Centro Internazionale
di Semiotica e di Linguistica

Working Papers

and prepublications

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Replies and Responses

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Italia

num. **46-47** *sett.-ott. 1975* | *serie* **C**

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working paper

This paper examines conversational dialogue. It is divided into four parts. The first presents arguments for dialogic analysis, the second lists some failings, the third applies this critical view to the notion of a «reply»; the final part is an overview.

PART ONE

I

Whenever persons talk there are very likely to be questions and answers. These utterances are realized at different points in «sequence time».

Notwithstanding the content of their questions, questioners are oriented to what lies just ahead and depend on what is to come; answerers are oriented to what has just been said, and look backward, not forward. Observe that although a question anticipates an answer, is designed to receive it, seems dependent on doing so, an answer seems even more dependent, making less sense alone than does the utterance that called it forth. Whatever answers do, they must do this with something already begun.

In questions and answers we have one example, perhaps the canonical one, of what Harvey Sacks has called a «first pair part» and a «second pair part», that is, a couplet, a minimal dialogic unit, a round two utterances long, each utterance of the same «type», each spoken by a different person, one utterance temporally following directly on the other; in sum, an example of an «adjacency pair». The first pair part establishes a «conditional relevance» upon anything that occurs in the slot that follows; whatever comes to be said there will be inspected to see how it might serve as an answer, and if nothing is said, then the resulting silence will be taken as notable--a rejoinder in its own right, a silence to be heard[2].

On the face of it, these little pairings, these dialogic units, these two-part exchanges, recommend a linguistic mode of analysis of the formalistic sort. Admittedly, the meaning of an utterance, whether question or answer, can ultimately depend in part on the specific semantic value of the words it contains and thus (in the opinion of some linguists) escape complete formalization. Nonetheless, a formalism is involved. The constraining influence of the question-answer format is somewhat independent of *what* is being talked about, and whether, for example, the matter is of great moment to those involved in the exchange or of no moment at all. Moreover, each participating utterance is constrained by the rules of sentence grammar, even though, as will be shown, inferences regarding underlying forms may be required to appreciate this.

II

What sort of analyses can be accomplished by appealing to the dialogic format?

First, there is the possibility of recovering elided elements of answers by referring to their first pair parts, this

turning out to be evidence of a strength of sentence grammar, not (as might first appear) a weakness. To the question «How old are you?» the answer «I am eleven years old» is not necessary; «I am eleven», will do, and even, often, «Eleven». Given «Eleven» as an answer, a proper sentence can be recovered from it, providing only that one knows the question. Indeed, I believe that elements of the intonation contour of the underlying grammatical sentence are preserved, supplying confirmation to the interpretation and assurance that an appeal to the grammatically tacit is something more than the linguist's legerdemain. If, then--as Gunter has shown--the right pair parts are aptly chosen, answers with very strange surface structures can be shown to be understandable, and what seemed anything but a sentence can be coerced into grammatical form and be the better off for it. What is «said» is obscure; what is «meant» is obvious and clear.

A: «Who can see whom?»
B: «The man the boy» [3].

The same argument can be made about dangling or interrupted sentences, false starts, ungrammatical usage and other apparent deviations from grammatical propriety.

Note that answers can take not only a truncated verbal form but also a wholly nonverbal form, in this case a gesture serving solely as a substitute--an «emblem» to use Paul Ekman's terminology [4]--for lexical materials.

To the question «What time is it?» the holding up of five fingers may do as well as words, even better in a noisy room. A semantlically meaningful question is still being satisfied by means of a semantically meaningful answer.

Second, we can describe embedding and «side-sequence» [5] features, whereby a question is not followed directly by an answer to it, but by another question meant to be seen as holding off proper completion for an exigent moment:

A_1 «Can I borrow your hose?»
B_2 «Do you need it this very moment?»
A_2 «No».
B_1 «Yes».

or even:

A_1: (to trainman in station) «Have you got the time?»
B_2: «Standard or Daylight Saving?»
A_3: «What are you running on?»
B_3: «Standard»
A_2: «Standard then»
B_1: «It's five o'clock».

Which, in turn, leads to a central issue so far not mentioned: the question of how adjacency pairs are linked together to form chains. For «chaining» presumably provides us with a means of moving analysis forward from single two-part exchanges to stretches of talk. Thus, one might want to distinguish the two person interrogative chain:

A_1
B_1
A_2
B_2
etc.

whereby he who provides a current question provides the next one, too (this turning out to have been a presupposition of the current utterance all along) [6], from the two-person sociable chain, whereby he who provides a second pair part then goes on to provide the first pair part of the next pair:

A_1
B_1/B_2
A_2/A_3
etc.

Combining the notion of ellipsis with the notion of chaining, we have, as Marilyn Merritt has suggested [7], the possibility of eliding at a higher level. Thus the typical:

i(a) A: «Have you got coffee to go?»
B: «Milk and sugar?»
A: «Just milk».

can be expanded to display an underlying structure:

i(b) A_1 : «Have you got coffee to go?»
B_1/B_2: «Yes/ Milk and sugar?»
A_2: «Just milk».

an elision presumably based on the

fact that an immediate query by the queried can be taken as tacit evidence of the answer that would make such a query relevant, namely, affirmation. Nor does expansion serve only to draw a couplet pattern from a three-piece unit. Thus:

ii(a) A: «Are you coming?»
B: «I gotta work».

can be viewed as a contraction of:

ii(b) A_1: «Are you coming?»
B_1: «No».
A_2: «Why aren't you?»
B_2: «I gotta work».

illustrating one interpretation (and the example) of the practice suggested by Stubbs [8], namely, that an answer can be replaced by a reason for that answer. I might add that in what is to follow it will be useful to have a term to match and contrast with adjacency pair, a term to refer not to a question-answer couplet but rather to the second pair part of one couplet and the first pair part of the very next one, whether these parts appear within the same turn, as in:

A_1 : «Are they going?»
B_1/B_2: «Yes. /Are you?»
A_2: «I suppose».

or across the back of two turns, as in:

A_1: «Are they going?»
B_1: «Yes».
A_2: «Are you?»
B_2: «I suppose».

I shall speak here of a «back pair».

III

Observe now that, broadly speaking, there are three kinds of listeners to talk: those who *overhear*, whether or not their unratified participation is inadvertent and whether or not it has been encouraged; those who are ratified participants but (in the case of more than two-person talk) are not specifically addressed by the speaker; and those ratified participants who *are* addressed, that is, oriented to by the speaker in a manner to suggest that his words are particularly for them, and that some answer is therefore anticipated from them, more so than from the other ratified participants. (I say «broadly speaking» because all sorts of minor variations are possible--for example, speaker's practice of drawing a particular participant into an exchange and then turning to the other participants as if to offer him and his words up for public delectation). It is a standard possibility in talk that an addressed recipient answers the speaker by saying that the sound did not carry or that although words could be heard, no sense could be made of them, and that, in consequence, a rerun is required, and if not that, then perhaps a rephrasing. There are many pat phrases and gestures for conveying this message, and they can be injected concerning any item in an ongoing utterance whensoever this fault occurs [9].

