employed at initial unit's initial transition-relevance place, and before current speaker's option to continue—Rule 1(c)—is invoked. For if 1(c) is thus invoked, Rule 2 will apply, and the Rule-set (a)–(c) will reapply, and Rule 1(a)'s option will take priority over Rule 1(b)'s again. Thereby, Rule 1(b)'s operation is constrained by Rule 1(c)'s presence in the set, independent of Rule 1(c)'s actually being employed. Having noted that lower priority rules thus constrain the use of higher priority options, it should be recalled that the constraints imposed on lower priority rules by higher priority rules are incorporated in the rule-set itself.

The rules provide an ordering of the application of the technique groups (i.e., the two groups of turn-allocational techniques) that makes the inclusion of the two types of techniques in the rule-set compatible

with "one speaker at a time," obviating a violative potential of their joint inclusion were they not ordered. If the technique groups were not ordered, if, for example, both were usable on any occasion on which one was usable, then the very techniques whose operation should yield only one next speaker would provide the possibility of more than one party being selected. That possibility would be provided because each type of technique involves a different party using it, and unless the party doing self-selection were the same party being selected by current speaker, more than one next speaker will have been selected. The rule-set's ordering of the application of the techniques removes this possibility. Furthermore, the "first starter has rights" provision of Rule 1(b) provides an ordering within the possibilities provided by that technique group addressed to the possibility of multiple self-selection that technique opens up.

Minimization of gap and overlap may be seen to be accomplished in two ways, one of which localizes the problem, the other of which addresses it in its localized forms. The rule-set, and the constraints provided on each option in it by the others, cleanses the bulk of conversation of gap and overlap by cleansing the bulk of single turns of gap and overlap. The rules provide for turn transfers occurring at transition-relevance places, wherever the allocational technique's use has been constructionally accomplished. Thus, "current speaker selects next" techniques may be constructionally accomplished at the very beginning of the unit-type employed in a turn (e.g., by the use of an address term for certain unit-types), but the accomplishment of turn transfer does not occur until the first possible transition-relevance place. Since the use of self-selection techniques is contingent on the nonuse of "current selects next" techniques, and those may be done at any point up to the first transition-relevance place, self-selection may not be done (the technique selected or the transfer attempted) until the first transition-relevance place, and since current speaker may continue—Rule 1(c)—if self-selection is not done, thus recycling the rules, self-selection, to be assured, must be done *at* the transition-relevance place.¹⁶ The turn-taking rule-set thus provides for the localization of gap and overlap possibilities at transition-relevance places and their immediate environment, cleansing the rest of a turn's "space" of systematic bases for their possibility.

HOW THE SYSTEM ACCOUNTS FOR THE FACTS

In this section, we bring the system just described to bear on the initially noted, grossly apparent facts to find how the model either produces or is compatible with them. As well, a variety of other, not so readily apparent, findings that attend the model will be examined.

1. Speaker change overwhelmingly *recurs* and at least occurs. This turn-taking system provides a systematic basis for speaker change and speaker change recurrence, while not making them automatic. The possibility of speaker change is built in, recurrently within any single turn's construction, and recurrently for each new turn, because any unit-type instance out of which a turn may be constructed will reach a transition-relevance place, at which the first two priority options involve transfer of turn to a next speaker. Speaker change and speaker change recurrence are not automatic because at each transition-relevance place, the options provided by Rules 1(a) and 1(b) may not be exercised, while the option provided by Rule 1(c) is. For as long as this combination is applied at each encountered transition-relevance place, there will be a sequence in which there is no speaker change. Speaker change *occurrence* is a special case of speaker change *recurrence*, being a restriction too complicated to be dealt with here.¹⁷

2. Overwhelmingly one party talks at a time. This fact is provided for by two features of the system. (a) The system allocates *single* turns to *single* speakers, any speaker getting, with the turn, exclusive rights to talk to first possible completion of an initial instance of a unit-type, rights that are renewable for single next instances of a unit-type under the operation of Rule 1(c). (b) All turn transfer is coordinated around transition-relevance places, which are themselves determined by possible completion points for instances of the unit-types.

3. Occurrences of more than one at a time are common, but brief. We have already discussed how the rule-set localizes occurrences of overlap. We turn here to the systematic bases for their occurrence and for their briefness.

One obvious source of their briefness is that they occur at transition-relevance places, that is, places where current speakers can or should exit, their exiting removing a constitutive component of the overlap.

There are a number of systematic bases for the occurrence of overlap, of which we can mention only a few.

A. Rule 1(b) in allocating a turn to that self-selector who starts first encourages earliest possible start, and encourages it for each self-selector. It thereby provides for overlap by competing self-selectors for a next turn, when each projects his start to be earliest possible start at some possible transition-relevance place—the case of simultaneous starts.

Data 1-3

[Labov:Battersea:A:7]

PARKY: *Oo what they call them dogs that pull the sleighs.* (1)
(0.5)

- PARKY: S-sledge dogs.
(0.7)
- OLD MAN: Oh uh :: uh
[Uh-Huskies. =
- TOURIST: Huskies. Mm,
 - OLD MAN: =[[Huskies. Yeh Huskies.
 - PARKY:

[Labov *et al.*:Travel Agency:2]

- LIL: Bertha's lost, on *our* scale, about fourteen (2)
pounds.
- DAMORA: Oh::no::.
[Twelve pounds I think wasn't it. =
- JEAN: Can you *believe* it?
 - DAISY: =[[
 - LIL: Twelve pounds on the Weight Watcher's
scale.

[Frankel:67]

- MIKE: I know who d'guy is. = (3)
- VIC: He's ba::d.
- JAMES: =[[You know the gu:y?

It is notable that such simultaneous starts testify to the independent-for-each-party projectability of possible completion points of the talk that occupies current turn.

B. Another basis of overlap derives from the projectability of possible completion or transition-relevance places. Variation in the articulation of the projected last part of a projectably last component of a turn's talk, which is in fact a consequential locus of articulatory variation, will expectably produce overlap between a current turn and a next.

Data 4-8

[Crandall:2-15-68:93]

- A: Well if you knew my argument why did you (4)
bother to a: sk.
- B: [Because I'd like to defend *my*
argument.

[Civil Defense Headquarters.2:88]

B: Well it wasn't me :: (5)

A: [No, but you know who it
was.

[NB:I:6:7]

A: Sixty two feet is pretty good si: ze. (6)

[Oh:: boy.

[GTS:1:2:24]

A: Terr::ifi:: c. (7)

B: [I think it's much better than about
a:: black 'n white *nuns* going down stairs.

[GTS:1:2:28]

A: So yer not a Pontiac People any- (8)
mo(hh) re.

B: [They're gonna hit you with a bi::ll,

The addition of such optional elements that can specifically go after first possible completion without intending continuation (e.g., address terms, etiquette terms) will be productive of similarly structured overlaps (and their absence, for that matter, can be productive of similarly structured gaps).¹⁸

Data 9-11

[NB:III:3:5]

A: Uh *you* been down here before havenche. (9)

B: [Yeh.

[Trio:II:12]

P: Yeh alright dear (10)

J: [Okay

[FD:IV:35]

A: What's yer name again please sir, (11)

B: [F. T. Gallo-
way.

4. Transitions from one turn to a next with no gap and no overlap are common. Together with transitions characterized by slight gap or slight overlap, they make up the vast majority of transitions. The components and the rule-set, in organizing transfer exclusively around transition-relevance places, provide for the possibility of no gap—no overlap transitions. We have described some structural bases for the occurrence of some gap, and some overlap, bases that also provide for such gap or overlap being slight, and bases that are consequences of the very rule set that otherwise secures no gap—no overlap transitions.¹⁹

5. Turn order is not fixed, but varies. This fact is produced by the system via a combination of two of its features: (a) single turns are allocated at a time; and (b) for each such allocation, a series of options are provided, each of which can provide for different next speakers. Thereby, ordering of speakers, being locally (i.e., turn by turn) controlled, can vary.

We can add to the initial observation that, while turn order varies, it does not vary randomly. For example, one bias that is particularly important is for speaker just prior to current speaker to be selected as next speaker.

Data 12

[From GTS:2:2:70]

- ROGER: ((To Jim)) Are you just agreeing because you (12)
feel you wanna uh
- JIM: Hm?
- ROGER: You just agreeing?
- JIM: What the hell's *that*.
- AL: It's— Agree ing?
- [
- ROGER: Agreeing.
- JIM: Agree::n.
- ROGER: Yeah.
- AL: With us. Just going along with us.
- JIM: No.
- ROGER: Saying "yes, yes" hehheh hh hehhh hh heh-
heh hh
- [
- JIM: Well, i-i-it's-it-s true.
Everything he sai(h)d is *true*, so

Roger as last and next for Jim, and Jim as last and next for Roger work across this whole sequence, with Al's first entry not coming off as the

effective turn, and his second being initially shaped as an addition to another's turn. See also Data (ix), (p. 52) and (14).

The sources of this bias are external to the turn-taking system's basic organization and cannot be detailed here.²⁰ What *is* to be noted here is that the rule-set allows such a bias to operate, via the ordering of the options that make up the rule-set. It is the priority of the "current speaker selects next" option that allows the bias to occur.

An importance of the bias is this. Because of it, the possibility of "colloquy" is systematically provided, that involving, in the first instance, the possibility of local (i.e., turn-by-turn) monitoring for hearing, understanding, agreement, and so forth. It is, indeed, directly after any turn that dealing with problems of hearing, understanding, for example, concerning it are preferably raised, their means of being raised involving the selection of the last speaker to be next, to repeat, clarify, and so on.²¹

6. Turn size is not fixed, but varies. The variability of turn size has its grossest sources in two features of the system we have described: (a) The availability of a range of unit-types out of which turns may initially be constructed (a range that varies on the parameter of length), and the availability to a current speaker of free selection among them, provides that for a set of turns, each of which will have contained but the single unit to which a speaker is initially entitled by virtue of having a turn, the turns in the set may have varying turn sizes.²² In this regard, sentential constructions are the most interesting of the unit-types because of the internally generated expansions of length they allow, and, in particular, allow *before* first possible completion places.

Data 13

[GTS:2]

KEN:

I still say though that- if you take if you take (13)
uh a big fancy car out on the road and you're
hotroddin around, you're- you're bound to
get- you're bound to get caught, and you're
bound to get shafted.

(For short, single-sentence turns, cf. Data [ii]
and [x].)

