Introduction to Conversation Analysis
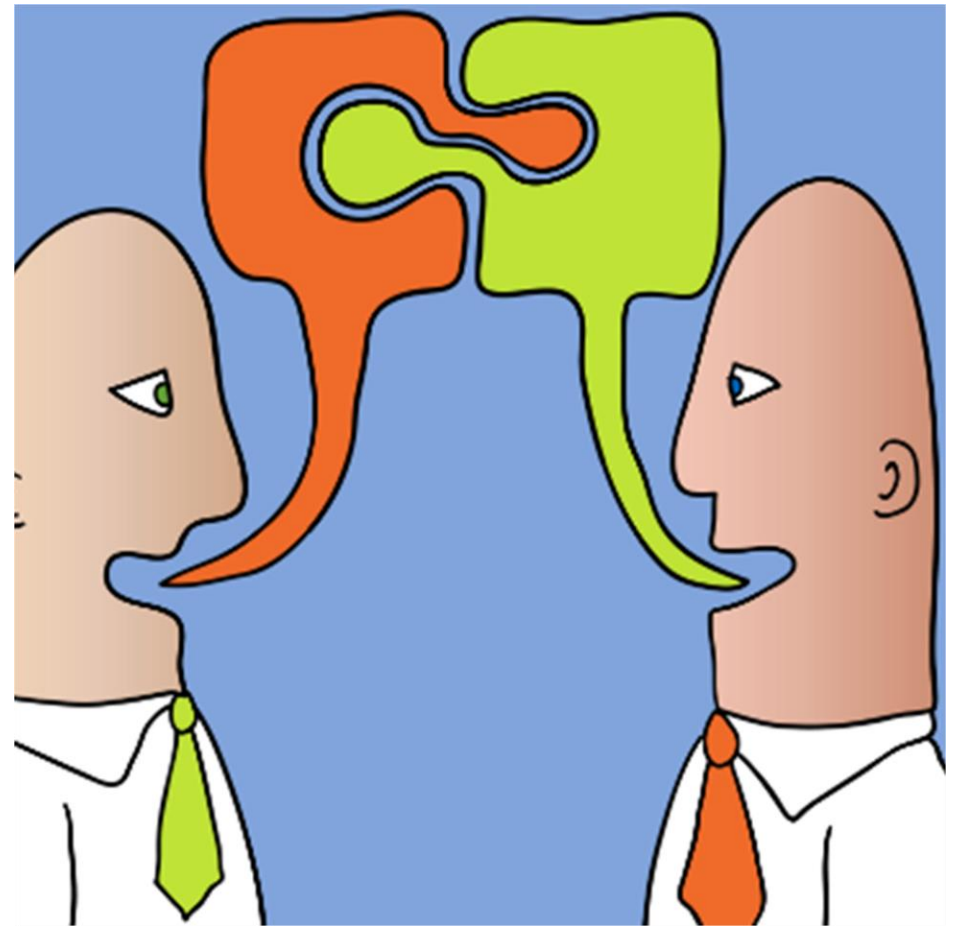
School for Social Care Research capacity building seminar

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What is Conversation Analysis?

- An approach to research that uses recordings of natural interaction to describe the patterns and underlying organisation of verbal and non-verbal interaction.

Some historical threads

The question of social order

Thomas Hobbes

Talcott Parsons

Developments in the 1960s:

Ethnomethodology (Harold Garfinkel) – people are not 'cultural dopes'

Symbolic interactionism (Erving Goffman) – 'the interaction order'

Speech act theory (John Austin) - 'I now pronounce you man and wife'

Harvey Sacks (1935 – 1975) - helplines

A: Hello
B: Hello

A: This is Mr Smith, may I help you.
B: Yes, this is Mr Brown

A: This is Mr Smith, may I help you.
B: I can't hear you
A: This is Mr <u>Smith</u>
B: Smith

Interaction as sequenced

- Linguistics that spoken language is the disorderly and corrupted form of a system of underlying rules (Chomsky, 1957)

- The concept of sequence – that interaction occurs turn by turn enables conversation to be subject to empirical analysis.

- Talk is not too messy – 'order at all points' (Sacks, 1984)

- Does not focus on what people *say*, but what *action* the talk performs

- Not about language as a window to the mind, but what people do and how they do it (Potter and Wetherell, 1987)

What kinds of question can CA answer?

