How to Analyse Talk in Institutional Settings

A Casebook of Methods

Edited by
Alec McHoul and Mark Rapley

continuum

How to Analyse Talk in Institutional Settings

This page intentionally left blank

How to Analyse Talk in Institutional Settings

A Casebook of Methods

Edited by
ALEC McHOUL and MARK RAPLEY

continuum
LONDON • NEW YORK

Continuum
The Tower Building, 11 York Road, London SE1 7NX
370 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017–6503

First published 2001

© Alec McHoul, Mark Rapley and contributors 2001

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 0-8264-5463-1 (hardback)
0-8264-5464-X (paperback)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

How to analyse talk in institutional settings: a casebook of methods / edited by Alec McHoul and Mark Rapley.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8264-5463-1 (hardback) — ISBN 0-8264-5464-X (pbk.)

1. Conversation analysis. 2. Discourse analysis. 3. Social interaction. I. McHoul, Alec II. Rapley, Mark.

P95.45 .H69 2001
302.3′46—dc21

2001017347

Typeset by CentraServe Ltd, Saffron Walden, Essex

Printed and bound in Great Britain by MPG Books Ltd, Bodmin, Cornwall

Contents

Contributors vii

Preface: with a little help from our friends xi
Alec McHoul and Mark Rapley

Acknowledgements xv

Part I Approaches

1. Applied conversation analysis 3
Paul ten Have

2. Discursive psychology 12
Derek Edwards and Jonathan Potter

3. Critical discourse analysis 25
Norman Fairclough

Part II Applications

4. Discovering order in opening sequences: calls to a software helpline 41
Carolyn Baker, Michael Emmison and Alan Firth

5. Understanding who's who in the airline cockpit: pilots' pronominal choices and cockpit roles 57
Maurice Nevile

6. Reporting a service request 72
Ann Kelly

7. Applying membership categorization analysis to chat-room talk 86
Rhyll Vallis

8. Investigating the 'cast of characters' in a cultural world 100
Kathy Roulston

9. Whose personality is it anyway? The production of 'personality' in a diagnostic interview 113
John Lobley

10. Howard's way: naturalizing the new reciprocity between the citizen and the state 124
Karen Herschell

11. History as a rhetorical resource: using historical narratives to argue and explain 135
Martha Augoustinos

12. On saying 'sorry': repertoires of apology to Australia's Stolen Generations 146
Amanda LeCouteur

13. Far from the madding crowd: psychiatric diagnosis as the management of moral accountability 159
David McCarthy and Mark Rapley

Part III Theory and Method

14. Two lines of approach to the question 'What does the interviewer have in mind?' 171
Angela O'Brien-Malone and Charles Antaki

15. Methodological issues in analysing talk and text: the case of childhood in and for school 183
Helena Austin, Peter Freebody and Bronwyn Dwyer

16. Demystifying discourse analysis: theory, method and practice 196
Keith Tuffin and Christina Howard

17. Is institutional talk a phenomenon? Reflections on ethnomethodology and applied conversation analysis 206
Stephen Hester and David Francis

References 219

Index 235

Contributors

Charles Antaki is Reader in Language and Social Psychology at Loughborough University. His research interest is conversation analysis as it illuminates the interactions of everyday life and work. He has recently co-published with Susan Widdicombe *Identities in Talk* (Sage).

Martha Augoustinos is Associate Professor in Psychology at Adelaide University where she teaches social psychology. Her current research interests include discursive studies of racism and political rhetoric. She is co-editor with Kate Reynolds of *Understanding Prejudice, Racism and Social Conflict* (Sage).

Helena Austin teaches at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University. Her current research investigates theories of the child and childhood as they are enacted in institutional practices.

Carolyn Baker is Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Queensland. She has written on language and social interaction in classrooms, meetings and interviews. Current research projects include analyses of helpline calls by children, the telling of marriage and courtship narratives, and talk, interaction and difference in primary classrooms. She is also preparing *Conducting and Analysing Interviews* (Sage).

Bronwyn Dwyer completed her PhD in Education at Griffith University in 1997 and is now working as a research officer within the Attorney General's Department in Canberra. Her research interests include ethnomethodology and the enactment of childhood within school classrooms.

Derek Edwards is Professor of Psychology at Loughborough University. His main interests are in the analysis of discourse and conversation, and especially in discursive psychology. He is author or co-author of several books including *Common Knowledge* (Routledge), *Ideological Dilemmas* (Sage), *Discursive Psychology* (Sage) and *Discourse and Cognition* (Sage).