All of this suggests that a basic normative assumption about talk is that, whatever else, it should be correctly interpretable in the special sense of conveying to the intended recipients what the sender more or less wanted to get across. The issue is not that the recipients should agree *with* what they have heard, but only agree with the speaker *as to what* they have heard; in Austinian terms, illocutionary force is at stake, not perlocutionary effect.

Some elaboration is required. Commonly a speaker cannot explicate with precision what he meant to get across, and on these occasions if hearers think they know precisely, they will likely be at least a little off. (If speaker and hearers were to file a report on what they assumed to be the full meaning of an extended utterance, these glosses would differ, at least in detail). Indeed, one routinely presumes on a mutual understanding that doesn't quite exist. What one obtains is a working agreement, an agreement «for all practical purposes» [10]. But that, I think, is quite enough. The edging into ambiguity that is often found is only significant, I think, when the interpretive uncertainties and discrepancies exceed certain limits or are intentionally induced and sustained (or thought to be by the hearers) or are exploit-

ed after the fact to deny a legitimate accusation concerning what the speaker indeed by and large had meant. A serious request for a rerun on grounds of faulty reception is to be understood, then, not as a request for complete understanding--God save anyone from that--but for understanding that is on a par with what is ordinarily accepted as sufficient--understanding subject to, but not appreciably impaired by, «normatively residual» ambiguity.

Observe that the issue here of «normatively residual» ambiguity does not have to do with the three kinds of speech efficiency with which some students have confused it. First, the matter is not that of deixis or, as it is coming to be called, indexicality. An indexical such as «me» or «that one» can be rather clear and unambiguous as far as participants in the circle of use are concerned, the ambiguity only occurring to readers of isolated bits of the text of the talk. Second, ellipsis is not involved, for here again participants can easily be quite clear as to what was meant even though those faced with a transcribed excerpt might not agree on an expansion of the utterance. Finally, the issue is not that of the difference between what is «literally» said and what is conveyed or meant. For although here, too, someone coming upon the line out of the context of events, relationships, and mutual knowingness in which it was originally voiced might misunderstand, the speaker and hearers nonetheless can be perfectly clear about what was intended - or at least no less clear than they are about an utterance meant to be taken at face value. (Indeed, it is in contrast to these three forms of mere laconicity that we can locate *functional* ambiguities, difficulties such as genuine uncertainty, genuine misunderstanding, the simulation of these difficulties, the suspicion that real difficulty has occurred, the suspicion that difficulty has been pretended, and so forth).

Given the possibility and the expectation that effective transmission will occur during talk, we can ask what conditions or arrangements would facilitate this and find some obvious answers. It would be helpful, for example, to have norms constraining interruption or simultaneous talk and norms against withholding of answers. It would be helpful to have available, and oblige the use of, «back-channel» [11] cues (facial gestures and nonverbal vocalizations) from hearers so that the speaker, *while* he was speaking, could know, among other things, that he was succeeding or failing to get across, being informed of this while attempting to get across. (The speaker might thereby learn that he was not persuading his hearers, but that is another matter). Useful, too, would be a hold signal through which an addressed recipient could signal that transmission to him should be held up for a moment, this hold signal in turn requiring an all-clear cue to indicate that the forestalled speaker might now resume transmission. It would also be useful to enjoin an addressed recipient to *follow* right after current speaker with words or gestures showing that the message has been heard and understood, or, if it hasn't, that it hasn't.

Given a speaker's need to know whether his message has been received, and if so, whether or not it has been passably understood, and given a recipient's need to show that he has received the message, and correctly - given these very fundamental requirements of talk as a communication system - we have the essential rationale for the very existence of adjacency pairs, that is, for the organization of talk into two-part exchanges [12]. We have an understanding of why any next utterance after a question is examined for how it might be an answer.

More to the point, we have grounds for extending this two-part format outward from pairs of utterances which it seems perfectly to fit - questions and answers - to other kinds of utterance pairs, this being an extension that Sacks had intended. For when a declaration or command or greeting or promise or request or apology or threat or summons is made, it still remains the case that the initiator will need to know that he has gotten across; and the addressed recipient will need to make it known that the message has been correctly received. Certainly when an explanation is given the giver needs to know that it has been understood, else how can he know when to stop explaining? [13] And

so once again the first pair part co-opts the slot that follows, indeed makes a slot out of next moments, rendering anything occurring then subject to close inspection for evidence as to whether or not the conditions for communication have been satisfied.

Given that we are to extend our dialogic format, our adjacency pairs, to cover a whole range of pairs, not merely questions and answers, terms more general than question and answer ought to be introduced, general enough to cover all the cases. For after all, an assertion is not quite a question, and the rejoinder to it is not quite an answer. Instead, then, of speaking of questions and answers, I will speak of *statements* and *replies*, intentionally using «statement» in a broader way than is sometimes found in language studies, but still retaining the notion that an initiating element is involved, to which a reply is to be oriented.

Once we have begun to think about the transmission requirements for utterances and the role of adjacency pairing in accomplishing this, we can go on to apply the same sort of thinking to sequences or chains of statement-reply pairs, raising the question concerning what arrangements would facilitate the extended flow of talk. We could attend the issue of how next speaker is selected (or self-selects) in more-than-two-person talk [14] and (following the structuring that Sacks has nicely uncovered) how utterances might be built up to provide sequences of points where transition to next speaker is facilitated and even promoted but not made mandatory, the speaker leaving open the possibility of himself continuing on as if he had not encouraged his own retirement from the speakes role [15]. We could also examine how a speaker's restarts and pauses (filled and otherwise) might function both to allow for his momentary failure to obtain listener attention and to remind intended recipients of their inattention [16]. And after that, of course, we could pose the same question regarding the initiating and terminating of a conversation considered as a total unit of communication [17]. We would thus be dealing with talk as a communications engineer might, someone optimistic about the possibility of culture-free formulations. I shall speak here of system requirements and system constraints.

A sketch of some of these system requirements is possible.

1. A two-way capability for transceiving acoustically adequate and readily interpretable messages.

2. Back-channel feedback capabilities for informing on reception while it is occurring.

3. Contact signals: means of announcing the seeking of a channeled connection, means of ratifying that the sought-for channel is now open, means of closing off a theretofore open channel. Included here, identification-authentication signs.

4. Turnover signals: means to indicate ending of a message and the taking over of the sending role by next speaker. (In the case of talk with more than two persons, next-speaker selection signals, whether «speaker selects» or «self-select» types).

5. Preemption signals: means of inducing a rerun, holding off channel requests, interrupting a talker in progress.

6. Framing capabilities: cues distinguishing special readings to apply across strips of bracketed communication, recasting otherwise conventional sense, as in making ironic asides, quoting another joking, and so forth.

7. Norms obliging respondents to reply honestly with whatever they know that is relevant and no more [18].

8. Nonparticipant constraints regarding eavesdropping, competing noise, and the blocking of pathways for eye-to-eye signal.