Thus, sentential constructions alone do provide for turn-size variability.

It is in terms of this expandability property of sentential construction before first possible completion that the "projectable completion" feature of Component 1 of the turn-taking system is to be understood. Sentential constructions are capable of being analyzed, in the course of their produc-

tion by a party/hearer able to use such analyses to project their possible directions and completion locii. In the course of its construction, any sentential unit will rapidly (in conversation) reveal projectable directions and conclusions, which its further course can modify, but will further define.²³

(b) A second, and additional, source for turn-size variation is this. Rule 1(c) provides for the possibility that any current speaker may get a chance to produce more than a single instance of a unit-type—cf. Data (xiii). The possibility of Rule 1(c)'s operation means that the system does not define maximum turn size, while the turn-constructive component does determine minimal turn size. Rule 1(a) providing any current speaker with a turn-termination technique usable at any transition-relevance place, the variability of turn size is systematically provided for by this route, independent of the aforementioned one.

Together, these two sources provide for a considerable range of variability in turn size.

7. Length of conversation is not specified in advance. The turn-taking system itself says nothing directly about length of conversation or closing conversation. It does, however, put constraints on how any rules, or system of rules, for achieving conversational closing, and thus length, could operate. For example, by virtue of Rule 1(a), ending ought not, and rarely does, occur after a turn in which a "current speaker selects next" technique has been used.

Length of conversation (or closing conversation) is governed by other kinds of organization than the turn-taking system. One such organization has already been described elsewhere;²⁴ about it we can note that the close of conversation, and therefore its length, are generated in a manner internal to its developing course (as turn length has been earlier described as having its eventual length determined internally, in the course of its development). Not all conversational activity for which the turn-taking system is relevant occurs in instances of the unit "a single conversation" for which that closing structure is relevant. The turn-taking system is, in the first instance, a system for "sequences of talk." There is an order of organization for "types of sequences," by reference to which length of conversation for units of that sort may be determined. The turn-taking system itself is compatible with varying lengths, and does not pre-fix any length.

8. What parties say is not fixed or specified in advance. In ceremonies, what is said by the participants in it may be specified in advance to any degree desired. In debates, the order in which the participants talk is directly related to the character of what they are to say, the parties being characterizable as "pro" and "con," and the turns in which they

talk as, for example, "rebuttal" and "counterrebuttal." The turns an "interview system" organizes alternately are "questions" and "answers." In these and other speech-exchange systems, the turn-taking organization employs, as part of its resources, the grosser or finer pre-specification of what shall be done in the turns it organizes.

By contrast with these other speech-exchange systems, the turn-taking organization for conversation makes no provision for the content of any turn, nor does it constrain what is (to be) done in any turn. Neither the components nor the rule-set includes features that bear on this matter. That is not to say that there are no constraints on what may be done in any turn, for that is clearly not the case. "First turns" in a structurally characterizable set of circumstances properly take "greetings," and "next turns" can in a variety of closely describable ways be constrained by "prior turns." We note only that in conversation such constraints are organized by systems external to the turn-taking system. One aspect of conversation's flexibility is a direct and important consequence of this feature of its turn-taking organization: Its turn-taking organization and thus conversational activity *per se* operate independent of various characterizations of what occupies its turns, the "topic(s)" in them.

As with other of the points we have made about variance, the nonfixedness of what parties say should be modified by noting a bias operative in it. The group of allocation techniques we have called "current speaker selects next" cannot be done by any utterance, or any utterance-type whatsoever. Rather, there is a set of utterance-types—adjacency pair first parts²⁵—that can be used to accomplish such a selection, and in being constrained to employ one of those, there are constraints on what a party can say. But note: (a) No party is constrained in any turn to use a "current speaker selects next technique"; and (b) any party interested in doing so has a considerably sized set of utterance-types to choose from, each of which may accomplish the selection. And while a party selected by the use of such a technique will be constrained in what he says in the turn so allocated (e.g., being under some constraints to "answer" if the technique employed to select him was "question"), these constraints are given by the organization of the "types of sequences"²⁶ whose first parts serve as the "current speaker selects next" techniques, and not by the turn-taking system *per se*. That the conversational turn-taking system does not constrain what occupies its turns, frees the turns for use by other systems, those systems' components then being subject to the organizational contingencies of the turns that they occupy.

9. Relative distribution of turns is not fixed, but varies. The rule-set maximizes the set "potential next speakers." That is: Rule 1(a) allows current speaker to select any other party as next speaker; Rule 1(b) allows

any party other than current speaker to self-select as next speaker. The combination provides alternative routes whereby any current nonspeaker can be next speaker, and is thus potential next speaker. Furthermore, Rule 1(c) has the consequence of not excluding even current speaker from next speakership, except that the system permits the treatment of the use of that option as a within-turn event, it counting not as an instance of a turn allocation to a same speaker, but as an increment to turn size. Since the rule-set operates at each transition-relevance place, and at each such place any party to the conversation can speak next, the rule-set provides for the possibility of any distribution of turns overall, and thereby frees turn distribution for manipulation by such interests as can be realized with the distribution of turns.²⁷

As relative distribution of turns is the cumulative outcome, at any current point in a conversation, of the determinations of turn order done turn-by-turn, the biases operative in turn-order determination, one of which was noted earlier (point 5), may issue in skewings intrinsic to the turn-taking system, in the overall distribution of turns to any point.

10. The number of parties to a conversation can change. Conversation can take different numbers of parties. The turn-taking system provides for that in a manner similar to that by which it provides for conversation of varying lengths. As it is built to organize but two turns at a time, current and next, and the transition from the one to the other, and does not restrict the number of such "current and nexts" it can serially organize, so it organizes but two speakers at a time, "current and next," and is not overtly directed to the size of the pool from which current and next are selected. In not providing for number of speakers beyond current and next, the system is compatible with different numbers of participants from conversation to conversation. Further, in being compatible with differing numbers of participants, it is compatible with varying numbers of participants within any single conversation, since there are mechanisms for entry of new participants and exit for current participants (though we will not describe them here).

While the turn-taking system does not require restrictions on the number of parties to a conversation it organizes, and number of participants can, therefore, vary between conversations and within any conversation, the system favors, by virtue of its design, smaller numbers of participants. This is related, most centrally, to the bias operative on mechanisms of turn ordering, discussed in point 5. Most simply put: The rule-set refers to only two speakers, "current" and "next," and the turn-order bias, when it operates selects "just prior to current" to be "next." In two-party conversation, the two speakers the rule-set refers to, and for whom the turn-order bias works, comprise all the parties to the

conversation, and it is not in point to speak of a turn-order "bias." The "last as next" bias, however, remains invariant over increases in the number of parties, and with each additional increment in number of parties tends to progressively concentrate the distribution of turns among a subset of the potential next speakers. With three parties, one might be "left out" were the bias to operate stringently; with four parties, two would be "left out," and so on.

It can be noted that some of the variabilities we have been discussing are connected (as, for example, in the preceding, number of parties and turn order) and have a range of differential relevancies, whose partial ordering we may illustrate by reference to the "number of parties" parameter.

So, for example: For two parties, the relevant variability is not differential distribution of turns (given that they will have alternating turns), but differential turn size.

With three parties, differential distribution of turns becomes relevant. While turn size remains relevant, a bias toward smaller turn size is introduced. With the introduction of a third party, "next turn" is no longer guaranteed to (or obliged for) any current nonspeaker. While in two-party conversation, a current nonspeaker can pass any given transition-relevance place that is nonobligatory (i.e., where "current selects next" technique has not been used) with full assurance of being "next speaker" at some point, with three or more parties this is not assured. Should a current nonspeaker interested in speaking next not self-select at a next transition-relevance place, then some other current nonspeaker might self-select, and in his turn select someone else, and so forth; or, current speaker might continue, and in his continuation select some other current nonspeaker, for example. Therefore, a current nonspeaker interested in speaking next will be under constraint to self-select at first possible transition point, and each successive such point. Furthermore, a current speaker interested in choosing among potential next speakers will be under constraint to accomplish the selection before first possible transition place (at which transition-relevance place transfer then occurs, via Rule 1[a]), lest an undesired current nonspeaker self-select at that point. From both directions, then, there will be a pressure for minimization of turn size, distinctively operative with three or more parties.

With four parties, a type of variability we have not so far considered is introduced: that is, variability in the number of turn-taking systems in operation. There are mechanisms for the schism of one conversation into more than one conversation. Those mechanisms can operate when at least four parties are present, since then there are enough parties for two

conversations. With four parties, then, schism is a systematic possibility. We earlier noted that the turn order bias of "last speaker being next speaker" becomes a relative distributional bias with three or more parties. With four or more parties, a possible check on it is introduced by the possibility of schism. If there is an interest in retaining, in a single conversation, some current complement of parties (where there are at least four), then the turn-taking system's means for realizing that effort involve "spreading turns around," because any pair of parties not getting or taking a turn over some sequence of turns can find their mutual accessibility for getting into a second conversation.

Data 14

[From Schenkein:II:13—drastically simplified version]

Ethel, Ben, and Max are visiting Bill and Lori. They've brought a lot of food, including a salami Max took out of his refrigerator. Ben is wearing his new combination eyeglasses/hearing aid. At this point, Lori is offering drinks.

- ETHEL: I'll take Scotch, if you have it, (14)
- BEN: You're gonna have to quit yelling, you see,
 - ETHEL: Oh lookit his *ear!*
 - LORI: [[Oh that's *right*. You got— I know I noticed when he came in.
 - BEN: Did you notice it?
 - LORI: Yeah how do you like it.
 - BEN: It's *fantastic*.
 - ETHEL: Except the thing presses into his head.
 - BEN: It—it hurts me terrible I have to go down and get it adjusted.
 - LORI: Yeah.
 - BEN: It kills me right here.
 - LORI: It's,
 - BEN: The glasses are tight I *feel* it.
- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>LORI: What happens if somebody else puts it on,</p> <p>BEN: Nothin,</p> <p>LORI: Will I hear it?</p> <p>LORI: Will I <i>hear</i> it?</p> <p>BEN: You gotta put this inside the <i>ear</i>.</p> | <p>MAX: Is the salami dry?</p> <p>MAX: Bill,</p> <p>MAX: Did it get dry?</p> <p>BILL: A <i>little</i> bit,</p> <p>BILL: But it's good that way.</p> <p>BILL: (Because) all the fat evaporates.</p> |
|---|--|

- LORI: And then will it be
real loud?
- BEN: Well, *yeah*. Probably
will be because you're-
- LORI: It won't be *too* loud,
- BEN: Well *I* could adjust the
volume, I have it,
- BEN: *I* have it down almost
all the way.
- LORI: Okay
- BEN: Yeah. Because see I
have *perfect hearing*
in *this* ear.
- ETHEL: Y'know *we* had-
- ETHEL: *We* knew somebody who
used to hang-
- ETHEL: hang it-
- ETHEL: leave it *outside*
all the time
- ETHEL: so it *would* dry out
- ETHEL: The fat would dry
all out.

