CHAPTER 9

Conversation analysis

9.1 Introduction

Conversation analysis (CA) is the investigation of authentic talk-in-interaction (Clift, 2014). It was established by the three U.S. sociologists Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It emerged from the sociological branch of ethnomethodology, which studies linguistic norms that help members of a community to organize social interaction. CA not only examines so-called "mundane" conversations of everyday personal life but also investigates institutionalized talk, such as classroom discourse, journalistic interviews or communication between doctors and patients (see Chapter 14).

As regards methodology, CA is a highly empirical, data-driven approach. It is based on naturally occurring, recorded conversations that are transcribed with the help of a set of conventionalized symbols and orthographic modifications (Section 9.2). One fundamental notion in the investigation of talk is turn-taking, which refers to the fact that the conversational floor moves from one speaker to the next, depending on a limited number of rules (Section 9.3). Contributions to conversations do not occur randomly but are organized in sequences of neighboring turns which are called adjacency pairs (Section 9.4). One pervasive phenomenon in talk is the occurrence of discourse markers, which signal transitions between contributions and indicate attitudes of interlocutors (Section 9.5).

9.2 Transcription methods

The study of verbal interaction requires a method of written representation, a **transcription system**, as the regular spelling conventions are not sufficient for transcription. Intonation, for instance, can only be partially reproduced using punctuation and stress marks. Furthermore, it is important to know exactly who said what when. It is also necessary to be able to register silence. The most widely used transcription system is **dramaturgical notation**, which is based on the written representation of stage discourse. Dramaturgical notation was developed by

Gail Jefferson (see, for example, her 1978 publication), one of the pioneers of conversation analysis.

Generally, transcription needs to reconcile two objectives. On the one hand, the written preservation of talk should be as authentic and detailed as possible, while on the other it should be simple enough to be read by a wide range of researchers (Clayman and Gill, 2014). For this reason, alphabetic spelling is employed instead of a full phonological transcription. However, the spelling may deviate from standard orthography whenever idiosyncratic pronunciations need to be displayed. For instance, "why don't you take a break?" can appear in the contracted form "whyncha take a break?", signaling that the words are pronounced as one connected unit (Liddicoat, 2011). For some speech sounds there is no standard orthography, so that transcribers need to establish spellings that represent these utterances as accurately as possible. For example, *mhm* or *mm* utterances are used by hearers indicating that they are paying attention. Due to the sociological background of CA, **paralinguistic features** such as laughter, inhalation and exhalation are also noted, since they may have contextual communicative functions.

For the sake of anonymity, the interlocutors are identified by means of capital letters or pseudonyms. Utterances are ordered one under another according to the sequence of participation. Whenever possible, individual acts are represented on single lines. The numbers placed at the beginning of lines are meant to simplify reference. Fragment (1) is transcribed in dramaturgical notation.

(1)

```
1   R:   Peter, well he almost ne:ver eats a:nything
2        (0.2)
3        ne:::ver (.) [He's never hungry   ]
4   J:                [That i:s surprising ]
5        You wouldn't say that by loo:king at him=
6   R:   =Strange: isn't it?=
7   J:   =Yes:: Not that he's fa:t (.) bu:t
8        (.)
9   R:   No but he- [who don't eat (.) vE::ry little ]
10       ((laughs)) [                                 ]
11  J:              [Those muscles must be coming    ]
12       from so::mewhere
13  R:   Ve:ry- ve:ry stra:nge
```

The meanings of the symbols are presented below. In view of this selection it becomes obvious that transcribing is an elaborate and time-consuming activity.