We can, then, draw our basic framework for face-to-face talk from what would appear to be the sheer physical requirements and constraints of any communication system, and progress from there to a sort of microfunctional analysis of

various interaction signals and practices. Observe that wide scope is found here for formalization; the various events in this process can be managed through quite truncated symbols, and not only can these symbols be given discrete, condensed physical forms, but also the role of live persons in the communication system can be very considerably reduced. Observe, too, that although each of the various signals can be expressed through a continuum of forms - say as «commands», «requests», «intimations» - none of this is to the point; these traditional discriminations can be neglected providing only that it is assumed that the participants have jointly agreed to operate (in effect) solely as communication nodes, as transceivers, and to make themselves fully available for that purpose.

IV

No doubt there are occasions when one can hear:

A: «What's the time?»
B: «It's five o'clock».

as the entire substance of a brief social encounter - or as a self-contained element therein - and have thereby a naturally bounded unit, one whose boundedness can be nicely accounted for by appealing to system requirements and the notion of an adjacency pair. But much more frequently something not quite so naked occurs. What one hears is something like this:

(i) A: «Do you have the time?»
(ii) B: «Sure. It's five o'clock».
(iii) A: «Thanks».
(iv) B: (gesture) «'t's okay».

in which (i) albeit serving as a request, also functions to neutralize the potentially offensive consequence of encroaching on another with a demand, and so may be called a «remedy»; in which (ii) demonstrates that the potential offender's effort to nullify offense is acceptable, and so may be called «relief»; in which (iii) is a display of gratitude for the service rendered and for its provider not taking the claim on himself amiss, and may be called «appreciation»; and in which (iv) demonstrates that enough gratitude has been displayed, and thus the displayer is to be counted a properly feeling person, this final act describable as «minimization» [19]. What we have here is also a little dialogic unit, naturally bounded in the sense that it (and its less complete variants) may fill out the whole of an encounter or, occurring within an encounter, allow for a longish pause upon its completion and an easy shift to another conversational matter. But this time actions are directed not merely to system constraints; this time an additional set apply, namely, constraints regarding how each individual ought to handle himself with respect to each of the others, so that he not discredit his own tacit claim to good character or the tacit claim of the others that they are persons of social worth whose various forms of territoriality are to be respected. Demands for action are qualified and presented as mere requests which can be declined. These declinables are in turn granted with a show of good spirit, or, if they are to be turned down, a mollifying reason is given. Thus the asker is hopefully let off the hook no matter what the outcome of his request. Nor are these ritual contingencies restricted to commands and requests. In making an assertion about facts, the maker must count on not being considered hopelessly wrongheaded; if a greeting, that contact is wanted; if an excuse, that it will be acceptable; if an avowal of feeling and attitude, that these will be credited; if a summons, that it will be deferred to; if an offer, that it won't be considered presumptuous or mean; if an inquiry, that it won't be thought intrusive. The pause that comes after a tactfully sustained exchange is possible, then, in part because the participants have arrived at a place which each finds viable, each having acquitted himself with an acceptable amount of self-constraint and respect for the others present.

I have called such units «ritual interchanges» [20]. Ordinarily each incorporates at least one two-part exchange but may contain additional turns and/or addi-

tional exchanges. Observe that although system constraints might be conceived of as pancultural, ritual concerns are patently dependent on cultural definition and can be expected to vary quite markedly from society to society. Nonetheless, the ritual frame provides a question that can be asked of anything occurring during talk and a way of accounting for what does occur. For example, back-channel expression not only lets the speaker know whether or not he is getting across while he is trying to, but also can let him know whether or not what he is conveying is socially acceptable, that is, compatible with his hearers' view of him and of themselves.

Note that insofar as participants in an encounter morally commit themselves to keeping conversational channels open and in good working order, whatever binds by virtue of system constraints will bind also by virtue of ritual ones. The satisfaction of ritual constraints safeguards not only feelings but communication, too.

For example, assuming a normatively anticipated length to an encounter, and the offensiveness of being lodged in one without anything to say, we can anticipate the problem of «safe supplies», that is, the need for a stock of inoffensive, ready-to-hand utterances which can be employed to fill gaps. And we can see added functions - the prevention of offensive expressions - for the organizational devices which reduce the likelihood of gaps and overlaps.

In addition to making sure someone (and only one) is always at bat, there will be the issue of sustaining whatever is felt to be appropriate by way of continuity of topic and tone from previous speaker's statement to current speaker's, this out of respect both for previous speaker (especially when he had provided a statement, as opposed to a reply) and, vaguely, for what it was that had been engrossing the participants [21].

As suggested, communication access is itself caught up in ritual concerns: to decline a signal to open channels is something like declining an extended hand, and to make a move to open a channel is to presume that one will not be intruding. Thus, opening is ordinarily requested, not demanded, and often an initiator will preface his talk with an apology for the interruption and a promise of how little long the talk will be, the assumption being that the recipient has the right to limit how much he is to be active in this capacity. (On the whole, persons reply to more overtures than they would like to, just as they attempt fewer openings than they might want). Once a state of talk has been established, participants are obliged to temper their exploitation of these special circumstances, neither making too many demands for the floor nor too few, neither extolling their own virtues nor too directly questioning those of the others, and, of course, all the while maintaining an apparent rein on hostility and a show of attention to current speaker. So, too, withdrawal by a particular participant aptly expresses various forms of disapproval and distance and therefore must itself be managed tactfully.

Instead, then, of merely an arbitrary period during which the exchange of messages occurs, we have a social encounter, a coming together that ritually regularizes the risks and opportunities face-to-face talk provides, enforcing the standards of modesty regarding self and considerateness for others generally enjoined in the community, but now incidentally doing so in connection with the special vehicles of expression that arise in talk. Thus, if, as Schegloff and Sacks suggest [22], a conversation has an opening topic which can be identified as its chief one, then he who would raise a «delicate» point might want to «talk past» the issue at the beginning and wait until it can be introduced at a later place in the conversation more likely to allow for lightly pressed utterances (say, as an answer to a question someone else raises), all of which management requires some understanding of issues such as delicacy. Participants, it turns out, are obliged to look not so much for ways of expressing themselves, but for ways of making sure that the vast expressive resources of face-to-face interaction are not inadvertently employed to convey something unintended and untoward. Motivated to preserve

everyone's face, they then end up acting so as to preserve orderly communication. The notion of ritual constraints helps us to mediate between the particularities of social situations and our tendency to think in terms of general rules for the management of conversational interplay. We are given a means of overcoming the argument that any generalization in this area must fall because every social situation is different from every other. In brief, we have a means of attending to what it is about different social situations that makes them relevantly different for the management of talk.