Michael Emmison is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Queensland. He has published articles on language and social interaction as well as cultural consumption and the mass media. He is co-author of *Accounting for Tastes* (Cambridge University Press) and *Researching the Visual* (Sage) and co-edits the *Journal of Sociology*.

Norman Fairclough is Professor of Language in Social Life at Lancaster University. His previous publications include *Language and Power* (Longman), *Discourse and Social Change* (Polity), *Critical Discourse Analysis* with L. Chouliaraki (Longman), *Discourse and Late Modernity* (University of Edinburgh) and most recently *New Language, New Labour?* (Routledge).

Alan Firth is Associate Professor in the Department of Languages and Intercultural Studies at Ålborg University. He has published articles on negotiation discourse, English as an international language, ethnomethodology, and language and culture. He is currently preparing *Discourse and Culture* (Sage) and *Studying Language as Social Interaction* (Macmillan), and has edited *The Discourse of Negotiation* (Elsevier).

David Francis is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Manchester Metropolitan University. He is co-author of *Perspectives in Sociology* (Routledge) and co-editor with Stephen Hester of *Local Educational Order* (Benjamins). He has written numerous articles in the fields of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, and is currently working on *Language, Society and Social Interaction* (Sage).

Peter Freebody is Professor of Education and Director of the Centre for Literacy and Language Education Research at Griffith University. His research and teaching interests are literacy education, government policy on literacy, and interaction analysis in relation to disadvantage, health and literacy. Among other books, he is co-author of *Children's First School Books* (Blackwell) and co-editor of *Knowledge, Culture and Power* (Taylor & Francis).

Karen Herschell is a PhD candidate in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Queensland. She is tracing the discursive construction of single-parent mothers in Australia through governmental welfare policies. Currently, she is a Senior Policy Officer with Education Queensland.

Stephen Hester is Reader in Sociology at the University of Wales (Bangor). His main research interests are in ethnomethodology, conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis. He is co-author of *Deviance in Classrooms* (RKP), *A Sociology of Crime* (Routledge), *The Montreal Massacre* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, in preparation), and is co-editor of *Culture in Action* (University Press of America) and *Local Educational Order* (Benjamins).

Christina Howard is a doctoral student and graduate assistant in the School of Psychology at Massey University. She is currently undertaking research into discursive aspects of the recovered memory/false memory syndrome debate.

Ann Kelly is a doctoral candidate in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Queensland. Currently she is interested in using conversation analysis to explicate how work and vocational training are enacted. She is the President of the Queensland Council for Adult Literacy and has published in the areas of adult literacy and vocational education and training.

Amanda LeCouteur is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at Adelaide University where she teaches in the areas of qualitative research methods, gender and metapsychology. Her research interests include discursive studies of racism, and of medicine and women's health.

John Lobley is Head of the Research and Development Department of the Calderstones NHS Trust. He is involved in management development and in research in services for people with intellectual disabilities in the British NHS. He has previously published articles on 'quality of life' measurement and on leadership in human services.

David McCarthy is a graduate student in the School of Psychology at Murdoch University. His interests are in discursive work as applied to 'mental illness', in particular in professional accounts of the experiences of people who hear voices.

Alec McHoul is Professor of Communication Studies at Murdoch University. He has published in the areas of discourse analysis, cultural theory, literary studies and technology. His most recent books are *Semiotic Investigations* (University of Nebraska Press) and *Popular Culture and Everyday Life* with Toby Miller (Sage). His current research project involves a reconsideration of the meaning of the concept of culture.

Maurice Nevile is a PhD candidate in the School of Language Studies at the Australian National University. Previously he was an academic advisor to university students, and he has published articles on the nature and acquisition of academic literacy. He is joint author of a reference book for students, *Making the Most of Your Arts Degree* (Longman).

Angela O'Brien-Malone completed her PhD in 1999 at the University of Western Australia. Since then, her research interests have included the relationship between methodology and theory in psychology and, in particular, how method constrains the way we think about theory. Recent publications include chapters (with Murray Maybery) in *Implicit and Explicit Mental Processes* (Erlbaum).

Jonathan Potter is Professor of Discourse Analysis at Loughborough University. His most recent book is *Representing Reality* (Sage) which provides a systematic overview, integration and critique of constructionist research. He is co-editor of the journal *Theory and Psychology*.