(2) Transcription conventions (adapted from Schegloff, 2007)

[ ]	overlapping utterances
=	continuation without interruption (at the beginning and the end of a line)
-	self-interruption, word correction
::	prolongation of a preceding sound (more colons indicate increased duration)
<u>word</u>	emphasis (through loudness or increased pitch)
WORD	very strong emphasis
?	rising intonation

(0.2)	0.2 second pause (measured in tenths of a second)
(.)	micropause (less than 0.2 of a second)
(( ))	description of non-verbal phenomena, comments by transcriber
(word)	uncertainty in comprehension, transcriber's "best guess"

In this transcription system only verbal elements and paralinguistic utterances are recorded. Posture and facial expressions of the conversational participants are not taken into account. In the early days of CA, when telephone conversations were investigated, body behavior was irrelevant. In face-to-face conversations, however, it can influence the course of an interaction. For the analysis and representation of types of body behavior, video recordings are used (Mondada, 2013).

The audio- or videotape recording is a *reproduction* of a social event, while the transcript is a *representation* of the recorded data (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 2008). The transcript is not supposed to replace the recording but has the function of a reference tool, making the data permanently visible for analysis and comparison. By identifying similar patterns in transcriptions, conversation analysts are able to determine regularities in social interaction, such as how a conversation is started or ended (see Section 9.3). Moreover, during the production of a transcript researchers may perceive details that would otherwise remain unnoticed.

It is important to realize that any method of transcription is more or less selective, not only in the encoding of pauses and prosody, but also in the interpretation of non-verbal aspects and in the presentation of utterances. When, for example, a participant in a conversation stops speaking for a moment and then later continues, his or her words can be registered as one turn or as two different turns with a pause in between them.

9.3 The turn-taking model

At first glance, most conversational activities seem rather chaotic. One phenomenon, however, seems to be constant: verbal interaction is realized by **turn-taking**. But even this turn-taking allows for much variation. In conversations, there is no fixed limit to the length of a turn. A turn can vary in length from a single word to a complete story. There is also variability concerning the order of turns among conversational participants and the number of turns a participant can take or the possible content of a turn.

Despite the enormous number of variations possible, it is rare for silences to result from participants not knowing whose turn it is. A closer look at conversations shows that exactly simultaneous turn-taking also seldom occurs. In conversations there is a clear tendency to speak in orderly turns with only one speaker speaking at any given moment. This tendency is described in the turn-taking

model developed by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974). The model consists of two components: the **turn-constructional component** and the **turn-allocation component**. The first component contains one or more **turn-constructional units (TCUs)**, built up of syntactical units: sentences, sentence fragments or words. The first point at which an allocation of turns can take place is at the end of the first TCU. This point is called the **transition-relevance place (TRP)**, a possible point of turn transfer. As soon as such a point is reached, i.e., at the end of every syntactical unit, the turn-allocation component becomes applicable. This component consists of two rules, the first of which is again subdivided into three subordinate rules.

(3) The rules for turn-taking

1. For any turn, at the initial transition-relevance place of an initial turn-constructional unit:
   a. If the turn-so-far is so constructed as to involve the use of a 'current speaker selects next' technique, then the participant thus selected has the right and is obliged to take the next turn to speak; no others have such rights or obligations, and transfer occurs 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, then self-selection for the next speakership may, but need not, be instituted. The person who first starts at that moment acquires the right to a turn, and transfer occurs 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 the current speaker may, but need not continue, unless another self-selects.
2. If, at the initial transition-relevance place of an initial turn-constructional unit, neither 1a nor 1b has operated, and, following the provision of 1c, the current speaker has continued, then the rule-set (a) to (c) re-applies at the next transition-relevance place, and recursively at each ensuing transition-relevance place, until transfer is effected.

These descriptive rules are not intended to function as normative or prescriptive guidelines for appropriate conversation but as a fundamental system of how turn-taking schematically works. For the sake of illustration, consider the following Example (4), which includes three speakers, named A, B and C.

(4)

```
1  B:  how did the exam go yesterday?
2  A:  well (eh) pretty bad actually 'cause I'd really learned the stuff you know but
3      when I was sitting in that lecture hall (eh) I just couldn't come up with the
4      answers (1.4) and well (eh)
5  B:                                    you got a blackout
6  A:  (1.1) yeah, I was trying to concentrate, but could only think of not coming up
7      with proper answers
8  B:  well, you shouldn't worry [about] it too much now
9  C:                            [yeah]              no, indeed
```

In line 1 Speaker B chooses A as the subsequent speaker according to rule 1a. Speaker A continues until, after a moment of silence, B takes a turn in line 5 following rule 1b or rule 1c. After the silence that then follows, rule 1c becomes applicable, so that A continues in line 6.