In that regard, an interest in retaining the full complement of parties encourages a distribution of turns different than that which would be the distributional product of the turn-order bias.

It should be noted that the schism possibility introduced by a fourth party can serve as a check on turn distribution introduced by a third party, just as the turn distribution introduced by a third party serves as a check on turn size mechanisms operative for two parties.

It should also be noted that the schism possibility's service as a "check" on turn distribution is equivocal, for turn distribution can, by the same measure, be used as a means by some parties for encouraging schism by others.

11. Conversation can be continuous or discontinuous. Talk is continuous when, for a sequence of transition-relevance places, talk continues (by another or by a same speaker continuing) across a transition-relevance place, with a minimization of gap and overlap. Discontinuities occur when at some transition-relevance place,²⁸ a current speaker having stopped, no speaker starts (or continues), the ensuing space of nontalk constituting itself as more than a gap; not a gap, but a lapse.

Data 15

[C-J:2]

- J: Oh I could drive if you want me to. (15)
- C: Well no I'll drive (I don' m in')
- J: [hhh
(1.0)
- J: I meant to *off*ahh.
(16.0)

- J: Those shoes look nice when you keep on putting stuff on 'em.
- C: Yeah I 'ave to get another can cuz cuz it ran out. I mean it's a lmost(h) ou(h) t=
[Oh::: ah he]
- J: •hh heh=
=yeah well it cleans 'em and keeps 'em clean.
- J: [Yeah right=
C: =I should get a brush too and *you* should getta brush 'n you=
[Yeah suh::
- J: =should fix your hiking bo ots
[my hiking boots=
C: =which you were gonna do this weekend.
- J: Pooh, did I have time this wk- well::
- C: Ahh c'mon=
J: =wh'n we get- (uh::kay), I haven't even sat down to do any- y'know like •hh today I'm gonna sit down 'n read while you're doing yur coat,
(0.7)
- J: do yur- hood.
- C: Yehhh=
J: =(ok)
(2.0)
- J: I haven't *not* done *anything* the whole *weekend*.
- C: (okay)
(14.0)
- J: Dass a rilly nice swe::der, (•hh) 'at's my favorite sweater on you, it's the only one that looks right on you.
- C: mm huh.
(90.0)

That talk can be continuous is provided in the rules by each option providing some procedure whereby some next speaker can be located at

any transition-relevance place. The exercise of any option to talk, in the ordered fashion in which they become available, at each transition-relevance place yields a sequence of continuous talk. Each of the rules, however, providing an *option* (and the last of the ordered set of rules, in particular, providing an option, rather than, for example, a backstop, providing a speaker, should no other option have provided one), the possibility of discontinuity is also given. At any transition place at which none of the options to speak has been employed, the possibility of a lapse, and thus discontinuous talk, arises.

A variety of constraints may operate on the possible placement of lapses. An important one is given by the turn-taking system itself. If the Rule 1(a) is employed in a turn's talk, in selecting a next speaker to talk upon its possible completion, no lapse can properly occur; that is, a silence after a turn in which a next has been selected will be heard not as a lapse's possible beginning, not as a gap, but as a pause before the selected next speaker's turn beginning. We are saying: Among the means used for reducing gap are classificatory decisions that seem themselves orderly with respect to the alternative applicability of "gap," "pause," and "lapse" as ways of conceiving the appearance of silence in a conversation.²⁹

If Rule 1(a) has been employed in a current turn's talk, then, a lapse is ruled out as a possibility immediately following it. A lapse occurs when Rule 1(a) has not been employed, by a recycling of the options provided by Rules 1(b) and 1(c). That is, Rule 1(a) not having been employed, next turn is available to a self-selecting next speaker. Should no one self-select, then current speaker may self-select to continue (in his continuation possibly applying Rule 1[a]). Should current speaker not self-select to continue, Rule 1(a) remains not in operation, and there is further space—another round—available for self-selection, and in the absence of self-selection by another, self-selection by current speaker to continue. That is, a series of rounds of possible self-selection by others and self-selection by current to continue—Rules 1(b) and 1(c)—may develop, in none of which are options to talk exercised, with the thereby constituted development of a lapse in the conversation.³⁰

12. Turn-allocation techniques.³¹ An initial observation that next-speaker selection techniques operate in conversation can be made from "obvious cases," such as an addressed question selecting its addressee to speak next, or that in starting to speak when not selected, a party selects himself to speak.³² Those obvious cases can suggest two consequences to begin with: (a) Obvious cases having suggested that there are selection techniques in operation, there is warrant for searching out techniques that are less obvious, but expectably used; (b) the obvious cases suggest that

the techniques may be grouped, and suggest a kind of grouping, which can organize the search for other techniques.

There are, indeed, other allocation techniques, and they do, indeed, appear to be grouped as "current selects next" and "self-selection." The most we can do here is to briefly describe several techniques from each group, so as to suggest that the groups indeed have more than a member each, and that they naturally fall into groups so differentiated.

A. The "obvious" case of an addressed question is but a special case of a class of utterance types, or "type of sequence" parts, which share the property of possibly selecting next speaker. That is, "question" is one instance of the first part of a sequential unit elsewhere termed³³ "adjacency pairs." That class of units includes as well such sequences as "greeting-greeting," "invitation acceptance/decline," and so on.

Data 16-19

[GTS:1] Complaint/denial

- KEN: Hey yuh took my chair by the way an' I don't (16)
 think that was very nice.
AL: I didn' take yer chair, it's *my* chair.

[FN] Compliment/rejection

- A: I'm glad I have you for a friend. (17)
B: That's because you don't have any others.

[] Challenge/rejection

- A: It's not break time yet. (18)
B: I finished my box, so shut up.

[Barker & Wright, 1951] Request/grant (19)

7:19 Raymond sat back in his chair. He was nearly finished with his breakfast. He said in a slightly complaining tone, "Mommie, I don't want this other piece of toast." His mother said casually, "You don't? Well, O.K., I guess you don't have to eat it." He finished eating his breakfast [p. 23].

See as well, Data (viii) for offer/accept and offer/reject, (ix) et passim for question/answer, (15) for offer/reject, two compliment/accepts, and others throughout the data in this paper, Goldberg (1977) on instruct/receipt and the papers cited in note 26 for others.

Some features of this class of units have been described elsewhere, and others will be described in later reports. Their first components can be termed "first pair-parts"; first pair-parts set constraints on what

should be done in a next turn (e.g., a "question" making "answer" specially relevant for next turn); they do not by themselves allocate next turn to some candidate next speaker. They are, nonetheless, the basic component for selecting next speaker. For it is primarily by affiliation to a first pair-part that the most apparently effective device for selecting next speaker—addressing someone—in fact works.³⁴ Thus, an important, perhaps the central, general technique whereby current speaker selects next, involves the affiliating of an address term (or some other device for achieving "addressing," e.g., gaze direction) to a first pair-part.³⁵ That technique will select the addressed party as next speaker. But addressing a party per se will not necessarily select him as next speaker. Thus, addressing a question to a party selects that party as next speaker; but, when that party speaks next, and addresses an answer (a second pair-part) to prior speaker, the addressee is not necessarily selected as next speaker. For example,

Data 20-21

[SN-4:3]

- SHARON: You didn' come tuh talk tuh Karen? (20)
 MARK: No, Karen- Karen' I 're having a fight,
 (0.4)
 MARK: after she went out with Keith an' not with
 (me).
 ● RUTHIE: hah hah hah hah
 ● KAREN: Wul Mark, you never asked me out.

[Toni-6:372-380]

- S: Oscar did you work for somebody before you (21)
 worked for Zappa?
 O: Yeh, many many.
 (3.0)
 Canned Heat for a year.
 S: Didya?
 O: Poco for a year.
 ● T: ooh when they were good?
 O: Bangor Flunt Madura fer a y- couple years
 T: Bangor Flunt Madura?
 O: Bangor Flying Circus.
 ● J: Oh: yeh I remember Bangor Flying Circus
 [

and the data cited in note 35. In each case, note that the speaker after an answer is not the questioner to whom the answer was addressed, although

in Data (21) there are also sequences in which the questioner goes again after the answer.

B. One variant of the use of the first pair-part to select a next speaker will accomplish a next-speaker selection without addressing or any such other related technique, but will select only a particular other as next speaker. That variant is a variant of the "question," a type of first pair-part, such as repetitions of parts of a prior utterance with "question" intonation,³⁶ a variety of "one-word questions," for example, "what?" "who?" and other "repair techniques."

Data 22

[Schenkein:II:38]

- | | | |
|---------|-----------------------------------|------|
| BEN: | They gotta- a <i>garage</i> sale. | |
| • LORI: | Where. | (22) |
| BEN: | On third <i>avenue</i> . | |

See also Data (i)-(vi), (12) (JIM: Agree::n), (21) (T: Bangor Flunt Madura?).

This question-type may be done without any affiliated technique for selecting a particular other, and thereby select a speaker of just prior turn as next speaker. These repair techniques constitute a central device that introduces the turn-order (and, cumulatively, the turn-distribution) bias noted earlier. For the only systematic mechanism available for next speaker selection that can prefer, formally, a next speaker identified only in turn-taking (and thus context-free) terms is one that selects prior speaker as next speaker.

C. The technique described under heading A above, the use of a first pair-part addressed, might appear to sharply constrain the talk of a turn in which a "current speaker selects next" technique was to be used. That is, it might appear that any such turn would have to be constructed to be a first pair-part; and "current selects next" techniques would then seem to not have a general operability, but be tied to utterances constructed as first pair-parts. It should, therefore, be noted that a turn's talk, whether it initially be constructed to be a first pair-part or not, can be made into a locus of "current selects next" by adding to it of a "tag question" addressed, for example, "you know?" and "don't you agree?"