For example, although a request for coffee allows the counterman to elect to elide an answer and move directly into a question of his own, «Milk and sugar?», this option turns out, of course, to be available only in limited strategic environments. When an individual asks a salesperson whether or not a large object is in stock - such as a Chevy Nova with stick shift or a house with a corner lot - the server may well assume that he has a prospective customer, not necessarily an actual one, and that to omit the «Yes» and to go right into the next level of specification, i.e., «What color?» or «How many rooms?» might be seen, for example, to be snide. For a purchase at this scale ordinarily requires time and deliberation. The server can assume that whatever remarks he first receives, his job is to establish a selling relationship, along with the sociability-tinged, mutually-committed occasion needed to support an extended period of salesmanship. The salesman will thus take the customer's opening remarks as a call for an appreciable undertaking, not merely a bid for a piece of information. At the other extreme, the question «Do you have the time?» is designed never to be answered in such a way that another utterance, «Can you tell me it?» will be necessary - so much so that the setting up of this second request becomes available as an open joke or a pointed insult. May I add that a feature of face-to-face interaction is not only that it provides a scene for playing out of ritually relevant expressions, but also that it is the location of a special class of quite conventionalized utterances, lexicalizations whose controlling purpose is to give praise, blame, thanks, support, affection, or show gratitude, disapproval, dislike, sympathy, or greet, say farewell, and so forth. Part of the force of these speech acts comes from the feelings they directly index; little of the force derives from the semantic content of the words. We can refer here to interpersonal verbal rituals. These rituals often serve a bracketing function, celebratively marking a perceived change in the physical and social accessibility of two individuals to each other [11], as well as beginnings and endings - of a day's activity, a social occasion, a speech, an encounter, an interchange. So in addition to the fact that any act performed during talk will carry ritual significance, some seem to be specialized for this purpose - ritualized in the ethological sense - and these play a special role in the episoding of conversation.

We might, then, for purposes of analysis try to construct a simple ritual model, one that could serve as a background for all those considerations of the person which are referred to as «ego», «personal feelings», *amour-propre*, and so forth. The general design, presumably, is to sustain and protect through expressive means what can be supportively conveyed about persons and their relationships.

1. An act is taken to carry implications regarding the charachter of the actor and his evaluation of his listeners, as well as reflecting on the relationship between him and them.

2. Potentially offensive acts can be remedied by the actor through accounts and apologies, but this remedial work must appear to be accepted as sufficient by the potentially offended party before the work can properly be terminated.

3. Offended parties are generally obliged to induce a remedy if one is otherwise forthcoming or in some other way show that an unacceptable state of affairs has been created, else, in addition to what has been conveyed about them, they can be seen as submissive regarding others' lapses in maintaining the ritual code.

And just as system constraints will always condition how talk is managed, so, too, will ritual ones. Observe that unlike grammatical constraints, system and ritual ones open up the possibility of corrective action as part of these very constraints. Grammars do not have rules for managing what happens when rules are broken [24]. Observe, too that the notion of ritual constraints complicates the idea of adjacency pairs but apparently only that; the flow of conversation can still be seen as parcelled out into these relatively self-contained units, the relevance of first slot for second slot appreciated - but now all this for added reasons.

PART TWO

System constraints reinforced by ritual constraints provide us with an interpretive understanding of some of the details of conversational organization. This is no longer news. The point of having reviewed the arguments is to question the adequacy of the analysis that results. For although a focus on system and ritual constraints has considerable value, it also has substantial limitations. It turns out that the statement-reply format generating dialogue-like structures covers some possibilities better than others. Consider, then, some problems introduced by this perspective.

I

First, the embarrassing question of units. The environing or contextual unit of considerable linguistic concern is the sentence - «...an independent linguistic form, not included by virtue of any grammatical construction in any larger linguistic form» [25] - in which the contained or dependent units are morphemes, words, and more extended elements such as phrases and clauses. In natural talk, sentences do not always have the surface grammatical form grammarians attribute to the well-formed members of the class, but presumably these defectives can be expanded by regular rules of ellipsis to display their inner normalcy. The term sentence is currently used to refer to something that is spoken, but the early analysis of sentences seemed much caught up in examination of the written form. The term utterance has therefore come into use to underscore reference to a spoken unit. In this paper I shall use the term utterance residually to refer to spoken words as such, without concern about the naturally bounded units of talk contained within them or containing them.

Now clearly, a sentence must be distinguished from its interactional cousin, namely, everything that an individual says during his exercise of a turn at talk, «a stretch of talk, by one person, before and after which there is silence on the part of the person» [26]. I shall speak here of talk during a turn, ordinarily reserving the term «turn» or «turn at talk» to refer to an opportunity to hold the floor, not what is said while holding it [27]. Obviously the talk of a turn will sometimes coincide with a sentence (or what can be expanded into one), but on many occasions a speaker will provide his hearers with more than a one sentence-equivalent stretch. Note, too, that although a turn's talk may contain more than one sentence-equivalent, it must contain at least one.

Now the problem with the concepts of sentence and talk during a turn is that they are responsive to linguistic, not interactional, analysis. If we assume that talk is somehow dialogic and goes on piecing itself out into interchange spurts, then we must obtain our unit with this in mind. As suggested, a sentence is not the analytically relevant entity, since a respondent could employ several in what is taken to be a single interactionally relevant event. Even something so glaringly answer-oriented and so dear to the grammarian's heart as a well-formed question regarding fact can be rhetorical in character, designed to flesh out the speaker's remarks, adding a little more weight and color or a terminal dollop, but not meant to be specifically answered in its own right. (In fact, so much is a rhetorical question not to be specifically answered that it becomes available as something the apt answering of which is automatically a joke or quip).

But just as clearly, the talk during an entire turn can't be used either - at least not as the most elementary term - for,

as suggested, one of the main patterns for chaining rounds is the one in which he who answers a question goes on from there to provide the next question in the series, thereby consolidating during one turn at talk two relevantly different doings. And indeed, a question may be shared by two persons - one individual stepping in and finishing off what another has begun - all for the edification of a third party, the addressed recipient [9], who does not thereby lose a beat in the sequencing of his own reply. Thus, the talk during two different turns can yet function as one interactional unit. In fact, an addressed recipient can step in and help a slow speaker find the word or phrase he seems to be looking for, then follow this with a reply, thereby combining in one turn at talk some of two *different* parties' contribution to the dialogue. In general, then, although the boundary of a sequence-relevant unit and the boundary of a speaking commonly coincide, this must be seen as analytically incidental. We are still required to decide which concern will be primary: the organization of turns *per se* or the sequencing of interaction [10]. And we must sustain this discrimination even though the two terms, turn and interaction sequence, seem nigh synonymous.

In order to attack this problem, I propose to use a notion whose definition I cannot and want not to fix very closely - the notion of a «move» [11]. I refer to any full stretch of talk or of its substitutes which has a distinctive unitary bearing on some set or other of the circumstances in which participants find themselves (some «game» or other in the peculiar sense employed by Wittgenstein), such as a communication system, ritual constraints, economic negotiating, character contests, «teaching cycles» [12], or whatever. It follows that an utterance which is a move in one game may also be a move in another, or be but a part of such other, or contain two or more such others. And a move may sometimes coincide with a sentence and sometimes with a turn's talk but need do neither. Correspondingly, I redefine the notion of a «statement» to refer to a move characterized by an orientation to some sort of answering to follow, and the notion of «reply» to refer to a move characterized by its being seen as an answering of some kind to a preceding matter that has been raised. Statement and reply, then, refer to moves, not to sentences or to speakings.