- Basic CA: Concerned with understanding and describing basic machinery and patterns that underlie talk in everyday situations

- Applied CA: CA methods have been applied to a range of health and social care questions
    1) Descriptive e.g. *how health and social care tasks/goals are accomplished*
    2) Relational e.g. *relationships between interactional practices and outcomes*
    3) Causal e.g. *evaluating talk-based health/social care interventions*

Why not just ask people about their communication?

- Focus groups and interviews remain the method of choice for the majority of qualitative researchers despite the well-recognised problems posed by researcher-generated data.

- Are our research participants telling us what really happened? Could answers be influenced by social desirability effects? In telling about an event, people inevitably put a 'slant' on it.

- Removed from the phenomenon itself

- In interview or focus group research, then, researchers face the difficulty of how to theorise the relationship between participants' talk and the things they're talking about. There is a gap between the data (talk about an experience) and what researchers are usually most interested in (the experience itself)

So what differentiates data in conversation analysis?

- …<u>not</u> data collected from:
  - Introspection
  - Field notes
  - Interviews
  - Experiments

  Mondada (2013)

- 2 tests:
  1. The Unwell Social Scientist
  2. Recovery of Action

  Potter & Shaw (2018)

Recording

- Telephone calls

- Audio only

- Video

Some benefits of using naturalistic data

- It does not flood the research setting with the research setting with the questioners own categories/assumptions or interests (embedded in questions, probes, vignettes, etc)

- It does not put people in the position of having to account for what they do, or be 'disinterested experts' by encouraging them to provide normatively appropriate descriptions

- It does not require participants to 'do' anything other than what they would be normally doing (- can be of benefit to populations who may be excluded from other types of research because of communication impairments)

(Potter & Shaw, 2018)

Issues with data collection

- Do individuals modify their behaviour in response to their awareness of being observed?
- Ethical issues
  - Acceptability of making recordings some settings
  - Use of data
  - Transfer & storage
  - Anonymising video & audio data

Transcription

- Conversation analysts use a transcription approach developed by Gail Jefferson (also Bolden and Hepburn, 2017 *Transcribing for Social Research*)

- CA transcription follows strict conventions to preserve as much detail as possible (in and out breaths, pauses and silences, sighs, tone of voice, overlapping speech, speed of delivery, etc)

- See http://emcawiki.net/Transcription_Resources for a variety of online and offline resources

- 'An evolving flexible document'

- Data must be anonymised

'No order of detail in interaction can be dismissed *a priori* as disorderly, accidental or irrelevant'

Heritage (1984:241)

[ ]	Square brackets mark the start and end of overlapping speech, aligned with the talk immediately above or below.
↑↓	Vertical arrows precede marked pitch movement.
Underlining	Emphasis; the extent of underlining within individual words locates emphasis, but also indicates how heavy it is.
CAPITALS	Speech that is obviously louder than surrounding speech.
°↑I know it,°	Raised circles ("degree" signs) enclose obviously quieter speech.
(0.4)	Numbers in round brackets measure pauses in seconds; in this case, 4 tenths of a second.
(.)	A micropause, hearable but too short to measure.
she wa::nted	Colons show degrees of elongation of the prior sound; the more colons the more elongation, roughly one colon per syllable length.
hhh	Aspiration (out-breaths); proportionally as for colons.
.hhh	Inspiration (in-breaths).
Yeh,	Commas mark weak rising or continuing intonation, as used sometimes in enunciating lists, or in signalling that the speaker may have more to say. Question marks signal stronger, "questioning" intonation, irrespective of grammar.
Yeh.	Periods (stops) mark falling, stopping intonation, irrespective of grammar, and of whether the speaker actually stops talking.
bu-u-	hyphens mark a cut-off of the preceding sound.
>he said<	"greater than" and "lesser than" signs enclose speeded-up talk.
solid.= We had	"Equals" signs mark the immediate "latching" of successive talk, whether of one or more speakers, with no interval.