As was already mentioned above, turns can be very short. Even single words can be considered turns, as long as they fulfill the function of a conversational contribution (Clift, 2014). For instance, in Extract (5) the therapist's utterance "at?" (line 3) serves as a turn, since the mother recognizes it as such and responds accordingly.

(5) (T = Therapist, M = Mother)

```
1   T   What kind of work do you do?
2   M   Ah food service.
3   T   At?
4   M   (Uh)- (A) post office cafeteria downtown …
```

A number of objections have been raised against this model. First of all, in the analysis of conversations it is often difficult to say which rule applies. Take the following example, in which three undergraduates talk about university life (adapted from Svartvik and Quirk, 1980, sample S.1.3).

(6)

```
1   A   all nationalities (2.0) you know people from India and people from America
2       (3.0) ((cat miaows outside))
3       that your wolf?
4   B   (3.0) (I don't know what it is)
5   C   (3.0) one of the numerous cats presumably
```

After the sound of the cat outside, B is selected as the next speaker by A's jocular question according to rule 1a. However, it is problematic for analysts to ascertain if C is getting a turn according to rule 1a (current speaker A chooses subsequent speaker) or rule 1b (a conversational participant takes a turn when no subsequent speaker is chosen). Determining which rule is applicable has turned out to be more difficult than the model suggested. From the participants' perspective, this analytical ambiguity does not pose serious problems, since the conversation usually continues smoothly.

Secondly, it is assumed in the model that conversational participants can recognize a construction unit. This may be true for questions and answers, but in many utterances it can be unclear where the possible points of turn allocation are. Moreover, it is possible for a speaker to neutralize these points by beginning a turn with a remark such as: "There are two points that I would like to make clear …". Formally speaking, the rules for turn allocation become effective at the end of the first possible point of completion. In this case, however, the content indicates that this point does not demarcate the end of the turn. If a potential next speaker misprojects a point of completion, this may lead to a brief overlap

of utterances. Once the overlap has been resolved, the conversation proceeds according to the rules.

Thirdly, conversational participants who do not currently "have the floor" may voice their involvement with such utterances as *hm*, *really?*, *well, well*, etc. This type of utterance is classified as **back-channel behavior** or **collateral communication**. The turn-taking model does not make clear how the distinction is made between turns, on the one hand, and ancillary remarks or back-channel behavior that does not trigger the rules of allocation, on the other. This raises the question of what exactly a turn is. Is back-channel behavior, the *hm* made by speakers or the *um* by which hearers indicate a wish to speak, also a turn? If it is appropriate to speak of a turn only when a participant takes the floor, then these minimal reactions will not qualify as turns. Instead, another's turn is supported by hearer reactions such as "How about that?", "You can say that again" or similar utterances. Speakers can, after such a reaction, simply continue with their turns. If, however, the turn application *um* is seen as a complete turn, then the rules of the turn-taking model do not always apply. Interestingly, a silence can also be seen as a turn. Participants can, by remaining silent, answer a question or agree to a request (Kurzon, 1998).

Obviously, it is too simplistic to speak only of a turn when participants become the main speaker, but it is equally wrong to view every utterance, no matter how minimal, as a turn. One solution is to view back-channel behavior as a **pre-turn** with which participants make it clear that they want a turn, just as the so-called *inbreath* indicates that participants want to say something. That a silence can sometimes also constitute a turn can be explained by the assumption that positions can be filled by a verbal reaction, or a "zero" verbal reaction.