The availability of the "tag question" as affiliatable to a turn's talk is of special importance, for it is the generally available "exit technique" for a turn. That is, a current speaker having constructed a turn's talk to a possible transition-relevance place without having selected a next, and finding no other self-selecting to be next, may, employing his option to

continue, do a tag question, selecting another as next speaker upon the tag question's completion, and thereby exiting from the turn. In this regard, the tag question is one member of a class we may call "recompleters," a class that supplies one major source of the talk done when Rule 1(c)'s option is exercised. The effectiveness of tag questions in this regard is that they invoke Rule 1(a), and make the start of a particular next speaker's turn relevant on *their* completion. It should be noted that this sort of use of Rule 1(a) via tag questions is sequentially quite different from the invocation of Rule 1(a) via turns constructed from their starts to be, for example, addressed questions. For the former are instances of Rule 1(a) being applied, only given that Rule 1(b) has not been exercised. While turns that employ Rule 1(a)'s options from their starts thus project turn transfer at first transition-relevance place, tag questions (i.e., what we might term "1[c]-1[a]'s") come after an initial transition-relevance place. They thus operate in a second cycle of the rule-set's options.

D. The list of "current speaker selects next" techniques can be extensively expanded by inclusion within it of such techniques that employ social identities in their operation. For example, in a conversation composed of two couples, an invitation, for example, to go to the movies made by a speaker will be heard to select as next speaker a member of the "other couple," excluding "own spouse." The problem of introducing particular social identities into our description of the technology is particularly complex because it is one of the major aspects of conversation's flexibility that it is compatible with multiplicities of, and changes in, the social identities of some "same" participants. A formal characterization of how participants' social identities are made relevant and changed in conversation does not now exist, though work is proceeding on that problem. It is clear enough that some "current selects next" techniques are tied to the issue such a formal characterization will deal with, but are for now too cumbersome to be introduced in detail.³⁷

E. The basic technique for self-selection is "starting first." Rule 1(b) explicitly incorporates this technique in its provision that "first starter gets the turn." That formulation should not primarily be heard to refer to a circumstance in which, upon one turn's completion, several parties begin to talk, among whom "first starter goes." Rather it invites noticing that regularly, after a very brief pause, only one starts. That is, that the interutterance pauses are very brief shows that one regularly starts fast; and the *single* starter should be thought of as "first starter," succeeding in being single starter because of the "first starter goes" provision, and being "dispensable" in that had he not started and started fast, someone else would have. Here it is appropriate to recall the earlier discussion of the pressure Rule 1(b) and its "first starter" provision place on turn size:

The first starter provision motivates any intending self-selector to start as early as possible at an earliest/next transition-relevance place, and a current speaker oriented to that will so construct a turn's talk as to allow its intact formation in the fact of this pressure. Thus, from both sides there is a pressure for turn-size minimization.

The pressure for early starts on self-selectors produced by the "first starter goes" provision is constrained by a feature of the unit-types out of which a turn's talk is constructed. It was noted (p. 12) about the unit-types, that they project from their beginnings, features of their construction, their direction, and what it will take to complete them.³⁸ A self-selector aiming for an earliest start, one projected in the course of the ongoing utterance so as to follow closely on its completion, has the problem that his earliest start will have to begin with a unit-type's beginning, a beginning which, given its projectability, will need to reflect some degree of planning for the turn's talk, and will itself project that planning. That will be involved, though current turn is still in progress, and may be internally extended with its extensions modifying its direction. There are, as well, the earlier mentioned (pp. 16-17) additions to prior turn, after first possible transition place, of articulatory extensions and optional postcompletion elements. A next turn's beginning is thus subject to multiple sources of overlap—an overlap of a unit-type's beginning possibly impairing its part in the turn's utterance construction and its projection of the turn's plan. Therefore, the need to begin with a sentence's beginning (where a sentence is the planned unit) constrains the relative timing of its turn's start, for its analyzability will be affected if it overlaps.

With regard to the "begin with a beginning" constraint and its consequences, a familiar class of constructions is of particular interest. Appositional beginnings, for example, "well," "but," "and," and "so," are extraordinarily common, and do satisfy the constraints of beginning. However, they do that without revealing much about the constructional features of the sentence to follow: That is, they do not require that the speaker have a plan in hand as a condition for starting. Furthermore, their overlap will not impair the constructional development or the analyzability of the sentence they begin. Appositionals then are turn-entry devices—prestarts, just as the earlier discussed tag questions are exit devices—postcompleters. Appositionals and tag questions are heavily used devices, though the basis for their use is by no means self-evident linguistically. We are proposing that they are to be understood as devices with important turn-organizational uses.

F. While the basic technique for self-selection is "starting first," and it is by virtue of its operation that regularly first starters are only starters,

it is obvious enough that self-selection *is* done when another self-selector has already started, and that such self-selectors *do* in fact start a turn's talk. Aside from the case of "more than one at a time," which is produced by simultaneous starts by self-selectors aiming for earliest possible start, there are multitudes of instances of "more than one at a time," where one clearly started first. There are, then, techniques for "second starters" or "subsequent starters."

The first starter provision for self-selection operates without respect to the type of utterance thereby started. Second starter techniques—more accurately, their efficacy in superseding the operation of the first starter provision—are contingent on the type of utterance they can, from their starts, reveal themselves to be. We cannot here begin to detail the constraints under which second starter supersession operates. We can, however, recall one basis for such a supersession which was discussed earlier. It was noted in the discussion of turn-order bias that prior speaker could systematically be selected to be next speaker, and that techniques for accomplishing this were overtly directed to problems of understanding prior utterance, *that* furnishing the basis for the possibility of colloquy. Now we can note that such addressing of problems of understanding is a priority activity in conversation. A self-selector whose turn beginning reveals his turn's talk to be prospectively addressed to a problem of understanding of prior utterance may, by virtue of that, get the turn, even though at the turn transfer another started before him, and his start is, then, second.

Data 23

[KC-4:2]

- | | | |
|------|-----------------------------------|------|
| R: | Hey::, the place looks different. | (23) |
| F: | Yea::hh. | |
| • K: | Ya have to see all our new- | |
| | [] | |
| • D: | It does? | |
| R: | Oh yeah | |

Note that D starts well after κ, and that κ does not withdraw until enough of D's turn is out (here all of it) to exhibit that he is raising a problem of understanding.

13. Various turn-constructive units are employed for the production of the talk that occupies a turn. The turn-taking system we are describing is one for conversation, that is, for talk in interaction. We have

proposed that the allocation of turn space is organized around the construction of talk *in* the turns. That organization appears to key on one main feature of the construction of the talk in a turn, namely, that whatever the units employed for the construction, and whatever the theoretical language employed to describe them, that they have points of possible unit completion, points that are projectable before their occurrence. That being the better part of what the turn-taking system asks of the language materials out of which its turns are fashioned, it will be compatible with a system of units that has this feature.

The discussion (p. 12) of the turn-constructive component of the turn-taking system identifies the types of turn-constructive units as sentential, clausal, phrasal, and lexical—that is, syntactically. The discussion of appositionals and tag questions, and most importantly, the way in which the prospect of turn transfer at “first possible transition-relevance place” conditions decisions as between left-embedded and conjoined sentence structures, should indicate the deep ways in which syntax matters to turn taking, albeit a syntax conceived in terms of its relevance to turn taking. If one examines empirical materials to see where in an ongoing turn next speakers begin (or try to begin) next turns, one finds that such starts do not occur continuously over the developmental course of a turn, but discretely over its development. That is, possible transition-relevance places recur discretely in the course of a turn (this is the import of Rule 2 in the rule-set). Examination of *where* in current turns such “next-turn starts” occur shows them to occur at “possible completion points.” These turn out to be “possible completion points” of sentences, clauses, phrases, and one-word constructions,³⁹ and multiples thereof.

Data 24–28

[Trio:II]

- PENNY: An' the fact is I- is- I jus' thought it was so kind of (24)
stupid I didn' even say anything when I came ho:me.

- JANET: [Y- [Eh-
(0.3)

JANET: Well Estelle jus' called'n . . .

[T. Labov: Battersea:B:1]

- TOURIST: Has the park changed much, (25)

PARKY: *Oh*:: ye:s,
(1.0)

- OLD MAN: Th'*Fun*fair changed it'n ahful lot didn' it.

● PARKY: [Th- [That-

PARKY: *That* changed it,

[GTS 5:9]

- KEN: I saw 'em last night at uhm school. (26)

● JIM: [They're a riot

[GTS 1:MC1:7]

- LOUISE: I think it's really funny to watch. (27)

● ROGER: [Ohhh God!

[CDHQ:2:82]

A: Well we just wondered, (28)

A: We just came in from Alexandria,

A: Just got home

- A: and these winds were so bad we're gettin scared again heh

● B: [Mm hm,

● B: No, we doh-

- A: [And we wondred whether we should go to a motel or something.

B: No, you stay right where you are . . .

Note that in Data (24)-(27) the next turn starts come at first possible transition-places and next possible transition places; in Data (28), A gets a number of turn-constructional units before B comes in, A comes back in after a first lexical unit, and B comes back in at first possible completion of a first sentential unit. See also Data (33) below, et passim.

The empirical materials of conversation, then, lead to the observation about the facticity of the use of such components, and to their inclusion in the model of turn taking as the elements out of which turns are built.

Clearly, as well, some understanding of "sound production" (i.e.,

phonology, intonation, etc.) is very important to turn-taking organization. For example, discriminations between "what" as a one-word question and as the start of a sentential (or clausal or phrasal) construction are made not syntactically, but intonationally. When, further, it is realized that any word can be made into a "one-word" unit-type,⁴⁰ and that via intonation, then, the character of the unit-types' description in syntactic terms can be appreciated as partial.

While the rule-set itself appears to treat as central only the "projectable completion" feature of its host's language materials, it seems productive to assume that, given conversation as a major, if not *the* major, locus of a language's use, other aspects of language structure will be designed for conversational use, and, *pari passu*, turn-taking contingencies. The interaction of syntactic and turn-taking structures, however, awaits serious investigation, perhaps along lines such as the following.

We earlier noted that the turn-taking system is a system for sequences of turns. A "turn" is to be thought of as a turn-in-a-series, with the potential of the series being made into a sequence. Turns display gross organizational features that reflect their occurrence in a series. They regularly have a three-part structure: a part which addresses the relation of a turn to a prior, a part involved with what is occupying the turn, and a part which addresses the relation of the turn to a succeeding one. These parts regularly occur in that order, an obviously rational ordering for an organization that latches a turn to the turns on either side of it.