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Why do the details matter

```
01               ((ring))
02 Gordon:    Hello:,
03            0.7
04 Dana:      Hello where've you been all morning
```

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What do we think is happening in this greeting sequence in a Personal Independence Payment assessment ?

```
1       HCP:    Okay then we'll start the

2               assessment. So my name's Linda Black↑well

3       CLA:    [Hi  ]

4       HCP:    [Tch.] I'm a [clinical nurse specialis[t but I'm     ]

5       CLA:                 [I'm                      [uh I'm Jonathan]

6       HCP:    also a disability analyst .hhh so you're name's Joshua,

7               (1.4)

8       HCP:    Joshua Foun:↓tain is that corr[ect?_

9       CLA:                                  [Uh

10      CLA:    Jon- (0.3) Jonathan

11      HCP:    Jonathan sorry I beg your pardon. Jonathan, (0.4)
                 Fountain.
```

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Steps towards analysis – choosing a focus

- Examples of focus (among many) include:
- Sniffs in interaction
- Switching pronouns for imagined constructed thought

- How do questions get used and to what effect?
- How do speakers achieve the task of building a relationship?

- Building a collection of examples
  - eg Receptionists rejecting requests for GP appointments

Some fundamentals of doing analysis

- Turn taking and transition relevant places

- Adjacency pairs

- Next turn proof procedure

- Preference organisation

Turn taking and transition relevant points

People take turns in conversations, following established rules about:

- Whose turn it is, when that turn is over, and whose turn it is next
- If people talk at the same time (or not at all, they usually work to resolve this.

Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974)

Turn taking and transition relevant points

```
A: Hello

B: Hello


41  Wor:   or we could just do some parenting

42         coaching over the ph_one if that would be easier

43         (1.2)

44  Wor:   if you wan[ted som'in like] that?

45  Par:             [y: e: a: h       ]

46         (1.0)

47  Par:   yeah I th_ink that would be _better
```

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Adjacency pairs – talk is actions and pairs

- **FIRST PAIR PART**   **SECOND PAIR PART**

- **Greeting**   **Greeting**

- **Invitation**   **Acceptance/declination**

- **Offer**   **Acceptance/declination**

- **Request for action**   **Granting/denial**

- **Request for information**   **Informative answer**

The second part is from the same pair type as the first utterance (eg question-answer pair type)

The first part places constraints on what is permissible as a second part because it should conform to that same pair type (eg request-offer)

Schegloff and Sacks (1973)

Adjacency pairs

```
01          (ring)
02  Par:    hullo::?
03  Wor:    hi is that Donna?
04          (1.0)
05  Par:    u-ye::s:
06  Wor:    it's um Mel from the Parent[ing Service]
07  Par:                              [hang o:n  I] can't
08          hear yo::u::,
09          (0.6)
10  Wor:    it's um my name's Mel I work for the Parenting
11          [Service]
12  Par:    [hello:?]
```

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Adjacency pairs as actions,

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10  Wor:    it's um my name's Mel I work for the Parenting
11          [Service]
12  Par:    [hello:?]
```

```
13   Wor:    hiya?
14           (0.7)
15   Wor:    my name's Mel I work for the Parenting Service?
16           ((2.5 seconds of static noise))
17   Par:    hang on a minute let me go outsi:de?
18   Wor:    [cheers]
19   Par:    [see if] that
20           (4.0)
21   Par:    hullo?
22   Wor:    =hi Donna my name's Mel? I work for the Parenting
23           Service? .hhhh I du-
24   Par:    ↑oh h↑ello::
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13   Wor:    hiya?

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23           Service? .hhhh I du-

24   Par:    ↑oh h↑ello::
```

Next Turn Proof Procedure

- Commitment to making a finding by sequential evidence that the speakers were orienting to this themselves

```
Ann: Why don't you come see me some times?
Bar: I would like to
Ann: Yes but why don't you?
```

Is this a complaint or invitation?

Heritage (2011)

Preference organisation

- We shape our turns at talk for recipients

- Turns at talk are context dependent and context renewing (Heritage, 1984)

- When we take a turn at talk, we design our turn to either promote or undermine social solidarity

For example: 'if possible, avoid or minimise explicitly stated disconfirmations in favour of confirmations' in response to yes-no questions.

Pomerantz and Heritage (2013)

Preferred responses are smooth and keep the interaction moving forwards

```
Q: Would you like to come to the movies on Friday?

A: Yeah sounds great!
```

Dispreferred responses take extra conversational work, such as delays, prefaces or accounts

```
Q: Would you like to come to the movies on Friday?