Research on turn-taking also concentrated on the beginnings and the ends of conversations. This approach started with a study by Schegloff and Sacks (1973), in which the techniques used by participants to reach a point at which the conversation can be closed were inventoried. In every conversation there is a point at which the conclusion of one turn no longer leads to a subsequent turn and the silence that follows cannot be interpreted as the silence of one of the participants. Schegloff and Sacks analyzed a large number of telephone conversations and found that many of the conversations ended with the following **closing pair**.

(7)

```
1   A: Okay?
2   B: Alright.
```

Should B not want to end the conversation, then the possibility exists for B to continue after A's utterance. However, if B fills in the second part of the closing pair with an affirmation of the first part, then the conversation is essentially over (except possibly for a mutual farewell). What is interesting is that a pair like the one

above can also occur in the middle of a conversation. Speaker A can, following B's reaction, continue with a new topic (see Section 5.6). Apparently, changing phrases such as "okay" only serve to end a conversation if there is nothing left to discuss.

How do conversational participants know that there is nothing left to discuss? When reviewing their material, Schegloff and Sacks found that topics were usually ended with words such as *good*, *okay* and *well*, pronounced with a falling intonation after which the speaker started a new topic. Their analysis showed that these types of topic closing are also used as a way of suggesting the end of a conversation. Below is an example taken from Schegloff and Sacks's material in which the word "okay" occurs three times. The first "okay" (line 2) is a topic closing and thereby a possible pre-announcement of a conversation closing. The second "okay" (line 5) serves as an announcement or declaration of intent to end the conversation. The third "okay" (line 6) serves as a sign of agreement with this closing.

(8)

```
1   A:   … and uh, uh, we're gonna see if we can't uh tie in our plans a little better.
2   B:   Okay [fine    ]
3   A:        [Alright?]
4   B:   Right.
5   A:   Okay boy,
6   B:   Okay
7   A:   Bye [bye     ]
8   B:       [G'night.]
```

Obviously, multiple functions can be combined in one "okay". In the following excerpt it can be seen that "okay" serves as both a topic closing and as a declaration of intent to close the conversation.

(9)

```
(A has called to invite B, but has been told that B is going out to dinner.)
1   A:   Yeah. Well get on your clothes and get out and collect some of that free food
2        and we'll make it some other time Judy then.
3   B:   Okay then Jack.
4   A:   Bye bye.
5   B:   Bye bye.
```

Schegloff and Sacks's analysis shows that analyzing a number of turns containing "okay" is insufficient to make it clear why a double "okay" exchange can be followed by a closing in the form of a farewell and return of the farewell. For the analysis of a turn or a pair of turns, it is necessary to look at the context within which it occurs.

9.4 Sequential organization

A conversational sequence is a systematic succession of turns. In the analysis of sequences the focus has been primarily on the **adjacency pair**. This term refers to the phenomenon that, in a conversation, one utterance has a role in determining the

subsequent utterance or at least in raising expectations concerning its contents. Typical cases are the pairs "greeting-greeting" and "invitation-acceptance". Below is an example of the adjacency pair "question-answer".

(10)

```
1   A:   How do you like college?
2   B:   (0.3) Well, what can I say?
```

An adjacency pair consists of two turns by different interlocutors. Since the two contributions have a relatively fixed order, it is possible to distinguish between **first pair parts (FPPs)**, which start the pair, and **second pair parts (SPPs)**, which constitute some type of response to the previous turn. Schegloff (1977) points out that in an adjacency pair, the second utterance is **"conditionally relevant"**. This means that if an FPP has been uttered, then an SPP is expected. And, when the SPP has been uttered, then it is viewed by the participants as being relevant to the FPP. The SPP is therefore relevant on the condition that the FPP has been uttered. If the SPP does not occur, then this is not random but a significant or "observable" absence and conclusions can be drawn from this. Both possibilities can be seen in the following example.