The notion of move gives some immediate help with matters such as types of silence. For example, there will be two kinds of silence after a conversational move has been completed: the silence that occurs between the back-pair moves a single speaker can provide during one turn at talk, and the one that occurs between his holding of the floor and the next person's holding [13].

II

Although it is clear that ritual constraints reinforce system ones, deepening a pattern that has already been cut, qualifications must be noted. A response will on occasion leave matters in a ritually unsatisfactory state and a turn by the initial speaker will be required, encouraged, or at least allowed, resulting in a *three*-part interchange; or chains of adjacency pairs will occur (albeit typically with one, two, or three such couplets, the chain itself having a unitary, bounded character.

Moreover, standard conflicts can occur between the two sets of conditions. Ritual constraints on the initiation of talk, for example, are likely to function one way for the superordinate and another for the subordinate, so that what is orderliness from the superior's position may be excommunication from the inferior's.

Cultural variation is important here as well. Thus it is reported of Indians on the Warm Springs reservation in Oregon that because of obligations of modesty, young women may have answers they can't offer to questions [14], and that questioning itself may be followed with a decorum a communications engineer might well deplore:

Unlike our norm of interaction, that at Warm Springs does not require that a question by one person be followed immediately by an answer or a promise of

an answer from the addressee. It may be followed by an answer but may also be followed by silence or by an utterance that bears no relationship to the question. Then the answer to the question may follow as long as five or ten minutes later[14].

Also when utterances are not heard or understood, the failing hearer can feel obliged to affect signs of comprehension, thus forestalling correction and, in consequence, forestalling communication. For to ask for a rerun can be to admit that one has not been considerate enough to listen or that one is insufficiently knowledgeable to understand the speaker's utterance or that the speaker himself may not know how to express himself clearly - in all cases implying something that the uncomprehending person may be disinclined to convey.

III

Once we have considered the differential impact of system and ritual constraints upon talk we can go on to consider a more complicated topic, namely, the inversionary effects of both these sets of constraints.

When, during a conversation, communication or social propriety suddenly breaks down, pointed effort will likely follow to set matters right. At such moments what ordinarily function as mere constraints upon action become the ends of action itself. Now we must see that this shift from means to ends has additional grounds.

Although rerun signals are to be initially understood in obvious functional terms, in fact in actual talk they are much employed in a devious way, a standard resource for saying one thing - which propositional content can be withdrawn to if needs be - while meaning another. The same can be said of apparent «unhearings» and misunderstandings, for these too provide the apparently beset recipient a means of intentionally breaking the flow of the other's communication under the cover of untendentious difficulty.

What is true here of system constraints is, I think, even more true of ritual ones. Not only will conventional expressions of concern and regard be employed transparently as a thin cover for allusions to one's own strengths and others' failings, but just what might otherwise be protected by tact can delineate the target of abuse. As if on the assumption that other's every move is to be taken as something requiring remedial correction (lest one be seen as lax in the exaction of justice for oneself), assertions can be followed by direct denials, questions by questioning the questioner, accusations by counter-accusations, disparagement by insults in kind, threats by taunting their realization, and other inversions of mutual consideration. Here adjacency pairing and the normative sequence of remedy, relief, appreciation, and minimization continue to provide a scaffold of expectations, but now employed as a means for rejecting blame, according it without license, and generally giving offense. Neatly bounded interchanges are produced, well-formed to prevent at least one of the participants from establishing a tenable position[15].

IV

Having accounted for the prevalence of the two-person dialogic format by reference to the effective way in which it can satisfy system and ritual constraints, we can go on to examine organization that doesn't fit the format.

1. There are, for example, standard three-person plays:

1st speaker: «Where is this place?»
2nd speaker: «I don't know. Yuo know, dont' you?»
3rd speaker: «It's just north of Depoe Bay»[16].

in which 3rd speaker's reply will bear a relation to first speaker's question, but a complicated one. Also to be noted are standard arrangements, as, for example, in classrooms, in which a speaker obliges a number of persons to cite their answers to a problem or opinions on an issue. In such cases, second respondent will wait for first respondent to finish, but second respondent's reply will not be an *answer* to first respondent, merely

something to follow in sequence, resulting at most in a comparative array. (This is but an institutionalized form of what is often found in «small talk»: as suggested, next speaker can «match» current speaker's story with one like it of his own, such that although the timing of the new contribution is tied to the termination of the prior one, the only other connection between the two stories is that they draw upon the same topic license). Further, there is the obstinate fact that during informal conversation, especially the multi-person kind, an individual *can* make a statement such that the only apparent consequence is that the next speaker will allow him to finish before changing the topic, a case of patent disregard for *what* a person says. And, of course, when this happens, a third participant can decide to reply not to the last statement, the adjacent one, but to the one before, thus bypassing last speaker [11].

2. It is also an embarrassing fact that the ongoing back-channel cues which listeners provide a speaker may, as it were, «surface» at episodic junctures in the speaking, providing, thus, a clear signal that understanding and sympathy have followed this far. Gee, gosh, wow, hmm, tsk, no! are examples of such keep-going signals. Now these booster-like encouragements could be counted as a turn at talk, yet obviously he who provides them does not «get the floor» to do so, does not become the ratified speaker. Thus, what is perceived as a single speaking, a single go at getting something said, a single period of having the floor, can carry across several of these looked-for and appreciated interruptions.

Furthermore, it appears that the possibility of speaking *without having the floor or trying to get it* can itself be pointedly used, relied upon, in conveying asides, parenthetical remarks, and even quips, all of whose point depends upon their not being given any apparent sequence space in the flow of events. (Asides cause their maker embarrassment if ratified as something to be given the floor and accorded an answer, indeed such a reception becomes a way of stamping out the act, not showing it respect).

All of which leads to a very deep complaint about the statement-reply formula. Although many moves seem either to call for a replying move or to constitute such a move, we must now admit that not all do, and for the profoundest reasons. For it seems that in much spoken interaction participants are given elbow room to provide at no sequence cost an evaluative expression of what they take to be occurring. They are given a free ride. (The surfacing of back-channel communication is but one example). Thereby they can make their position felt, make their alignment to what is occurring known, without committing others to address themselves openly to these communications. (The common practice, already mentioned, whereby a teacher uses an answer to his question as an occasion for evaluating the merit of the reply suggests how institutionalized this can become). Although such «reacting» moves--to use Bellack's term [12]--may be occasioned by, and meant to be seen as occasioned by, a prior move, they have a special status in that the prior speaker need not take it from their occurrence that his statement has been replied to. Nor need anyone who follows the reacting move take it that a reply to it is due. (Which is not to say that evaluative responses are not often pressed into service as replies).