   (0.8)

A: Umm                                        DELAY

   I don't know for sure                      PREFACE

   I think I may have something on that night ACCOUNT

   Can we make it another time                REJECTION
```
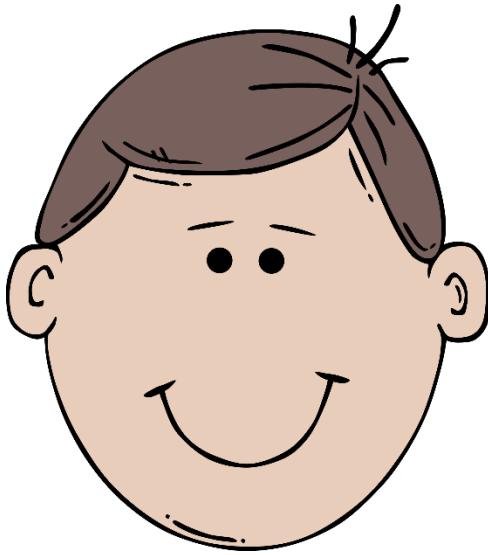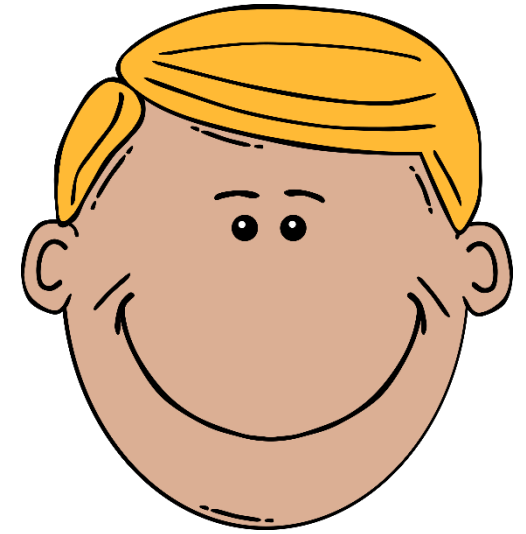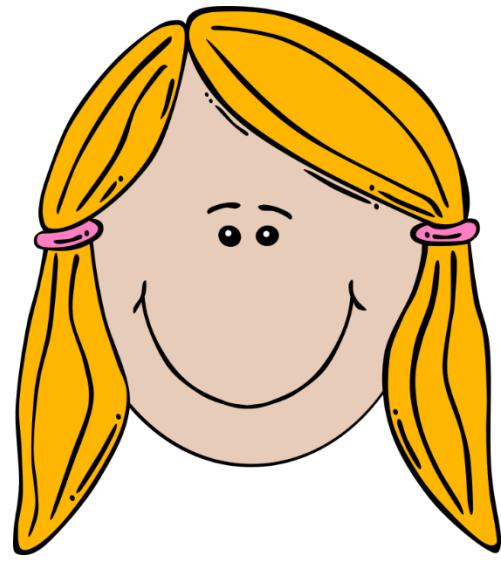
A social care relevant example of preferred and dispreferred turns

Paul's PAs

Paul: a young man with a learning disability

Anne

Robert

PAUL: ((Points to a pack of 4 donuts))

PAUL: What about these?

(0.7)

ANNE: They've only got <u>four</u> though

ROB : Ah well

ANNE: And you only want <u>one</u>

So what happens when Paul makes a different choice?

PAUL: ((Points to the shelf))
ANNE: You want a chocolate croissant?
PAUL: Yes=
ANNE: =Okay
ROB :   Done.
ANNE: That's a good idea.

Examples from our own work

- How social care staff talk to people with dementia about their memories

- The role of the companion in remote healthcare consultations for patients with learning disabilities

- Reflective supervision and decision making in child and family social work

How can this be taken out into the world?

- **What questions do you have for interactional research in your own settings**
- **Introductory courses (Loughborough, York, Oxford)**
  - 3rd February 2022: CA Beginners Feb 3 2022 Loughborough
  - Introduction to the Jefferson system of transcription - 27 June 2022 (online)
  - All courses can be found on http://emcawiki.net/Training

- **Resources for further learning**
  - Youtube (Em does CA; Liz Stokoe Ted Talk; CA Data Sessions Southampton)
  - Charles Antaki's website tutorials for CA beginners – https://learn.lboro.ac.uk/ludata/cx/ca-tutorials/sitemenu.htm
- **Conferences/events**
  - CASW Network and Conference (14th December – online and FREE) www.conversationsocialwork.com
  - Conference on atypical interactions (27th June 2022) https://www.ngi.org.uk/resources/events-calendar/atypical-interaction-conference-2022/

Any questions?