(11)

```
1   A:   Would you like to go and … uh … get some coffee?
2   B:   (2.0)
3   A:   Or aren't you in the mood?
4   B:   (1.5) What do you mean?
```

A's first utterance creates expectations of a reaction. Questions are, after all, usually followed by an answer. It is for this reason that B's silence is not viewed by A as being random. A's second utterance is a reaction to an observably absent answer. B's second utterance is conditionally relevant to this reaction by A. A's question makes B's utterance relevant, that is, interpretable as an answer in the form of a request for more precise information.

In fact, the designation *adjacency pair* cannot always be taken literally, since the parts of a pair are often not immediately adjacent. With respect to a basic adjacency pair, different types of expansions are possible: pre-expansion, insert expansion, and post-expansion (see Figure 1).

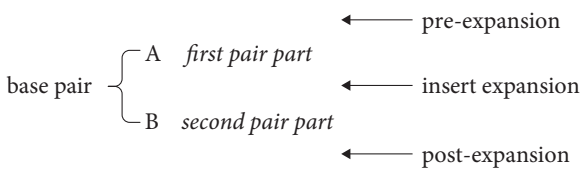

Figure 1. Possible expansions of an adjacency pair (Sidnell, 2010)

In the following Example (12), the opening question and the answer to this question are separated by another question-answer pair.

(12)

```
1   A:   Can you tell me how to get to the mall?   [Q1]
2   B:   Do you see that big neon sign?            [Q2]
3   A:   Yes.                                      [A2]
4   B:   You have to make a left turn there.       [A1]
```

This is **insert expansion**, since here a first pair part (Q1) is immediately followed by another first pair part, a counterquestion (Q2). After the counterquestion has been answered (A2), the original question is answered as well (A1). The conditional relevance is upheld from the first to the fourth turn.

In the case of **post-expansion**, an adjacency pair is followed by another relevant turn, which may result in a three-part sequence. Below are some examples.

(13)

```
1   A:   Well, Paul, can you come up and find Australia on the map?
2   B:   That's here, I guess.
3   A:   Indeed, you are right.
```

(14)

```
1   A:   How about having a drink downtown?
2   B:   Yes, good idea!
3   A:   O.K., there is a taxi.
```

In classroom interaction, such as in (13), the teacher often asks a question and comments on the answer given by the pupil. This three-part sequence is called a question-answer-evaluation chain. And if someone proposes something as in (14), the positive reaction is usually followed by a suggestion for further action. This sequence is called the offer-agreement-affirmation chain.

An answer to a question is often followed by a comment, as in the following example.

(15)

```
1   A:   Can you tell me how to get to the mall?
2   B:   Turn right at the third light.
3   A:   Terrific, thank you.
```

In **pre-expansion**, a preparatory sequence occurs before an adjacency pair. Such pre-sequences may be used to check whether the conditions for the intended sequence are fulfilled. Typical cases are pre-requests (e.g. "Do you have a minute?") and pre-announcements (e.g. "Didju hear who's coming?") (Schegloff, 2015). The following Extract (16) contains a pre-invitation.

(16)

```
(Nelson is the caller; Clara is called to the phone)
1   Clara:   Hello
2   Nelson:  Hi.
3   Clara:   Hi.
4   Nelson:  Whatcha doin'.
5   Clara:   Not much.
6   Nelson:  Y'wanna drink?
7   Clara:   Yeah.
8   Nelson:  Okay.
```

After the initial greetings, lines 4 and 5 form the pre-invitation, in which Nelson checks whether Clara is available for leisure activities. In lines 6 and 7, the actual adjacency pair of invitation and acceptance is performed.

First pair parts usually allow for different types of second pair parts. For instance, an offer can be accepted or declined. This is a matter of **preference organization** (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 2008). The term *preference* is slightly misleading in this context, since it does not refer to personal attitudes of speakers but rather to built-in structural preferences of sequences. For instance, a suggestion "prefers" consent and disprefers declination. This corresponds with the structural complexity of turns: while preferred second pair parts are quite simple and therefore unmarked, dispreferred ones are more complex and hence structurally marked. The following Example (17) contains a dispreferred SPP.