Mark Rapley is Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Murdoch University. His current work applies discursive psychology to questions of power. Other work has examined the interactional and rhetorical production of persons with intellectual disabilities, the 'mentally ill' and Aboriginal Australians. Two books are in preparation: *The Social Construction of Intellectual Disability* (Cambridge University Press) and *Quality of Life Research in the Social Sciences* (Sage).

Kathy Roulston recently completed her PhD in Education at the University of Queensland and is now Post-doctoral Fellow at the University of Georgia where she teaches in the Qualitative Research Methods program. Her research interests include conversation analysis, ethnomethodology and the application of qualitative research methods in music education.

Paul ten Have is Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Amsterdam. He has published work in conversation analysis and on computer-mediated interaction. His most recent book is *Doing Conversation Analysis* (Sage). He edits the website, *Ethno/CA News*, at: <http://www.pscw.uva.nl/emca/index/htm>.

Keith Tuffin is Senior Lecturer in the School of Psychology at Massey University where he teaches critical social psychology and discursive psychology. His research interests include political discourse, and constructionist approaches to emotion, culture and identity. He is currently working on *Understanding Critical Social Psychology* (Sage).

Rhyll Vallis is a PhD candidate in the Graduate School of Education, University of Queensland. She has published on several aspects of social interaction in internet chat rooms.

Preface: with a little help from our friends

Alec McHoul and Mark Rapley

Most of the prefatory work in this book is achieved by the three guest-expert introductions (Chapters 1 to 3) and by the editorial prefaces to each of the other chapters. For that reason, we omit the normally obligatory blow-by-blow preface and instead offer a sketch of our 'analytic mentality' (as Jim Schenkein used to call it) along with some technical preliminaries.

The book aims to provide models, templates and perspicuous case studies for beginning researchers in the fields of conversation analysis (CA), discursive psychology (DP) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) as those – we think convergent – approaches apply to 'institutional' settings. We take the term 'institutional' loosely so that it can refer to a broad range of settings: from airline cockpits to schools; from computer helplines to personality testing; from political speeches to organizing concerts. 'Institutional', then, is not intended to carry important analytic or theoretical weight – at least, that is, until the very last chapter of the book where the term (or concept) is opened to thoroughgoing criticism (Chapter 17).

We begin with a section called 'Approaches', where three leading experts in the fields listed above (applied CA, DP and CDA) provide introductions to them. We then move on to ten 'Applications', our core demonstrations. Finally we have included a short section on questions of 'Theory and Method'. Apart from the 'Approaches' section, as noted, each chapter is separately introduced by the editors.

All contributions to the book are new and original; none has been published previously. Contributors range from interested professionals (political speech-writers and clinical psychologists, for example), to world experts in various types of discourse analysis, to postgraduate students who are themselves beginning to explore the fields of CA, DP and CDA. In particular, the book showcases the work of newly emergent women analysts, including many from Australia.

What we are attempting, above all, is to introduce readers to applied CA, lay a specific emphasis on its fairly recent uptake in DP and, then, show how some of the resultant work closely approaches CDA – even if it sometimes departs from the specific version of that field as outlined in Norman Fairclough's chapter (Chapter 3). That is, as we note below, CDA has a very distinctive orientation to data and analysis; nevertheless it strongly informs Chapters 9 to 13, where

the impetus is as much towards criticizing and changing social practices as it is towards describing and understanding them.

As Paul ten Have notes in the first chapter of the book, applied CA usually comes in two varieties: 'the application of the findings of "pure" CA to study what is often called "institutional interaction"' vs. the application of 'CA findings and/or specific studies to advise people and organizations how specific practical problems might be handled in order to facilitate smooth and effective practice'. Both of these are exemplified in the book, but our movement in the direction of CDA effectively foreshadows a third variety: applying CA as a critical window on institutional procedures and aiming at what Fairclough calls 'emancipatory change'.

For us, there are important similarities and differences between applied CA (including its DP arm) and CDA; and these show up in Fairclough's chapter. The crucial difference is the *inversion of starting points.* Applied CA begins with prima-facie evidence of actual talk and builds its findings on that foundation. By contrast, for Fairclough:

> CDA analyses texts and interactions, but it does not *start* from texts and interactions. It starts rather from social issues and problems, problems which face people in their social lives, issues which are taken up within sociology, political science and/or cultural studies.