Data 29-33

[TZ:21-23]

- A: It would bum you out to kiss me then, (29)
hunh
[
- B: Yeah well we all know where that's at.
((pause))
- A: ()
[
- B: I mean you went- you went through a- a long
rap on that one. =
- A: =Yeah, so I say that would bum you out then,
hunh

Where "yeah" is a formal affiliator to last turn, and "hunh" is a tag question, projecting a link to next turn.

[Fat tape:1]

- D: Jude loves olives. (30)
 J: That's not bad.
 • D: She eats them all the time. I understand they're fattening, huh?

Where the first sentence relates to a prior via multiple proterm use, and a tag question projects a link to next turn.

[Fat tape:6]

- J: But by the time you get out of the (31)
 shower and get your d- self ready,
 • M: [Well I'm *not*
 ready. I haven't kept you waiting yet though,
 have I?
 J: Michael, You will, I know you will

Where the first sentence relates to the prior at least by contrast, and the tag question relates to a next.

[Ladies:12:13]

- B: Maybelle's takin' this week off, and she- you (32)
 know something, she looked kinda tired.
 • A: Uh huh. (2.0) Uhm well I guess she's been
 working pretty steadily, hasn't she.
 B: [Yeah, she's been
 working pretty steady, and she's had some
 difficult cases.

[HG:2-3]

- N: Yah an' an' the fact that you're you feel guilty (33)
 about eating them *that's* what makes you
 break out, because it's- it's all inside you.
 H: So people who've broken out they're just
 very emotional people, huh,
 N: [Heh heh heh, and they're
 worried about it.
 H: [heh heh heh heh heh heh
 • N: I don't know. It sounds kinda crazy, bu:t
 H: •hh just a little.

The turn-taking system, it should now be clear, exerts pressure to have these systematically potential turn parts, or turn jobs, be accomplished before first possible completion, for example, in a single sentence.

Data 34-35

[TZ:57-59]

A: So it could happen to:: some people. •hh (34)
 But I: I wouldn' uh I wouldn': I wou- I
 say I wouldn' uh ((pause)) I don' know of
 anybody- that- 'cause anybody that I really
 didn't *di:g* I wouldn't have the *ti:me*,
 uh: a:n: to waste I would say, unh if I
 didn' ()

• B: [And you consider it wasting to jist be-
 you know- to jist like talkin' an' bein' with
 somebody.

A: Yeah. If you haven't got nothin' goin' (you're)
 jist wastin' your time. •hh You could be doin'
 somethin' important to you. You know an- =

Where B links to prior via the conjunction and the cross reference, and links to a next by building the turn as a first part of an adjacency pair—confirmation request/ confirmation—getting a confirmation next.

[HG:3]

N: So what ti me- (35)
 []

H: Now what-

• N: Oh so we we get the tickets when we get
 there, right?

H: [yeah yeah they're reserved seats.

Where the interruption marker "oh" exhibits a relationship to prior, and the tag question to next. See also Data (33), second turn, which is similar to (34).

It is expectable, then, that some aspects of the syntax of a sentence will be best understood by reference to the jobs that need to get done in a turn-in-a-series, turns being a fundamental place for the occurrence of sentences.

14. Repair mechanisms for dealing with turn-taking errors and violations obviously are available for use. The various organizations that are operative in conversation are susceptible to errors, violations, troubles, and for them repair devices are available. We cannot here enter into a full discussion of repair.⁴¹ We mean to touch on three themes.

First, among the variety of repair devices in conversation are ones directed to, and designed for, turn-taking problems. No special theoretical motivation is needed to observe that questions such as "who, me?"⁴² the lore and practices of etiquette concerning "interruption" and complaints about it, the use of interruption markers such as "excuse me" and others, false starts, repeats or recycles of parts of a turn overlapped by others, as well as premature (i.e., before possible completion) stopping by parties to simultaneous talk, are repair devices directed to troubles in the organization and distribution of turns to talk.

Second, at least some of the mechanisms for turn-taking repair are intrinsic to the very system whose troubles they repair. Thus, for example, the basic device for repairing "more than one at a time" involves a procedure which is itself otherwise violative in turn-taking terms—namely, stopping a turn before its possible completion point;⁴³ it involves, then, a transformation of a central feature of the turn-taking system, the use of turn-constructive units to their next possible completion, and not some device quite external to it. In that regard, we can further note that there are places in the rule-set itself designed for repair, in particular the cycle of options provided by Rules 1(b) and 1(c). What we earlier called "1(c)-1(a)'s," a current speaker continuation after the nonoccurrence of turn transfer at a transition-relevance place, a continuation that selects a next speaker to go,⁴⁴ should be appreciated as a repair of a failure of turn transfer, provision for which is directly incorporated in the turn-taking system's basic organization. It is a major feature of a rational organization for behavior that accommodates real worldly interests, and is not susceptible of external enforcement, that it incorporates resources and procedures for repair of its troubles into its fundamental organization.

Third, the turn-taking system constrains repairs of other than a turn-taking sort. For example, repairs by "other than current speaker" are not done until a turn's completion, respecting the turn-taking system's allocation of rights to a turn even where repair is found necessary. In fact, most repair (e.g., correction of a word) is done within the turn in which the repairable occurs. But when repair spills over the boundaries of a turn, when, for example, "other than speaker" initiates a repair in the turn following the one in which the repairable occurred, then the sequence so initiated is organized by the same turn-taking system, and the repair sequences exhibit the same features of turn taking as we have been

discussing, including the feature currently under discussion—that is, repair sequences can take repair.⁴⁵

The compatibility of the model of turn taking with the facts of repair is thus of a dual character: The turn-taking system lends itself to, and incorporates devices for, repair of its troubles; and the turn-taking system is a basic organizational device for the repair of any other troubles in conversation. The turn-taking system and the organization of repair are thus “made for each other” in a double sense.

THE TYPE OF MODEL THIS IS

So far, we have touched on a variety of literature in which materials relevant to turn-taking organization in conversation are collected, addressed, or analyzed, although not necessarily in explicit turn-taking terms; we have proposed a set of grossly observable features of conversation with which a model of turn taking should be able to come to terms, if it is to merit serious consideration; we have proposed a model of a turn-taking system for conversation, or at least some major components of such a model; and we have sketched that, and how, that model comes to terms with the facts we had proposed as constraints, hopefully in the course of that discussion displaying some interesting features and uses of that model. It is certainly the case that the proposed model is in several respects incorrect or insufficient. However this particular model may be defective, we do think that the foregoing discussions support the claim that the appropriate model for turn taking in conversation will be this *sort* of model. In this section, we try to characterize what that *sort* is, by citing a few of its most important features with some elaborations. Those features are (a) that it is a “local management system,” and (b) that it is an “interactionally managed system.” Having characterized the sort of system it is, we will offer a formulation of the sort of problem it seems designed to serve as a solution to.

In characterizing the turn-taking system we have been dealing with as a “local management system,” we take note of the following clear features the rule-set and the components have: (a) The system deals with single transitions at a time, and, thereby, with only the two turns a single transition links at a time; that is, it allocates but a single turn at a time; (b) the single turn it allocates on each occasion of its operation is “next turn”; (c) while the system deals with but a single transition at a time, it deals with transitions comprehensively (i.e., it deals with any of the transition possibilities it methodizes the use of), exclusively (no other system can organize transitions independent of the turn-taking system),⁴⁶

and, via its dealing with "next turn," it deals with transitions serially, in the order in which they come up. These features by themselves invite a characterization of the system of which they are part as a local management system, in that all the operations are "local," that is, directed to "next turn" and "next transition" on a turn-by-turn basis. It should be noted, however, that this much constitutes local management only with respect to turn order. The system is, however, locally managed with respect to turn size as well. Not only is the allocation of turns accomplished in each turn for a next, but the determination of turn size is locally accomplished, that is, accomplished in the developmental course of each turn, under constraints imposed by a next turn and an orientation to a next turn in the current one. While the earlier discussion pointed out a range of features in conversation that are not fixed but vary, the two that the system directly and explicitly concerns itself with in its machinery are turn size and turn order. The turn-taking system is a local management system, then, in the sense that it operates in such a way as to allow turn size and turn order to vary, and be under local management, across variations in other parameters, and while achieving the aim of all turn-taking systems—the organization of "*n* at a time"—and the aim of all turn-taking organizations for speech-exchange systems⁴⁷—"one at a time while speaker change recurs."

The turn-taking system under examination can be further characterized for the kind of local management system it is. The character and organization of the rules that constitute the system as a local management system themselves determine its more particular organization in not only allowing and/or requiring turn size and turn order to vary, but in subjecting their variability to the control of the parties to the conversation for any conversation. It is, therefore, among local management systems, a "party-administered" system. Furthermore, it makes turn size and turn order interdependent by interlocking the mechanisms for their respective determination, turn-allocation mechanisms having consequences for turn size, and procedures for regulating or determining turn size employing turn-allocation techniques (as in the use of tag questions as turn exit, and therefore, turn stopping, devices). The system then integrates the machinery for turn-size and turn-order organization, and subjects that machinery to the administration of the parties to any conversation. The mechanism by which the system lends itself to party administration, by which turn-size and turn-order determinations are integrated, and by which the system achieves comprehensiveness for any turn transition is the option cycle that the ordered set of rules provides. For that rule-set provides options for "speakers" and "potential next speakers," putting itself thereby at the disposal of participants; it interconnects "stopping by

current" and "starting by next," thereby connecting turn size with turn order; and is abstractly formulated, so as to not exclude any transition place from its scope.

A set of further features of the system, collected under the rubric "interactionally managed," concerns the way in which the turn-taking system, in its local management, participant-administered form fits to, and is a specific adaptation of turn taking for, conversational interaction.

Party administration need not be interactive. In the turn-taking system for conversation, however, it is. The party-administered, local management of turn order is effected through the rule-set, whose ordered property provides a cycle of options in which any party's contribution to turn order determination is contingent on, and oriented to, the contributions of other parties. The basis of this contingency is given by the ways in which the operation of any of the options the rules provide is contingent on higher order options not having been exercised, and constrained by the prospective operation of lower-order options, a point discussed after the description of the rule-set (p. 13).