PART THREE

I want now to raise the issue of replies and responses but require a preface to do so.

I

It is a central property of «well-formed» sentences that they can stand by themselves. One can be pulled out at random and stuck on the board or printed page and yet retain its interpretability, the words and their order providing all the context that is necessary. Or so it seems [13].

It can be recommended that the power of isolated, well-formed sentences to carry meaning for students of language and to serve so well for so many

of the purposes of grammarians is a paradoxical thing. In effect, it is not that the grammarian's perspective can make sense out of even single, isolated sentences, but that these sentences are the *only* things his perspective can make sense out of. Moreover, without the general understanding that this effort is an acceptable, even worthy, thing to do, the doing could not be done. The functioning of these sentences is as grammarians' illustrations, notwithstanding that due to the residual effects of unpleasant exercises in grade school, large sections of the public can construe sentences in the same frame. The mental set required to make sense out of these little orphans is that of someone with linguistic interests, someone who is posing a linguistic issue and is using a sample sentence to further his argument. In this special context of linguistic elaboration, an explication and discussion of the sample sentence will have meaning, and this special context is to be found anywhere in the world where there are grammarians. But present one of these nuggets cold to a man on the street or to the answerer of a telephone, or as the content of a letter, and on the average its well-formedness will cease to be all that significant. Scenarios *could* be constructed in which such an orphaned sentence would be meaningful (as a password between two spies, as a neurologist's test of an individual's brain functioning, as a joke made by and about grammarians, and so forth). But ingenuity would be required. So all along, the sentences used by linguists take at least some of their meaning from the institutionalization of this kind of illustrative process. As Gunter suggests:

A deeper suspicion suggests that all isolated sentences, including those that linguists often use as examples in argumentation, have no real existence outside some permissive context, and that study of sentences out of context is the study of oddities at which we have trained ourselves not to boggle[*].

What can be said about the use of sample sentences can also be said about sample dialogue. A two-part interchange--an adjacency pair--can be put on the board or printed in a book, recommended to our attention without much reference to its original context, and yet will be understandable. Exchanges provide self-contained, packaged meaning. The following illustrates:

A: «What's the time?»
B: «It's five o'clock».

I suggest that as grammarians display self-sufficient sample sentences, apparently unembarrassed by the presuppositions of doing so, so interactionists display self-sufficient interchanges. Nor are interactionists alone in the enjoyment of this license. Those who give talks or addresses or even participate in conversations can plug in riddles, jokes, bon mots, and cracks more or less at their own option at the appropriate points on the assumption that these interpolations will be meaningful in their own right, apart from the context into which they have been placed, which context, of course, is supposed to render them apt or fitting. Thus the same little plum can be inserted at the beginning or end of quite different speakers' quite different talks with easy aptness. Stage plays provide similar opportunities in allowing for the performance of «memorable» exchanges, that is, sprightly bits of dialogue that bear repeating and can be repeated apart from the play in which they occurred. Yet we must see that the dialogic approach inherits many of the limitations of the grammarian's, the sins of which, after all, it was meant to correct. I refer to the sins of noncontextuality, to the assumption that bits of conversation can be analyzed in their own right in some independence of what was occurring at the time and place. First, an obvious but important point about single sentences. The reproduction of a conversation in the printed text of a play or in a novel or in a news account of an actual event satisfies the condition of any body of print, namely, that *everything* readers might not already know and which is required for understanding be alluded

to, if not detailed, *in print*. Thus, a physical event may be relevant without which the talk that follows does not make sense, but since the medium is print, a description, a *written* version of the event, will be provided in the text, in effect interspersing talk and stage directions--materials from two different frames. Cues for guiding interpretation which are imbedded in the physical and interpersonal setting are therefore not denied, at least on the face of it. And yet, of course, these unspoken elements are necessarily handled so as to sustain a single realm of relevant material, namely, words in print. To draw on these materials as sources in the analysis of talk is thus to use material that has already been systematically rendered into one kind of thing--words in print. It is only natural, therefore, to find support from sources in print for the belief that the material of conversations consists fundamentally of uttered words.

I think the same strictures can be suggested regarding «conversational implicature», that is, indirectly conveyed understanding. As with grammatical ambiguities and indexicals, it appears that a cited sentence can be used in and by itself as a pedagogic example of what can be meant but not said, conveyed but not directly, the difference, in short, between locutionary content and illocutionary force. Yet, of course, here the sentence in itself is quite clearly not enough. A bit of the context (or possible contexts) must be sketched in, and is, by the analyst, using more sentences to do so. It is these verbally provided stage directions which allow the writer correctly to assume that the reader will be able to see the point. And ordinarily these sketchings are not themselves made a subject of classification and analysis [6]. When we turn from the analysis of sentences to the analysis of interchanges, matters become somewhat more complicated. For there are intrinsic reasons why any adjacency pair is likely to be considerably more meaningful taken alone than either of its pair parts taken alone. Some elaboration is required.

As suggested, the transcript or audio tape of an isolated statement plucked from a past natural conversation can leave us in the dark, due to deixis, ellipsis, and indirection, although auditors in the original circle of use suffered no sense of ambiguity. But there is a further matter. As Gunter has recently recommended [7], what is available to the student (as also to the actual participants) is not the possibility of predicting forward from a statement to a reply--as we might a cause to its effects--but rather quite a different prospect, that of locating in what is said now the sense of what it is a response to. For he who had accepted replying to the original statement will have been obliged to display that he has discovered the meaningfulness and relevance of the statement and that a relevant reaction is now provided. Thus, for example, although his perception of the phrasal stress, facial gestures, and body orientation of the speaker may have been necessary in order for him to have made the shift from what was said to what was meant, the *consequence* of this guidance for interpretation can well be made evident in the *verbal* elements of the reply, and so in effect becomes available to we who review a verbal transcript later. In the same way the respondent's special background knowledge of the events at hand can become available to us through his words. Indeed, the more obscure the speaker's statement for his original auditors, the more pains his respondent is likely to have taken to display its sense through his own reply, and the more need we who come later will have for this help. Second pair parts turn out, then, to be incidentally designed to provide us with some of what we miss in first pair parts in our effort to understand them, and respondents in one circle can turn out to be ideally placed and knowing explicators for later circles. Admittedly, of course, laconicity can be answered with laconicity; but although matters therefore are not necessarily improved for us, they can hardly be worsened, any words being better than none.

But note that although he who had accepted replying had had to come to

a usable interpretation of the statement *before* providing evidence that he had caught the speaker's meaning, we who later examine an isolated excerpt will find the key to hand even as we find the door. By quietly reading (or listening) on we may find just the help we need. Quite systematically, then, we students obtain a biased view of uttered sentences. Unlike the self-sufficient sample sentences referred to by traditional grammarians, excerpts from natural conversations are very often unintelligible; but when they *are* intelligible, this is likely to be due to the help we quietly get from someone who has already read the situation for us.