Yet, as Fairclough also notes, 'there is no party line' in CDA; instead it is 'transdisciplinary' and open to influence by any 'disciplines which are concerned with linguistic and semiotic analysis, and between a range of other disciplines and particular theories'. In this case, after closely reading and editing the contributions to this volume, we see no reason to exclude applied CA/DP from that range. In fact, CA/DP may be especially contributive to CDA given that the latter also works with 'close analysis of texts and interactions' and 'cannot take the role of semiosis in social practices for granted' because 'it has to be established through analysis' (Fairclough). Another point of contact is that CDA 'seeks to establish non-obvious connections' and, as ten Have argues, 'Applied CA [also] requires a distance from practical interests because . . . an important part of its discoveries might be that things are *different* from what established ideas suggest'. This is what conversation analyst George Psathas (1995) calls 'the intuitively non-apparent'. And this is precisely what each one of our chapters, whatever approach informs it, aims to *make* apparent.

In terms of topics, the approaches are also strikingly similar. That is, just as applied CA forms around institutionally located interactions, so CDA analyses 'social practice', defined as any 'relatively stabilized form of social activity'; 'examples would be classroom teaching, television news, family meals and medical consultations' as well as 'everyday conversation, meetings in various types of organization, political and other forms of interview, and book reviews' (Fairclough). All of these would be familiar territory in applied CA where there is, as Fairclough says of CDA, a central focus on 'the active . . . work that people

are doing on specific occasions'. It is no coincidence, then, that Fairclough's own illustrative analysis is of an appraisal situation in which 'the skills of the appraiser are reminiscent of the counsellor' and that several contributions to this volume take up the analysis of counselling/helping situations, starting with Edwards and Potter's introduction to DP itself (Chapter 2).

Throughout the book then, but especially in Part III, we want to open up some current debates in the field with regard to questions of theory and method. That is, assuming the reader has worked through the approach-guides in Part I and the demonstrations of them in Part II of the book, the controversial nature of questions raised in Part III will be relatively self-evident. Example problems include the following. As Angela O'Brien-Malone and Charles Antaki ask: How does the newer DP sit with respect to more traditional cognitivist concerns in psychology? Do Tuffin and Howard's policies for *how to actually do* discourse analysis sit well with Edwards and Potter's version of DP? Does Austin *et al.*'s intervention open up new possibilities for analysing the *relations* between text and talk? Can the division into 'pure' vs. applied CA – which is where Paul ten Have begins the book – still stand after Hester and Francis's methodological rethinking of the field (in the last chapter), where they even go so far as to question whether there *can be* such a phenomenon as 'institutional talk'?

These two chapters, then, form our bookends. However, they are not uniform ones and offer a deliberate message: read these and make up your own mind, but most of all do so on the basis of your own experiments with actual data collections and analyses. Our casebook of methods will, we hope, provide templates for your own efforts in the field. But we do not mean them to be followed slavishly – far from it. As it were, once they have allowed you to climb up, they can, like Wittgenstein's famous ladder, be kicked away.

* * *

At this point we must move on to some essential technical information. With some minor exceptions, all contributions work with the Jeffersonian transcription notation. This is so standard today that we have not felt the need to include all its details. The canonical source for this is Heritage and Atkinson (1984) and a simplified form can be found in Psathas (1995). What is important is that readers grasp the importance of the accuracy of this transcription system. An earlier draft of one of our chapters – by Carolyn Baker, Michael Emmison and Alan Firth (Chapter 4) – contained as succinct a discussion of this as we have seen. We reproduce it below with our thanks to those three friends and colleagues:

> We have used the transcription notation system developed by Gail Jefferson, the standard form used in CA. This system is particularly sensitive to the sequential order of turns, to gaps, pauses and overlaps, and to properties of turn delivery such as emphasis, prolonged vowels, and stretches of louder, softer, faster or slower talk relative to the surrounding talk. This transcription system can be seen to attend to turns and timing as main dimensions of the talk. A silence or pause of (0.4) – four-tenths of a second – is barely noticeable in the ordinary course of conversation *unless* one is looking for a place to insert one's own turn without cutting into the middle of

a word or phrase being delivered by the current speaker. The places where this self-insertion can be done include these micro-pauses, which is why they are included in CA transcripts. They are places where a next speaker *could* possibly begin to speak, and if next speaker does not start to speak in these possible places, then it can be interpreted as (intendedly) leaving the floor to the current speaker:

C	I've recently installed microsoft office pro:
	(0.4)
CT	yeah

These places or slots in ongoing talk are known as 'transition-relevance places' (Sacks *et al.*, 1974), tiny slots (or longer ones) where starting to speak may be hearable as not-an-interruption or at least not-a-rude-interruption. When we are very anxious to enter into a (fast-moving) conversation without interrupting, we all listen for these tiny slots. We listen prospectively for them (retrospectively would be too late) by orienting to when a phrase, sentence or some other chunk of talk is likely to be finished. That is, we listen for the upcoming, imminent end of the 'turn-constructional units' currently being delivered. Sometimes we underestimate when the turn-constructional unit will be finished and we end up overlapping. (This is shown in transcripts with square brackets at the beginning of two speakers overlapping.)

We also use underlining to show emphasis on words or parts of words: for example, 'some form of ma:sking'. The transcript looks something like a drama script but is much more detailed. Not only are the very words (and non-words like 'erm') captured, so is their pronunciation (for example, 'wanna' instead of 'want to'). The character of the delivery and the character of the turn-by-turn coordination of turns are central to CA because of the analytic interest in words as parts of utterances (equivalent with turns or turn components), and utterances as activities such as 'eliciting information' or 'making a proposal'. In this sense, CA is an exercise in studying social inter-activity or interaction.

Transcription extracts such as this, of course, are usually referred to by analysts according to individual lines. In this book, numbers in brackets – (7), (22), (126), etc. – are used for this purpose. Readers should also note that the following abbreviations are used consistently throughout the book:

CA	Conversation analysis
CBA	Category-bound activity (or predicate)
CDA	Critical discourse analysis
DP	Discursive psychology
EM	Ethnomethodology
IT	Institutional talk
ITP	Institutional talk program
MCA	Membership categorization analysis
MCD	Membership categorization device
PDS	Perspective display series
SRP	Standard(ized) relational pair

Acknowledgements

The idea for this book grew out of the first Murdoch Symposium on Talk-in-Interaction (23–24 September 1999) where we were pleased and surprised to find such widespread and mutual interest in CA, DP and CDA applied to institutional talk. In particular we thank Susan Hansen for all her organizational efforts at the symposium (and for advice on this book), as well as the Centre for Research in Culture and Communication and the School of Psychology (both at Murdoch University) for funding. Professors Tom O'Regan (CRCC) and Mike Innes (Psychology) are especially to be thanked for arranging this funding. A grant from the Division of Social Sciences, Humanities and Education in 2000 greatly helped in the production of the final typescript.

This page intentionally left blank

PART I

Approaches

This page intentionally left blank

1 Applied conversation analysis[1]

Paul ten Have

INTRODUCTION

Conversation Analysis (CA), as developed by Harvey Sacks and his collaborators and students, most notably Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, was originally an effort at 'pure science'. Its purpose was to build a formal science that would provide for the interactional organization of conversation or, in Schegloff's later formulation, of 'talk-in-interaction'. This can be contrasted with an applied CA which, as I have argued elsewhere (ten Have, 1999), can be conceived of in two more or less independent ways. On the one hand, it can be used to denote the application of the findings of 'pure' CA to study what is often called 'institutional interaction', as in interviews, medical consultations, court sessions, and so forth. But on the other hand, it can also refer to efforts to apply CA findings and/or specific studies to advise people and organizations how specific practical problems might be handled in order to facilitate smooth and effective practice. Both kinds of application can, of course, be combined in one project; but for my purposes here, I want to separate them, as they raise distinct problems of conception and analysis.

TALK IN INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS

Although Sacks's and Schegloff's early studies were based on data of an institutional kind, their major analytic efforts were not directed at elucidating the relationship of that talk to its setting, but rather to explicate the endogenous organization of talk-in-interaction as such. The turn-taking paper (Sacks *et al.*, 1978), originally published in 1974, makes that very clear. It is suggested that conversation, since it is locally managed by the parties themselves, is substantially different from other forms of talk-in-interaction – such as debate or ceremony – which are constituted by imposing various kinds of 'restrictions' on a purely local allocation of turns and turn types (Sacks *et al.*, 1978: 45–7). Their suggestion is that conversation represents a more basic format from which various institutional formats can be derived. While they concede that they have 'barely been looking into' those other systems, they do offer some interesting

overall observations, suggesting that the various speech-exchange systems might be '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. (Sacks *et al.*, 1978: 46)