Turn size is also the product of not only party-administered local management, but of interactional production. That involves the sort of turn unit the turn-taking system uses, a facet which can here be used to explicate further what we intend in characterizing the system as an "interactionally managed system." The turn unit is of a sort which employs a specification of minimal sizes, but which provides for expansion within a unit, that is stoppable (though not at any point), that has transition places which discretely recur within it and can themselves be expanded or contracted—each of these features except the first being loci of interactional determination. By virtue of this character, it is misconceived to treat turns as units characterized by a division of labor in which the speaker determines the unit and its boundaries, and other parties to the conversation have as their task the recognition of them. Rather, the turn is a unit whose constitution and boundaries involve such a distribution of tasks as (as we have noted): That a speaker can talk in such a way as to permit projection of possible completion to be made from his talk (from its start), and to allow others to use its transition places to start talk, to pass up talk, to affect directions of talk, and so on, and that their starting to talk, if properly placed, can determine where he ought to stop talk. That is, the "turn" as a unit is interactionally determined.⁴⁸

For conversationalists, that turn size and turn order are locally managed (i.e., turn-by-turn), party-administered (i.e., by them), and interactionally controlled (i.e., any feature being multilaterally shaped), means that these facets of conversation, and those that derive from them, can be brought under the jurisdiction of perhaps the most general principle

particularizing conversational interaction,⁴⁹ that of "recipient design." With "recipient design" we intend to collect a multitude of respects in which the talk by a party in a conversation is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are the coparticipants. In our work, we have found recipient design to operate with regard to word selection, topic selection, the admissibility and ordering of sequences, the options and obligations for starting and terminating conversations, and so on, which will be reported in future publications.⁵⁰ It is a major basis for that variability of actual conversations that is glossed by the notion "context-sensitive." By "the particularizing operation of recipient design on turn size and turn order," we are noticing that parties have ways of individualizing some "this conversation"; their collaboration in turn allocation and turn construction achieves a particular ordering of particular-sized turns and turn-transition characteristics⁵¹ of the particular conversation at the particular point in it. In evolving a machinery by which turn organization is subjected to recipient design in a workable way, turn taking, abstractly conceived, is adapted specifically for conversation.

SOME CONSEQUENCES OF THE MODEL

In this section, we hope to state briefly some consequences of the type of organization we have described. We will consider only such sorts of consequences as are of "general interest."

1. An intrinsic motivation for listening. In its turn-allocational techniques, the turn-taking system for conversation builds in an intrinsic motivation for listening to all utterances in a conversation, independent of other possible motivations, such as interest and politeness. In the variety of techniques for arriving at a next speaker, and in their ordered character, it obliges any willing or potentially intending speaker to listen to, and analyze, each utterance across its delivery. Thus, a participant willing to speak next, if selected to do so, will need to listen to each utterance and analyze it at least to find whether or not he is selected as next speaker with it. And any potentially intending speaker will have to listen to any utterance after which he might want to speak to find, at the least, that no other has been selected as next speaker with it. Under either of these circumstances, a willing or potentially intending next speaker will have to listen through current utterance's end in order to be able properly to effect turn transfer, and perhaps in order to secure the turn. Given the mechanism for selecting "last speaker as next," a current speaker will

also be subject to this motivation upon completion of his turn. By maximizing the set of potential next speakers for any next turn,⁵² the system translates a willingness or potential desire to speak into a corollary obligation to listen.

2. Turn-taking organization controls, at least partially, the understanding utterances get. There are a variety of candidate proposals with regard to the question: How is talk understood? The investigation of turn taking contributes to this problem in various ways. One is: The basis furnished by the turn-taking system for listening, just discussed, may be amplified in the following respect. A participant potentially willing to speak, if selected to do so, will need to listen to any utterance to find if, with it, he is being selected to speak next. A major class of "current selects next" techniques being constituted by "first pair-parts," that is, by type-characterized utterances such as "greeting," "question," "insult," and "complaint," a willing speaker will need to analyze utterances to find if an instance of such an utterance-type is being employed, and is being employed in a way that possibly selects him as next speaker. And a potentially intending speaker will need to examine any utterance after which he might want to speak to find whether such a thing was being done to him or to some other party.

3. A methodological consequence. The turn-taking system has, as a by-product of its design, a proof procedure for the analysis of turns. When a speaker addresses a first pair-part, such as a "question," or a "complaint" to another, we have noted, he selects the other as next speaker, and selects for him that he do a second part for the "adjacency pair" he has started, that is, to do an "answer," or an "apology" (among other possibilities), respectively. The addressee, in doing a second pair-part, such as an "answer" or "an apology" next, not only does that utterance-type, but thereby displays (in the first place to his coparticipants) his understanding of the prior turn's talk as a first part, as a "question" or "complaint."

Therein lies a central methodological resource for the investigation of conversation (by contrast with the investigation of literary and other "text" materials), a resource provided by conversation's thoroughly interactional character. For it is a systematic consequence of the turn-taking organization of conversation that it obliges its participants to display to each other, in a turn's talk, their understanding of other turns' talk. More generally, a turn's talk will be heard as directed to a prior turn's talk, unless special techniques are used to locate some other talk to which it is directed. Regularly, then, a turn's talk will display its speaker's understanding of a prior turn's talk, and whatever other talk it marks itself as directed to.⁵³

In the first place, of course, such understandings are displayed to coparticipants, and are an important basis for conversation's local self-correction mechanism. Clearly, they also supply another important basis for the "last as next" turn-order bias, a prior speaker being motivated to self-select as next speaker if he finds the understanding of his prior utterance, displayed by current speaker in current turn, unacceptable.

But while understandings of other turn's talk are displayed to coparticipants, they are available as well to professional analysts, who are thereby afforded a proof criterion (and a search procedure) for the analysis of what a turn's talk is occupied with. Since it is the parties' understandings of prior turns' talk that is relevant to their construction of next turns, it is *their* understandings that are wanted for analysis. The display of those understandings in the talk in subsequent turns affords a resource for the analysis of prior turns, and a proof procedure for professional analyses of prior turns, resources intrinsic to the data themselves.

THE PLACE OF CONVERSATION AMONG THE SPEECH-EXCHANGE SYSTEMS

The use of a turn-taking system to preserve one party talking at a time while speaker change recurs for interactions in which talk is organizationally involved is not at all unique to conversation. It is massively present for ceremonies, debates, meetings, press conferences, seminars, therapy sessions, interviews, trials, and so on. All of these differ from conversation (and from each other) on a range of other turn-taking parameters and in the organization by which they achieve the set of parameter values they organize the presence of.⁵⁴

Such a sort of comparative investigation of the speech-exchange systems available to members of a same society, conceived of in terms of differential turn-taking systems has barely been looked into by us. However, certain striking arrangements may be noted, if only to suggest the possible interest this area shall have.

It seems, as noted, correct to say that generally, the allocational techniques for conversation do one turn allocation at a time. Alternatives to such a mode of operation are readily found. In debates, for example, the ordering of all turns is preallocated, by formula, by reference to "pro" and "con" positions. In contrast to both debates and conversation, meetings that have a chairperson partially preallocate turns, and provide for the allocation of unallocated turns via the use of the preallocated turns. Thus, the chairperson has rights to talk first, and to talk after each other speaker, and can use each such turn to allocate next speakership.

The foregoing suffices to suggest a structural possibility; that turn-taking systems, or at least the class of them whose members each preserve "one party talks at a time," are, with respect to their allocational arrangements, linearly arrayed. The linear array is one in which one polar type (which conversation instances) involves "one turn at a time allocation"; that is, the use of local allocational means, and the other pole (which debates instance) involves "preallocation of all turns," and medial types (which meetings instance) involve various mixes of preallocational and local allocational means.

That the types can be so arrayed permits them to be compared, directly, in relevant functional terms. Thus, one pole (local allocation of turns) permits maximization of the size of the set of potential speakers to each next turn, but is not designed organizationally to permit the methodical achievement of an equalization of turns among potential speakers; whereas the other (preallocation of all turns) is designed to permit the equalization of turns (or can be; it can be designed for other ends) which it does by specifying (and thereby, minimizing the size of the set of potential) next speaker. If the range of turn-taking systems is arrayed on a continuum ranging from full preallocation of turns to one allocation at a time, then any system may be found to maximize, minimize, or not be organizationally relevant to a range of functions (such as equalization of turns among participants, maximization of potential next speakers, etc.). The functions which any system is design-relevant for may then be explored, and the various systems compared with respect to their consequences on any given function of interest. On the two we have mentioned, equalization of turns and maximization of set of next speaker candidates, local allocation and full preallocation are polar types, as, indeed, it might turn out they are for any function for which turn allocation is systematically relevant.

Given the linear array, the polar position of conversation, and the functions that position permits maximization of, a characterization of the organization of turn taking in conversation takes on more than merely ethnographic interest. Occupying such a functionally interesting structural position, conversation is at least one representative of the means by which one polar possibility is organizationally achieved.

All positions on the linear array use turns and preserve the feature "one party talks at a time." While they each specify these differently, and while our systematic characterization was for conversation only, one further generalization—and the orderliness of the difference it leads to noticing—may be mentioned. For all positions of the linear array, "turns" are at least partially organized via language-specific constructional formats, for example, syntactic construction (of which sentential

construction is a most important and familiar, but not sole, instance). Turn size may be characterizable by two different aspects of sentential organization: (a) multiplication of sentence units in a turn, and (b) increasing complexity of syntactic construction within single sentence units. Two observations can be made about turn size and its relation to position on the linear array. First, turn size increases with increasing degrees of preallocation on the linear array; second, the metric employed for gauging, and for constructionally increasing, turn size may shift with position on the array, multiplication of sentence units being the central mode for the preallocational pole, and increasing internal complexity within single (or minimized) sentence units being the central mode for local allocational systems. Both of these observations can be seen to be natural products of the design of the turn-taking systems at various points on the array.

While we have referred to conversation as "one polar extreme" on the linear array, and "ceremony" as possibly the other pole, we should not be understood thereby to be proposing the independent, or equal status of conversation and ceremony as polar types. For it appears likely that conversation should be considered the basic form of speech-exchange system, with other systems on the array representing a variety of transformations on conversation's turn-taking system to achieve other types of turn-taking systems. In this light, debate or ceremony would not be an independent polar type, but rather the most extreme transformation of conversation, most extreme in fully fixing the most important, and perhaps nearly all, of the parameters that conversation allows to vary.