(17)

```
1   A:   Yuh coming down early?
2   B:   Well, I got a lot of things to do before getting cleared up tomorrow. I don't
         know.
         I w- probably won't be too early.
```

Speaker B declines the invitation by means of several strategies. The SPP contains a turn-initial particle ("well"), provides an explanation ("lot of things to do"), shows disfluency ("I w- probably") and displays mitigation devices ("probably", "too"). Preferred seconds usually do not contain such features, since an acceptance is possible with a brief answer such as *yes* or *sure*. Table 1 gives typical examples of adjacency pairs from the viewpoint of preference organization.

Table 1. Preference organization (adapted from Levinson, 1983)

First pair part	Second pair part	
	Preferred	**Dispreferred**
REQUEST	acceptance	refusal
OFFER/INVITE	acceptance	refusal
ASSESSMENT	agreement	disagreement
QUESTION	expected answer	unexpected answer, non-answer
ACCUSATION	denial	admission

Note that "denial" is listed among the preferred seconds, owing to less structural complexity, while "admission" is typically more complex, as it includes potential explanations and apologies. This again underlines that "preference" does not pertain to predilections of the speakers but to structural markedness.

9.5 Discourse markers

As was shown, conversational turns can be started by so-called "turn-initial markers" such as *well, uh* or *so* (Schegloff, 2007), alternatively labeled "sequential markers" (Sidnell, 2010). From the wider perspective of discourse studies, such pragmatic particles in spoken communication are called **discourse markers**. They have as their main functions marking something in the structure and indicating some aspects of attitude. Below are some examples (the italicized words).

(18) A: I think I will stay home. I feel *like* I ran half a marathon.
B: *And* yesterday you said you would come!

(19) A: *But* I told you not to open the door, not for anybody!
B: *Well*, I do have my own will, *y'know*.

(20) A: *So*, in the end you have decided to join us *then*.
B: *After all*, I had to be here *anyway*.

Discourse markers here include connectives (like *and* or *but*), adverbs (like *anyway* or *well*), prepositional phrases (like *after all*) and minimal clauses (like *y'know*). As with most important concepts, definitions of discourse markers given in the literature vary, depending on the theoretical approach. However, most describe discourse markers as signaling devices outside the propositional content, indicating the expressive function of a piece of discourse. The expressive function denotes the attitude of the speaker toward the locution (see Section 4.2). The piece of discourse can be, for example, a turn in a conversation or a topic. Because discourse markers are not a part of the propositional content, they are mostly found at the beginning or the end of an utterance. Discourse markers are usually distinguished from connectives in that connectives assign all kinds of semantic and pragmatic functions to paragraphs, clauses and subclauses, while discourse markers only indicate the attitude of a speaker (or possibly a writer), mostly marking a turn or a topic.

The two markers in Example (18) illustrate the attitude approach combined with the function of a turn. The discourse marker *like* indicates looseness. The speaker expresses that the degree of exhaustion does not have to be taken precisely as it is formulated. This can be seen as an attempt by the addresser to enhance the degree of relevance of the turn's content for the addressee, who is now allowed or obliged to also take into consideration a more "normal" kind of tiredness. The *And* at the beginning of B's turn does not indicate a connection such as in "apples and oranges". It expresses the indignation of the whole turn, which with this marker becomes more subjective than a formal reproach.

The discourse marker *like* has become popular especially through American youth language (Müller, 2005). As far as its functions are concerned, *like* may, for

instance, indicate that the speaker tries to find the appropriate word (Example 21), or it can be used as a focusing device (Example 22).

(21) And then, all of a sudden, this, *like*, guy entered the room.

(22) He was eating, *like*, a whole plate of beans one by one.