Finally, they remark:

> 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. (Sacks *et al.*, 1978: 47)

By so forcefully arguing for the original status of informal conversation and by showing how some of its most important features could be analysed in a systematic and empirical fashion, this can be taken as an invitation to start a *comparative* investigation of speech-exchange systems. This has been taken up now and then, although largely with a broader focus than just turn-taking, and including the setting-specific use of sequencing, as with, for example, questioning (Atkinson and Drew, 1979: 34–81; Greatbatch, 1988; McHoul, 1978; Peräkylä, 1995: 37–102). The general idea is that, for some institutional systems, there is a pre-established system of *turn allocation*, and quite often of turn-*type* allocation:

> 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. (Sacks *et al.*, 1978: 45)

Important initiatives for the overall programme of applying CA to institutional interaction have been taken by researchers from the UK such as Max Atkinson, Paul Drew and John Heritage. Their general purpose is to use the acquired knowledge of conversational organization in order to show how institutions are 'talked into being', to use Heritage's much-quoted phrase (1984b: 290). In an overview of this field, Heritage has written:

> There are, therefore, at least two kinds of conversation analytic research going on today, and, though they overlap in various ways, they are distinct in focus. The first

> examines the institution *of* interaction as an entity in its own right; the second studies the management of social institutions *in* interaction. (Heritage, 1997: 162)

I will refer to the first type as 'pure CA', while the latter represents the first kind of 'applied CA', as distinguished above.[2] It is remarkable that most of the studies in this tradition deal with agent/client contacts or interviews, ranging from more formal types (Atkinson, 1982) like court sessions (Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Drew, 1992), to more improvised ones like news interviews (Greatbatch, 1988; Heritage, 1985; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991).[3]

As noted, the underlying idea in this type of research is that institutional forms can be seen as being more 'restricted' than those found in conversation, in the sense of having one or more kinds of actions, forms or sequences, that could be observed in conversation, excluded from the specific institution's repertoire, or from a particular type of party's expected or tolerated range of available options. The asymmetrical distribution of questions and answers is but one example of such a 'restriction'. This overall approach to the study of institutional interaction has been criticized from a number of different perspectives. On the one hand, some tend to view such 'restrictions' as a dependent phenomenon, stressing the power of professionals over (specific categories of) clients, while others object to the formalistic tendencies that seem to be implied in it, ignoring the specific local circumstances and relevances of the participants.

One crucial point in all this seems to be where one locates the 'centre of gravity' for understanding interactional phenomena: in the local interaction and its procedural infrastructure itself, in the general institutional arrangements, or in the institutionalized power of one category of participants over another (see Schegloff, 1991, 1992; Wilson, 1991). An ethnomethodological take on these issues, on the other hand, would start from the locally relevant aspects of the task-at-hand, the situated work that the parties are involved in, rather than merely issues of turn-taking and sequencing (see Bjelic and Lynch, 1992: 54, 76). I will return to these issues in a later part of this chapter, but first I will discuss some aspects of the general approach elaborated by Drew and Heritage in their various writings.

In their overview of analyses of institutional interaction, Drew and Heritage (1992a) emphasize that CA studies activities as interactional products and takes a dynamic view of context, both the local context of consecutive utterances and the larger context of institutional frameworks (1992a: 16–19).[4] They note:

> A clear implication is that comparative analysis that treats institutional interaction in contrast to normal and/or normative procedures of interaction in ordinary conversation will present at least one important avenue of theoretical and empirical advance. (Drew and Heritage, 1992a: 19)

Such a comparative approach is not as simple and straightforward as one might wish, however, since:

> CA researchers cannot take 'context' for granted nor may they treat it as determined in advance and independent of the participants' own activities. Instead, 'context' and identity have to be treated as inherently locally produced, incrementally developed and, by extension, as transformable at any moment. (Drew and Heritage, 1992a: 21)

Against this background, CA studies of institutional interactions will not produce hard and fast distinctions between institutional and non-institutional realms. Rather, little more than a set of 'family resemblances among cases of institutional talk' (Drew and Heritage, 1992b: 21) is to be expected.