NOTES

1. For example, Goffman (1955, 1964, 1971), Albert (1964), Kendon (1967), Yngve (1970), Duncan (1972a,b, 1973). Thus Goffman (1964, pp. 135-136):

Card games, ball-room couplings, surgical teams in operation, and fist fights provide examples of encounters; all illustrate the social organization of shared current orientation, and all involve an organized interplay of acts of some kind. I want to suggest that when speaking occurs it does so within this kind of social arrangement; of course what is organized therein is not plays or steps or procedures or blows, but turns at talking. Note then that the natural home of speech is one in which speech is not always present.

I am suggesting that the act of speaking must always be referred to the state of talk that is sustained through the particular turn at talking, and that this state of talk involves a circle of others ratified as coparticipants. (Such a phenomenon as talking to oneself, or talking to unratiated recipients as in the case of collusive communication, or telephone talk, must first be seen as a departure from the norm, else its structure and significance will be lost.) Talk is socially organized, not merely in terms of who speaks to whom in what language, but as a little system of mutually ratified and ritually governed face-to-face action, a social encounter. Once a state of talk has been ratified,

cues must be available for requesting the floor and giving it up, for informing the speaker as to the stability of the focus of attention he is receiving. Intimate collaboration must be sustained to ensure that one turn at talking neither overlaps the previous one too much, nor wants for inoffensive conversational supply. For someone's turn must always and exclusively be in progress.

2. Stephan and Mishler (1952); Bales (1950, 1970); Coleman (1960).
3. Bales (1950).
4. Jaffe and Feldstein (1970); Matarazzo and Wiens (1972).
5. For example, Mitchell (1956, p. 79):

Important headmen also have the right of walking in front of their juniors. If there are three or four headmen returning from, say, a court case, they arrange themselves in the pathway in an order which reflects their rank. As they file down the narrow field paths the leader is the most senior among the group. After him come the other headmen and last of all the commoners. This order of precedence is also followed when initiands pass through the tribal initiation ceremonies.

Or Beardsley, Hall, and Ward (1959, p. 88):

Father and mother take the small children in to bathe with them, granny scrubs the men's backs, and relatives or neighbors who have no bath (three houses in Nillike) come to chat while waiting their turn at the end of the day. The senior male of the household finishes his bath first and the family follows in regular order of sex and age precedence. The first bather gets the hottest water.

And in 1933, Isaacs (1933, pp. 222-223), a psychologist doing what amounts to an ethnography of children, wrote:

"Taking turns" is one of the hardest lessons for children under five years to learn . . . the young child cannot without much experience believe that "his turn" really will come in due time. All that he knows is that the others "have got it" and he hasn't. A few minutes is an eternity when one is eagerly waiting for a prized pleasure such as riding on a tricycle or a see-saw. Nor does one believe in the goodwill of the others who are enjoying their turns first—one knows only too well how readily one would exclude *them* if one were allowed! Only the proved evenness of justice of the controlling adult will make a transition possible from the impetuous assertion of "I want it *now*" to that trust in the future which makes "taking turns" possible.

6: Among anthropologists, Albert (1964) has come the closest to addressing turn taking per se:

The order in which individuals speak in a group is strictly determined by seniority of rank. If the eldest present is lower in social rank than some other individual, age gives way before social status. Thus, a nephew may be older than his uncle but the uncle is of higher rank and will speak before him. A prince or chief may be younger than others present but speaks first by virtue of his higher rank. There are no recorded instances of confusion or conflict in the matter of determining order of precedence, even in very large groups.

In public, the rule for servants, females, and other inferiors is to speak when spoken to but otherwise to maintain silence. Nevertheless, the pattern is so arranged that younger or socially inferior persons are in due course able to express their views. Thus, the senior person will speak first; the next in order of rank opens his speech with a statement to the effect, "Yes, I agree with the previous speaker, he is correct, he is older, and knows best, etc." Then, depending on circumstances and issues, the second speaker will by degrees or at once express his own views, and these may well be diametrically opposed to

those previously expressed. No umbrage is taken, the required formula of acknowledgment of the superior having been used. If the *umukuru*, senior person, is truly very aged and weak his son may speak first, explaining his departure from the rules at the outset; "My father is old, his memory is not good, he wishes me to speak for him," or some other appropriate excuse is given. It is not unusual for the formal order of precedence to be abandoned in the latter part of a protracted discussion, and for loud voices to be heard even among upper-class individuals. [Reproduced by permission of the American Anthropological Association from the *American Anthropologist*, 66 (6, part 2), 1964. Pp. 40-41.]

7. Except perhaps, for Samuel Beckett's *The Lost Ones* (1972).

8. When we speak of "context-free" and "context-sensitive" we cannot say the scope of reference of "context" that is relevant. For now, let it suffice to employ a longstanding understanding of "context" in the social sciences, one that attends the various places, times, and identities of parties to interaction. What we mean to notice is that major aspects of the organization of turn taking are insensitive to such parameters of context, and are, in that sense, "context-free," while it remains the case that examination of any particular materials will display the context-free resources of the turn-taking system to be employed and disposed in ways that are fitted to particulars of context. It is the context-free structure that defines how and where context-sensitivity can be displayed; the particularities of context are exhibited in systematically organized ways and places, and those are shaped by the context-free organization.

We understand that linguists use a different sense of context-free and context-sensitive, in which "context" refers to syntactic or sound environment, and "context-free" and "context-sensitive" are mutually exclusive possibilities. Our usage goes, in the first instance, to social contexts; whether it has a bearing on sound or syntactic ones we cannot say.

9. There are obvious structures involved in this list: historical structures by reference to which some facts would be noted only after others had; and substantive structures, in which various of the points are variously related to each other. The list is presented as to override any of these structures. Much might be learned from a consideration of these structures, but we are not interested in such uses of these points here (just as more can be made of the turn-taking model we propose than we will be making here). The list of points is intended as a set of empirical constraints on the model we propose, and, for now, nothing more, just as most of the attention we will give the model of turn taking we propose will be addressed to showing that the model meets the constraints set by these empirical observations. The list should be read with these intended uses in mind. For example, each item might be read as following not the item that preceded it in the list, but following the sentence preceding the list as a whole.

10. The heading "in any conversation" has raised for several readers of this paper in manuscript the question of cross-cultural validity. Such a question can, of course, be settled only empirically, by examining varieties of conversational materials. We can report the validity of our assertions for the materials we have examined, and apparently for Thai materials examined by Moerman (1972), New Guinea creole materials examined by G. Sankoff (personal communication), and for an undetermined number of languages within the competency of a substantial number of linguists at the Linguistic Institute in Ann Arbor, Michigan (Summer 1973), and elsewhere, who have found what follows consistent with what they know of their languages, or illuminating of otherwise recalcitrant problems in their understanding. Furthermore, examination of cross-cultural conversation, that is, where parties do not share a language of competence but a *lingua franca* in which all are only barely competent, is consistent with what follows (cf. Jordan & Fuller, in press). Finally, the cross-cultural question, as we understand it, asks how the structures on which we report

vary across languages (lexically or syntactically conceived), or language communities, or across social organizations, structures that are thereby cast as more basic ones. That ordering is not at all clear to us. We do find that aspects of turn-taking organization may vary in terms of other aspects of the sequential organization of conversation. And, as we suggest in the final section of the paper, there are various turn-taking systems for various speech-exchange systems, for example, conversation and debate.

11. There are other gross empirical features of conversation that could be added to the list. The ones we have noted are all important aspects of the organization of turn taking for conversation, and are therefore critical tests of a model of that organization. Space considerations preclude developing for each point the ways in which it is critical. One evidence of the crucial character of at least some of the points is that when other than the observed feature is the case, the turn-taking system that it is correct for is not a turn-taking system for *conversation*, but for some other speech-exchange system. In that sense, any such feature (e.g., of turn-order's or turn-size's non-prespecification) is criterial for the organization of turn taking for *conversation*, and it is critical that a proposed model be shown to be compatible with it.

12. See the following section, point 13.

13. It is empirically evident from sequential materials, that projectability is the case; that is, we find sequentially appropriate starts by next speakers after turns composed of single-word, single-phrase, or single-clause constructions with no gap—that is, with no waiting for possible sentence completion. For example, single-word turns:

[FD:IV:191]:

- | | | | |
|-----------|------------------------|---------|-----|
| DESK: | What is your last name | Loraine | (i) |
| | | { | |
| • CALLER: | | Dinnis. | |
| • DESK: | What? | | |
| • CALLER: | Dinnis. | | |

[Trio:18]

- | | | | |
|-------------|---|---------------|------|
| JEANETTE: | Oh you know, Mittie— Gordon, eh— Gordon, Mittie's | husband died. | (ii) |
| | (0.3) | | |
| ESTELLE: | Oh whe::n. | | |
| JEANETTE: | Well it was in the paper this morning. | | |
| ESTELLE: | It wa::s, | | |
| • JEANETTE: | Yeah. | | |

[Ladies:3:2:5]

- | | | |
|---------|--|-------|
| FERN: | Well they're not comin, | (iii) |
| • LANA: | Who. | |
| FERN: | Uh Pam, unless they c'n find somebody. | |

[NB:I:5:4]

- | | | |
|---------|-------------------------------------|------|
| GUY: | Is Rol down by any chance dju know? | (iv) |
| • EDDY: | Huh? | |
| GUY: | Is uh Smith down? | |
| EDDY: | Yeah he's down, | |

Single-phrase turns:

[TG:]

- | | | |
|------|--|-----|
| A: | Oh I have the— I have one class in the e:vening. | (v) |
| • B: | On Mondays? | |

- A: Y-uh::: Wednesdays.=
 B: =Uh-Wednesday,=
 A: =En it's like a Mickey Mouse course.

[Ladies:2:8:5]

- ANNA: Was last night the first time you met Missiz Kelly? (vi)
 (1.0)
 • BEA: Met whom?
 ANNA: Missiz Kelly.
 BEA: Yes.

Single-clause turns:

[NB:III:3]

- A: Uh *you* been down here before havenche. (vii)
 B: [Yeh.
 • A: Where the sidewalk is?
 B: Yeah,
 • A: Whur it ends,
 B: Goes all a' way up there?
 A: [They c'm up tuh the:re,
 A: Yeah.

For another sort of evidence on this point, see pp. 34-35, and Data (24)-(28) cited there. For additional data and discussion of the precise placement of talk starts, cf. Jefferson (1973). How projection of unit-types is accomplished, which allows such "no-gap" starts by next speakers, is an important question on which we have been working. It seems to us an area to which linguists can make major contributions. Our characterization in the rules, and in the subsequent discussion, leaves the matter of how projection is done open (cf. pp. 33-38).