However, even in spite of the fact that there are deep reasons why adjacency pairs are more excerptible than first pair parts, we will still find that sample interchanges are biased examples of what inhabits actual talk.

With this warning about the dangers of noncontextuality, let us proceed to the theme, replies and responses.

Take as a start rerun signals, whether made with words or gestural equivalents. He who sends such a signal can be demonstrating that he is, in fact, oriented to the talk, but that he has not grasped the semantic meanings the speaker attempted to convey. He thus addresses himself to the *process* of communication, not to *what* was communicated--for, after all, he professes not to have understood that. Differently put, the recipient here abstracts from the sender's statement merely its qualifications as something to be heard and understood. It is to the situation of failed communication, not to what is being communicated, that the recipient reacts. To call these signals «replies» seems a little inappropriate, for in the closest sense, they do not constitute a reply to what was said; the term «response» seems better.

Take, then, as a basic notion the idea of *response*, meaning here acts, linguistic and otherwise, having the following properties:

i. they are seen as originating from an individual and as inspired by a prior speaker

ii. they tell us something about the individual's position or alignment in what is occurring

iii. they delimit and articulate just waht the «is occurring» is, establishing what it is the response refers to

iv. they are meant to be given attention by others now, that is, to be assessed, appreciated, understood at the current moment

And assume that *one* type of response is what might be called a *reply*, namely, a response in which the alignment implied and the object to which reference is made are both conveyed through words or their substitutes; furthermore, this matter addressed by the response is itself something that a prior speaker had referred to through words. Replies, I might note, are found in the artful dialogue of the theater and in novels, part of the transmutation of conversation into a sprightly game in which the position of each player is reestablished or changed through each of his speakings, each of which is given central place as the referent of following replies. Ordinary talk ordinarily has less ping pong.

II

Consider now the properties of responses in general, not merely replies in particular.

1. Recall that in the couplets so far considered, the second pair part incidentally can be seen as a reply to something of its own generic kind, namely, a brief spurt of words whose semantic (or propositional) meaning is to be addressed, a restriction to same generic type to be seen when one move in a game of chess calls forth another move or one strike at a ping pong ball calls forth another. A case simply of tit for tat. (Indeed, not only will a reply here answer a statement, but also it will be drawn from the same discourse-type, as in question-answer, summons-acknowledgement, etc.).

A minor qualification was admitted, namely, that words alone are not in-

volved. We have, for example, a special way of knotting up the face to convey the fact that we do not understand what it is a speaker seems to be trying to convey, and that a rerun is in order. And gestures obviously can also be freighted with ritual significance. In both cases, we deal with signals that can also be conveyed by words, indeed are very often conveyed by both words and gestures, presenting, incidentally, no particular need to question the relevance of system and ritual constraints in the analysis of talk. Here I only want to suggest that although it is plain that such gestures figure in conversation, it is much easier to reproduce words than gestures, and so sample interchanges tend to rely on the verbal portion of a verbal-gestural stream or tacitly substitute a verbal version of a move that was entirely gestural, with consequent risk of glossing over relevant moves in the sequence. And what is true of gesture is true also of scenic contributions. In consequence, words themselves, including the most perfunctory of them, can conceal the interactional facts. Thus the transcription:

A: «Have you got the time?»
B: «Yes, it's 5:15».

suggests that the «Yes» is rather redundant, being replaceable by a good tempered mention of the time alone. But in fact a scene is possible in which B, walking past A, who is in a parked car, wants it known that he, B, will honor the request, yet finds that the time taken to get at his watch removes him a couple of steps from the car and opens up the possibility of his being seen as declining to acknowledge the contact. The «Yes» then becomes an immediately available means of showing that an encounter has been ratified and will be kept open until its work is done.

Note, too, that ritual concerns are not intrinsically a matter of talk *or* talk-like gestures. Talk is ritually relevant largely insofar as it qualifies as but another arena for good and bad conduct [6]. To interrupt someone is much like tripping over him; both acts can be perceived as instances of insufficient concern for the other, mere members of the class of events governed by ritual considerations. To ask an improperly personal question can be equivalent to making an uninvited visit; both constitute invasions of territoriality.

Of course, talk figures in an added way, because challenges given to someone seen as not having behaved properly can neatly be done with words. Moreover, if something is to be offered that is physically absent from the situation or not palpable, and this offering is to be accepted, then offering and acceptance may *have* to be done with words or emblems.

So, too, if past conduct--verbal or behavioral--is to be cited for the purposes of demanding corrective action or bestowing praise, then again words will be necessary. (And in both the latter cases, the little interpersonal rituals likely to accompany the transaction will be verbal in a sense). Nonetheless, ritual is concerned with the expressive implication of acts, with the sense in which acts can be read as portraying the position the actor takes up regarding matters of social import--himself, others present, collectivities--and what sentences say constitute but one class of these expressions.

It follows that events which are not themselves verbal in character, but which, for example, raise questions of propriety, may have to be verbally addressed, and will thereby be thrust into the center of conversational concern. In sum, once the exchange of words has brought individuals into a jointly sustained and ratified focus of attention, once, that is, a fire has been built, any visible thing (just as any spoken referent) can be burnt in it.

Here a terminological clarification is required. Utterances are inevitably accompanied by kinesic and paralinguistic gestures which enter intimately into the stream of verbal expression. One may refer here to nonverbal communication and also include therein all nonverbal gestures which have acquired an emblematic function, replacing words and replaceable by them. However, conversation involves more than verbal and nonverbal communication. Physical doings unconnected with the speech stream are also involved--acts which for

want of a better name might here be called nonlinguistic.

So conversation can burn anything. Moreover, as suggested, the conventionalized interpersonal rituals through which we put out these fires or add to the blaze are not themselves sentences in any simple sense, having speech act characteristics quite different from, say, assertions about purported facts.

Observe, too, that something more than thrusts from the physical world into the spoken one are possible. For quite routinely the very structure of a social contact can involve physical, as opposed to verbal (or gestural), moves. Here such words as do get spoken are fitted into a sequence that follows a non-talk design. A good example is perfunctory service contacts. A customer who comes before a checkout clerk and places goods on the counter has made what can be glossed as a first checkout move, for this positioning itself elicits a second phase of action, the server's obligation to weigh, ring-up, and bag. The third move could be said to be jointly accomplished, the giving of money and the getting of change. Presumably the final move is one the shopper makes in carrying the bag away. Simultaneously with this last move, the server will (when busy) begin the second move of the next service contact. Now it turns out that this sequence of moves may or may not be bracketed by a greeting-farewell ritual, may or may not be embroidered with simultaneously sustained small talk, may or may not be punctuated at various points with thank you-you're welcome exchanges. Obviously, talk can figure in such a service contact and quite typically does. Moreover, should any hitch develop in the routine sequence, words will smoothly appear as correctives as though a ratified state of talk had all along existed--giving us some reason to speak of a service encounter, not merely a service contact. But just as obviously, talk and its characteristic structure hardly provides a characterization of the service sequence in progress, this servicing being a game of a different kind. In the serious sense, what is going on is a service transaction, one sustained through an occasion of cooperatively executed, face-to-face, nonlinguistic action. Words can be fitted to this sequence; but the sequencing is not conversational.