Drew and Heritage (1992a: 21–5) also elaborate on three themes that have emerged from such efforts: 1) institutional talk is goal-oriented in institutionally relevant ways; 2) it often involves 'special and particular constraints' on 'allowable contributions to the business at hand'; and 3) it may be 'associated with inferential frameworks and procedures that are peculiar to specific institutional contexts' (1992a: 22). In other words, participants in such interactions assume and demonstrate their overall 'instrumental' orientation, leading to specific withholdings, and also, as Drew and Heritage note, positive preferences or allowances while, at the same time, providing specific interpretive frames to account for such 'departures' from conversational practice.

QUESTIONING AND 'CONTROL'

One particular aspect of institutional interaction which has probably been most consistently in focus in applied CA studies is that of agents questioning clients. As noted above, the idea is that there is, in many situations, a pre-established system of *turn allocation*, and quite often of turn-*type* allocation. Drew and Heritage (1992a: 39) summarize the findings of a number of studies of relatively formal kinds of institutional interaction (including courtroom interaction, formal teaching, news interviews and mediation) as follows: 'All of these studies focus on turn-taking systems which, in their different ways, are organized through the preallocation . . . of questions and answers'. And one frequently noted upshot of such preallocation is that, because the question*er* has a pre-given *right* to a questioning turn, he or she can easily build a quite long, multi-unit turn, until a recognizable question is finally produced. The one being question*ed*, on the other hand, runs the *risk* of being interrupted as soon as a minimally adequate answering component has been uttered. This demonstrates that turn allocation and turn-type allocation are intimately related; but other aspects of interactional organization also need to be taken into account.

It is an empirical fact that in many (if not most) interactions between institutional agents and the lay persons with whom they talk, the dominant interactional format, at least for an important part of the encounter, is one of questioning. The analytically important point, however, is whether this empirically obvious division of interactional labour between a questioning agent and

an answering client is an effect of an *institutional* pre-allocation of questioning rights and answering duties, or whether it is implied in general *sequential* properties of activity organization, irrespective of the institutional embeddedness of such an activity. This issue is discussed by Schegloff (1991) under the heading of 'Social structure or conversational structure?'. A 'focus on social structure' and a 'focus on conversational structure in studying talk-in-interaction' could be 'complementary', but 'they can also be alternatives in a more competitive sense', for: 'Each makes its own claims in organizing observation and analysis of the data, and one can preempt the other. In particular, the more familiar concerns with social structure can preempt new findings about conversational phenomena' (Schegloff, 1991: 57).

For instance, the distributional fact that doctors ask patients more questions than patients ask doctors can be discussed in institutional terms, as an aspect of 'professional dominance', but it can also be analysed in terms of the overall sequential organization of the encounter. Such an encounter ordinarily takes off from a request for assistance; that is, for a professional diagnosis and/or treatment, which requires additional information before it can be given. This information can be acquired in various ways, including questioning. In other words, the sequential structure of such encounters tends to consist of a request/service pair, with *a series of insertion sequences* between the two parts of the pair. This structure is evident not only in medical consultations (ten Have, 1989), but also in other kinds of service encounters, such as calls for police assistance (Wilson, 1991; Zimmerman and Boden, 1991), and even in non-institutional situations when one party asks a complicated service of another (see Schegloff, 1991: 59). It is a fact, of course, that service requests and their disposal in interaction tend to occur mostly in specialized institutional settings. So it is the institutional specialization of *activities*, rather than the conventional institutional *format* (like questioning), that is the crucial point here (see Wilson, 1991: 37–9). The questioning of patients by doctors, or of callers by complaint takers, would *not* then be an issue of *turn-type pre-allocation*, but rather of a sequential-organizational *effect* of an institutional *activity allocation*. In other institutional situations, however, *turn-type pre-allocation* does play a role in having professionals question lay persons, as in job interviews (Button, 1987, 1992; Komter, 1991), news interviews (Clayman, 1988, 1992; Greatbatch, 1988, 1992; Heritage, 1985; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991), or various kinds of research interviews (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1995, 1996, 2000; Mazeland, 1992; Mazeland and ten Have, 1996; Suchman and Jordan, 1990).

ON THE USABILITY OF CA FINDINGS

I now turn to a short discussion of the second sense of the term 'applied CA' as distinguished at the start of this chapter. That is, I will discuss ways in which CA might be useful with reference to the concerns of people who have a

practical, moral and/or political interest in the practices studied, in terms of the situations, organizations and/or institutions that are co-constituted by those practices. In certain respects, this is a dangerous enterprise, as people with such interests quite often have a pre-conceived idea about what is important or relevant, and what is not. For CA, however, it is essential to bracket such preconceptions and take a fresh look at how things are actually done *in situ*, or more specifically, how talk-in-interaction is actually and locally organized.