Discourse markers have been studied in various ways to detect their usage and functions in different communication situations. In conversations, participants use discourse markers not only to express attitudes, but also to detect or to confirm which information is given and which is new (see Section 7.4 about given-new management). Discourse markers, in other words, also mark the presence or absence of **common ground** (see Section 3.4). This has been nicely demonstrated in a study by Jucker and Smith (1998). They asked their students to have conversations about topics like sports, travel, opera, etc., and divided the group into pairs of students who were friends and pairs who were strangers. In total they transcribed three and a half hours of conversation by 15 participants. They counted and listed the discourse markers and found almost 3,000, which means one about every five seconds. Here is one passage from their transcriptions with the discourse markers italicized:

(23)

1 A: I play basketball
2 B: *Oh yeah* what position (.) forward?
3 A: yeah
4 B: that's cool
5 A: jus: (.) just playing with the friends *you know*

With the reaction "Oh yeah" B does not confirm the information that A gives, as the "yeah" in A's second turn does. B indicates that the information has been received and can be stored with other information available at that point in the conversation. The discourse marker "you know" does not remind B of knowledge already given, but presents more or less an invitation to make the right inferences for the assignment of relevance to an utterance, for example that person A is not a real top sportsman.

Jucker and Smith divided the discourse markers into markers that serve as indicators of information reception, like *yeah*, and markers that are used to present information, like *you know*. They counted these markers in the conversations between friends and strangers, and found some remarkable differences in their material (Table 2).

The most frequent reception marker is *yeah*. However, between friends it is significantly less frequent (every 18 seconds) than between strangers (every 13 seconds). This can be explained by the nature of the conversation. Between strangers it is more necessary to indicate that the information has been received than

between friends, who have more common ground (see also Section 3.4) based on shared experiences.

Table 2. Frequency of reception markers and presentation markers (average number of tokens per minute) in conversations between pairs of strangers and pairs of friends

Marker	Strangers	Friends
Reception markers		
Yeah	4.5	3.4
Oh	1.6	1.1
Really	0.3	0.4
Presentation markers		
Like	2.8	4.5
you know	1.0	1.4

The analysis of the conversations also indicated that there is a difference in information reception between *yeah*, *oh* and *really*. Compare the following examples.

(24) A: I like playing basketball
B: Yeah, …

(25) A: I like playing basketball
B: Oh, …

(26) A: I like playing basketball
B: Really?

These three markers indicate a difference in the ease of integration of new information. *Yeah* indicates that the integration process is very easy, *oh* marks that some extra processing effort is needed, and *really* suggests that more information is needed before integration can be successful.

The presentation markers also showed a striking difference. Friends use them more often than strangers. This can be explained by the same factor of common ground. If there is more shared experience (between friends), there is a better basis for providing indicators about how to process information (for example, *you know* can be taken literally between friends). Hence, presentation markers like those mentioned above, and others like *well* and *I mean* are more frequent in conversations between friends than between strangers. With this study Jucker and Smith nicely show that discourse markers are not only indicators of attitude but also signposts for the exchange of information based on an important characteristic of communication: common ground.

9.6 Summary

In the investigation of spoken dialogues, conversation analysis makes an important contribution to discourse studies. Through a detailed notation system, CA provides an indispensable tool to preserve conversations for analysis in written form. The mechanisms of turn-taking can be explained with a few basic rules which account for the fact that conversations usually proceed smoothly and rarely contain longer pauses or problematic overlaps. In particular, it is necessary for prospective speakers to recognize transition-relevance places after a turn-constructional unit is possibly complete. Conversational openings and closings also follow specific patterns of turn-taking.

The minimal unit of conversation is the adjacency pair, consisting of a sequence of first and second pair parts. Preference organization refers to the fact that a specific first pair part may be followed either by a preferred second, which is structurally unmarked and simple, or by a dispreferred one, which is marked by more complexity. Longer sequences can be constructed by adding further adjacency pairs in different positions, resulting in pre-, post- or insert expansion. Conversational turns may be introduced or interspersed by discourse markers such as *well* or *you know*, which not only structure interaction but also indicate the speaker's attitude towards addressee and content. As regards the future of CA, new research opportunities are opened up, for instance, by online video chats or conferences conducted via software applications such as Skype.