Several observations are in order here concerning data citations: (a) An explanation of the symbols used in the transcriptions appears in the introduction to the book (for a more complete explication of notational symbols, the reader should consult the original paper in *Language*); (b) the data excerpts cited in this paper are illustrative. They are representative of large collections of data on the various points we have assembled out of a substantial number of conversations. The data cannot be presented more extensively because of space limitations, but all the data in the paper can be examined for points other than those in whose service they are initially cited, and in many cases we have selected such data excerpts for a point as would illustrate other points in the paper independently (bullets (•) indicate the location of the phenomenon for which the data excerpt is introduced). Similarly, all the data in all our other papers can be inspected for their bearing on the points made in this one. And any materials of natural conversation (transcribed to an appropriate level of detail and precision) collected by others may be examined as well. All this, of course, is appropriate if, indeed, what is proposed in the paper is so "for any conversation."

14. For example,

[Schenkein:II:49]

- SARA: Ben you want some ()? (viii)
 BEN: Well, *alright* I'll have a,
 ((untimed silence))
 SARA: Bill you want some?
 BILL: No,

In which Ben and Bill's turns are allocated by Sara (instances of current—Sara—selecting next), and Sara's turns are by self-selection.

Or:

[Adato:2:9]

SY: See Death'v a Salesman las'night? (ix)
 JIM: No.
 ((untimed silence))
 SY: Never see(h)n it?
 JIM: No.
 SY: Ever *seen* it?
 JAY: Yes

in which Jim and Jay are selected as next speakers by Sy, and Sy's turns are allocated by self-selection (about Sy's selections of next speaker, note that whether or not the first interchange involves a glance-selected recipient, the second and third are at least partially lexically accomplished, in the uses of "never" and "ever").

That the preceding should not be taken to evidence that questions are always self-selected and answerer turns the product of "current selects next" techniques may be seen in the following;

[GTS:5:25]

JIM: Any a' you guys read that story about Walter Mitty? (x)
 KEN: *I* did,
 ROGER: Mm hmm

all the turns in which are allocated by self-selection.

For further discussion, and additional data, concerning turn allocation, see pp. 27–33.

15. Thus:

[TG:JFr:20]

AVA: *He*, he'n Jo were like on the outs, yihknow? (xi)
 (0.7)
 • AVA: So uh,
 • BEE: [[
They always are (hh)hhh

[Ladies:2:2:3:14]

CLAIRE: So then we were worse o- 'n she and' she went down (xii)
 four,
 (0.5)
 • CLAIRE: But uhm
 (1.5)
 • CLAIRE: Uh
 • CHLOE: [[
 Well then it was *her* fault Claire,
 [
 CLAIRE: Yeah she said one no trump,
 and I said two, an' then she went back t'two . . .

[GTS:1:2:86]

ROGER: *That's a joke* that police force. They gotta hunderd cops (xiii)
 around the guy en so(h)me guy walks in and says I'm
 gonna shoot you and *shoots* him.

- ROGER: :hmmhhh heh
- ROGER: En it's the president's assassin y'know,
(0.9)
- ROGER: They're *wonder* ful.
- LOUISE: [Hm--Now they're not even sure.

16. We use the term "transition-relevance *place*" in order to avoid choosing, with a term, between alternative and possibly compatible features of transition coordination we are currently investigating. There are aspects of transition coordination that seem to require the notion of a "space" for transitions. To take an easily accessible example, interturn silences that are not treated by participants as gaps or pauses. And there are aspects of transitions for which the notion of a transition "point" seems correct. For example, the end of a question that selects a next speaker seems often to constitute a transition point, a new turn starting there whether or not talk by another is immediately begun. The two are not necessarily mutually incompatible as later discussion will indicate. The concerns of this paper seem to us not to depend on this order of detail, and we avoid prejudicing the issue by the use of "place," of which both "space" and "point" are possible specifications.

17. Speaker change occurrence is the case of a two-turn sequence, e.g., just: A: Hello; B: Hello, with nothing following.

18. Cf. Jefferson (1973), which deals specifically with this matter.

19. The relationship between the brief gap that may characterize an accomplished transition and such extended silences as do occur within conversations, characteristically between sequences, will not be considered here beyond noting that Rule 1(b) does provide that self-selection is optional, and that Rule 1(c) provides that "same speaker continuing" is also optional. This combination allows the possibility of a lapse, which will be considered below (in our discussion of point 11).

20. For some discussion, see below, point 12(b), p. 30.

21. As in Data (12) above, and in (i)-(vi), (21)-(23).

22. Data (i)-(x) and scan the rest of the data for varying sizes of single-unit turns.

23. Cf. Schegloff (forthcoming).

24. Schegloff and Sacks (1973).

25. See p. 28 ff., and for further elaboration Schegloff and Sacks (1973).

26. Discussions of a number of types of sequences have been published or are in press; for example, summons-answer sequences (Schegloff, 1968), side sequences (Jefferson, 1972), insertion sequences (Schegloff, 1972), closing sequences (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973), story sequences (Sacks, 1974), expanded sequences (Jefferson & Schenkein, 1977), and various others (e.g., Jefferson, 1973).

27. For example, it is sometimes suggested in the literature on small groups that relative distribution of turns (or some similar measure) is an index of, or medium for, power, status, influence, etc. For example, Bales (1970):

Who speaks how much to whom in the group is a "brute fact" characterizing the actual present situation. Speaking takes up time. When one member speaks it takes time and attention from all other members of the group, some of whom may want to speak themselves. To take up time speaking in a small group is to exercise power over the other members for at least the duration of the time taken, regardless of the content. It is an exercise of power that may not coincide at all with the status position of the individual based on outside criteria, or even on special criteria developed within the group. . . .

Within the small group the time taken by a given member in a given session is practically a direct index of the amount of power he has attempted to

exercise in that period [*Personality and interpersonal behavior*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. Pp. 76-77].

The next paragraph in the text above suggests another kind of care, in addition to those which researchers in this area undoubtedly already take, to be taken in such uses of relative turn distribution by professional analysts.

28. What follows is not true for any transition-relevance place at all, but for certain classes of transition places, characterizable by reference to the organization of sequences, not the organization of turn taking.

29. That is, parties' treatment of silence in conversation is contingent on its placement. Roughly, intraturn silence (silence not at a transition-relevance place) is a "pause," and initially not to be talked in by others; silence after a possible completion point is, initially, a gap, and to be minimized; extended silence at transition-relevance places may become lapses. But some silences are transformable. For example, if a developing silence at a transition place, which is a (potential) gap is ended by talk of the same party who was talking before it, the "gap" may be transformed into a "pause" (being now intraturn); that is one way that "gap" is minimized (cf. Data [xii], [xiii], [1]).

30. The option cycle relationship between Rules 1(b) and 1(c) depicted here may help to explain such results as are reported in Matarazzo and Wiens (1972) to the effect that "reaction time latencies" (the time intervening between one speaker's completion and a next speaker's start in two-party conversation) are shorter, on the average, than are "initiative time latencies" (the time intervening between one speaker's "completion" and the start of a "follow-up" utterance by same speaker, the other participant not having talked). It was, in part, the encountering of similar data in our materials that prompted that formulation of the rules.

31. Since turn allocation has appeared both as an empirical fact about conversation and as part of the components and rule-set, the discussion of it is more extensive than that in other sections, and is concerned to, at least partly, explicate that part of the rule-set.

The theme of showing the compatibility of the model with the gross facts is different in the case of turn allocation than in the case of other of the facts; for it is a central design outcome of the model to make multiple allocation techniques compatible with "one speaker at a time" by its ordering of them (see pp. 13-14).

32. See note 14, and the data therein; also Data (21).

33. See notes 24 and 25.

34. "Addressing" itself can be done as a first pair-part, e.g., as in summoning; cf. Schegloff (1968).

35. As, for example, in Data (viii), (14), or (21).

36. Cf. Jefferson (1972).

37. Cf. Sacks (1972c).

38. For example, one large group of turn beginnings are sentence starts, all of which are informative to some degree about the character of the sentence or turn so begun, some of them extremely so. For example, a turn's talk beginning with a *Wh*-word powerfully projects the possible involvement of a "question" character to that turn, with familiar consequences by now, for example, that it will be possibly selecting a next speaker, possibly selecting last speaker as next speaker, and given the availability of the one-word question form, the possibility of a rapid turn transfer.

39. See note 13.

40. See p. 30, discussion in point 12(B) for partial repeats and the citation there.

41. For discussion of two different aspects of repair, see Jefferson (1972) and Sacks and Schegloff (1974).

42. For example:

(L&M:7) Mother, 11-year-old daughter, and dog are in bed, putting the daughter to sleep; the dog has been addressed earlier in the conversation.

- M: wha'd are you doin.
 • L: me?
 M: yeh, you goina go ta sleep like that?
 L: nothing (xiv)
 L: no, hh heh hh hh
 M: with your rear end sticking up in the air, how you gonna
 sleep like that.
 L: heh heh I'm n(h)ot(h)

43. See *Data* (23) et passim.

44. Above in the discussion of 12(C), pp. 30-31.

45. Earlier work on repair, for example, Jefferson (1972), Schegloff (1972), and Sacks and Schegloff (1974) encountered the ordering of repair by the turn-taking system, not having especially looked for it. Cf. in particular the data in Jefferson (1972) in regard to the present discussion.

46. Thus, while an addressed question requires an answer from the addressed party, it is the turn-taking system, and not syntactic or semantic features of the "question," that requires the answer to come "next."

47. Cf. Miller (1963), p. 418.

48. Prior researchers, for example, Bales (1950), Jaffe and Feldstein (1970), in looking for a unit that could be "recognized," possibly for good technical reasons in their research, have focused on its self-determined, independent, recognizable completeness. This appears to contrast with the main turn-organizational character of conversation, which is the interactional shaping of turns.

49. We owe the possibility of ever having seen the importance of the particularization theme to our acquaintance with Harold Garfinkel. See Garfinkel (1967) and Garfinkel and Sacks (1970).

50. For word selection, cf. Sacks and Schegloff (1974).

51. Jefferson (1973) pp. 56-71, et passim.

52. See point 9, p. 21f.

53. Cf. Moerman and Sacks (1974).

54. Nor is the feature unique to a particular linguistic or social community. It is evidently exhibited in conversation, meetings, etc., in societies whose languages and systems of social organization quite drastically differ. Cf. for example, Albert (1964), and note 10.