Following James Heap in his essay on applied ethnomethodology (1990), we can say that applied CA is effectively the study of the *local rationality* of members' practices. That is, we have to ask why it makes sense, for participants, locally, in their practical context, to do things as they are done, even if this is at odds with how these practices are planned, evaluated or accounted for 'elsewhere', 'in theory', or at higher hierarchical levels in an organization. In this way, I think, Heap's sketch is a useful basis for a reflection on applying CA to various topics that may have a practical interest for lay members.

Applied CA requires a distance from practical interests because, as Heap argues, an important part of its discoveries might be that things are *different* from what established ideas suggest. This difference, however, should also not be presupposed or hunted for, in itself, but rather should be allowed to emerge from the analysis. All this seems to be implied in the notion of 'ethnomethodological indifference' (Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970: 345–6; see also Lynch, 1993: 141–7). Within CA, this policy has been formulated as one of 'unmotivated looking' (see the discussion in ten Have, 1999).

The important point is that both practitioners and managers tend to look at actual practices via the general purpose, plan or function of some activity, in terms of which the activity is both projected beforehand and accountable afterwards. Such a view may, at the same time, obscure aspects of the organization of the activity which are *not* pre-planned, and which tend *not* to be reported in any official *post hoc* account. Research based on audio or video recordings of actual instances of interaction-at-work, possibly supplemented with some ethnographic background explorations, may produce both 'bad' and 'good' news from a practical point of view. For instance, in research on standardized interviewing (such as Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1995, 2000; also ten Have, 1999: 170–81), one can find that interviewers depart significantly from the instruction to 'read the questions as worded'. This would not be allowed, officially, because it could influence answers in unpredictable ways and therefore bias the results. At the same time, however, such research can show that departures from the pre-given plan have a local rationality in that they may be useful in the job of keeping the respondent motivated to cooperate and to produce sensible answers.

In an early discussion of applied directions in CA, George Psathas (1990) has taken a slightly different tack, in that he suggests that applied CA might be useful to supply a description of competencies required for particular types of professional conduct:

> The interactional phenomena which are discovered across and within the varieties of settings will enable us to state, with greater certainty, what interactional competencies are requisite to participation in those systems. As such requisites are discovered, we should be able to say what preparation, training, or prior interactional performative skills are vital for new entrants into these systems. And, if members are lacking in particular, identifiable, and describable interactional skills, we should be able to develop methods for teaching, demonstrating, or training those deficient in the requisite skills. (Psathas, 1990: 21)

But he is careful to add a warning that this may also be a dangerous enterprise and that one should, in each case, consider its ethical effects.

> The promise for a humanistic science of human interaction is considerable. But the possibility also exists, as is the case in the use and application of any findings in the human sciences, for efforts to control, manipulate, and deliberately structure interaction so as to enable certain parties (and/or organizations) to advance their own ends and interests at the expense of others. (Psathas, 1990: 22)

Linda Tapsell (2000) has provided a description of an actual project along these lines, in which novice dieticians were trained in efficient 'history taking'. In a first phase, the research focused on competencies displayed by a number of student dieticians who were considered to do well. This analysis was not only informed by the canonical findings of the CA tradition, but also by a thorough consideration of the institutional task, and by looking at CA studies of different, but in some ways comparable, situations – including Rod Watson's (1997c) study of murder interrogations. In the second phase, a next generation of students was trained using the results of the first phase, with special emphasis on structuring the management of the dietary history. And finally the results of the training were investigated by inspecting recorded instances of dietary interviewing by these trained students. The results seemed to demonstrate that the training was successful in having the student manage the interview in a professional manner – that is, generating useful histories within a limited time frame, and leaving enough time for the required nutrition counselling.

While these studies of interviewing are mostly based on audio data, recent applied CA tends to be based on video recordings, most often supplemented with ethnographic research (see Heath, 1997 for suggestions and arguments). The resources of traditional CA are extended to include visual aspects of interaction, such as gaze direction, gesture and the manipulation of various kinds of objects. In this way, one can, for instance, study the interactional life of people with impaired communicational capacities, such as the deaf (McIlvenny, 1995) and those with cerebral palsy (Collins *et al.*, 1997), to the benefit of those who have to deal with such people or design training programs or supportive technology for them and their care-givers (see ten Have, 1999: 189–92).