With the strictures in mind that relevant moves in a conversation need be neither verbal nor gestural, let us examine more closely the workings of some perfunctory interchanges.

A query concerning the time can be signalled by a phrase or by a gesture, such as pointing to the other's watch or one's own bare wrist. (Under many circumstances both verbal and nonverbal methods will be used to assure effectiveness). The response to this query can be a verbal reply («It's five o'clock») or a verbal substitute (five fingers held up). Both modes of response satisfy system and ritual constraints, letting the asker know that his message has been correctly received and seen as proper--as would, incidentally, the excuse, «I'm sorry, I don't have a watch». But in addition, the recipient of the query can react by showing his watch to the questioner--a tack common in multilingual settings. Here, too, the standard system and ritual constraints are satisfied, the implication clearly being that the person offering access to the time has correctly received the message and, in complying with its demands in good spirit, believes the request to have been proper. But, again, this answering action is not a reply in the strict sense: words are being addressed but what they are addressed by is not words or their gestural substitute but a physical doing, a nonlinguistic deed which complies with a request. So, too, when in reaction to being asked for the salt, the asked person passes it ". Here words may accompany the responsive action, but they need not. (Of course, when such a request must be denied for some reason or temporarily put off, then words are likely to be necessary in order to provide an account, and when the request is for a doing in the future--and/or in another place--words in the form of a promise are often the best that can be provided). Indeed, a case might be made that when a speaker responds to a rerun signal by recycling his statement, *that* act is a doing, too, a

deed--in this case, the making of a picture, a hieroglyph--and not in the strictest sense a reply".

A moment's thought will make it obvious that there are lots of circumstances in which someone giving verbal orders or suggestions expects something nonlinguistic as a response. («On your mark, get set, go»). Thus, one group of sociolinguists studying classroom interaction has even had cause to make a basic distinction between «elicitations» and «directives», the first anticipating a verbal response, the second a nonlinguistic one". As already suggested, in starting a foot race or a classroom exercise (or a service transaction), the triggering words constitute a move in an action pattern that is not necessarily enclosed within a state of talk at all, but is rather something with a different character--a game of a different kind--whether involving a single focus of attention or a set of actions each supporting its own, albeit similar, focus of attention. The point to be made here, however, is that while some scenes of face-to-face interaction are set up specifically for nonlinguistic responses, no face-to-face talk, however intimate, informal, dyadic, «purely conversational», or whatever, precludes nonlinguistic responses or the inducing of such responses. Incidentally, it might be argued that children learn to respond with actions before they learn to respond with words".

2. Another feature of responses in general, as opposed to replies in particular, must be addressed: their «reach». A contrast between answering a query regarding the time by words and by demonstration has just been argued. But the matter needs further consideration. If we take the case of verbal answers (or their emblematic substitutes), even here we find that matters may not be merely verbal. Again look at answering a question about the time. What the respondent does is to look at his watch and then answer. His response, properly speaking, involves a strip of behavior which includes both these phases. Were he *not* to precede the verbal part of his answer with a glance at his watch, he could not answer in the same way. Should it happen that the queried person unbeknownst to the asker has just looked at his watch for an independent reason and now knows the time, making a second look (at that moment) unnecessary, it is quite likely that either he will make this unnecessary look or, if not, will express by gesture or words that there is something special in his response, namely, that he appreciates that he might appear to be answering irresponsibly--without checking, as it were--but that this is not actually so. (For similar reasons, if the time happens to be a round number, the respondent may feel it prudent to answer in a way calculated to forestall the interpretation that he is answering inattentively; thus, «It's *exactly* five o'clock»).

All of this is even more clear in other perfunctory interchanges. For example, when someone trips over another, offers an apology, and has that apology graciously accepted, the acceptance is not simply a reply to the apology; it is also a response to an apologized-for delict. (Again observe that the initial delict, although clearly a nonlinguistic act, is as fully a part of the interchange as are the words that follow the trouble in an attempt to deal with it). And the same would apply if the delict were not a physical event, such as a tripping over, but a statement that is badly managed, or untactful, or whatever.

C: (telephone rings)
A: «Hello».
C: «Is this the Y?»
A: «You have the wrong number».
C: «Is this KI five, double four, double O?»
A: «Double four, double *six*».
→ C: «Oh, I am sorry».
A: «Good-bye» (hangs up).

Here (in this verbatim record of an actual phone call) the caller's statement, «Oh, I am sorry», patently refers to his having caused someone to come to the phone without warrant; the answerer's immediately previous statement is merely the clincher and is not, all in itself, the object of the caller's remedial action. The object here stretches back to include the whole call.

Another example. In conversation it is obviously possible for a third person to

contribute a comment--say, of exasperation--concerning the way in which two other participants have been handling an extended exchange between themselves; and an individual may even choose to comment about what has been happening in a conversation up to the current moment between himself and another party, the immediately prior statement now being read as merely the final one in a sequence, the sequence as a whole being the subject.

Thus, the juncture of turn-taking, the management of interruption, and the like, may indeed support a formalistic analysis, showing the bearing with respect to timing of current statement on immediately completed one; but the semantic content of the response can still pertain to something that extends back in time.

The backward reach of responses is illustrated again in the interaction associated with storytelling. A very common feature of informal interaction is an individual's replaying of a bit of his past experience in narrative form [9]. Such replays are commonly only a few sentences long, but sometimes considerably longer, more like, for example, a paragraph than a sentence. And very often listeners are not meant to *reply* to what they have heard, for what form could a reply take? What they are meant to do is to give signs of appreciation, and these may be very brief indeed. In any case, the appreciation shown--like the applause at the end of a play--is not for the last sentence uttered but rather for the whole story and its telling. Thus we can account for something already described, a «rhetorical question» that takes the question-asking form but is not delivered with the intent of eliciting a specific answer; for often this sort of questioning is meant to be heard as but one element in a longer statement, the longer one being the move to which the speaker intends his recipients to address their responses. (So, too, when one individual uses up a turn by directly or indirectly quoting a statement purportedly made by an absent person, the listener cannot, strictly speaking, respond with a reply, but, at least ordinarily, only with an expression of his «reaction» or attitude to such a statement, for the original speaker would have to be produced if a reply in the full sense is to be offered). Another illustration is the «buried query»: wanting to obtain a bit of information but not wanting this to be known, an individual can set up a question series such that the answer he seeks is to one member of the class of questions, here seen as merely part of a series, not symptomatic in itself. The very possibility of employing this dodge assumes that a question series that elicits a string of answers will be seen, first off, as addressed to the sequence as a whole [10]. Finally, observe that it is possible for a recipient to respond to a speaker by repeating his words, derisively mimicking his style of delivery, this response performing the subtle--but nonetheless common--shift in focus from *what* a speaker says to his saying it in this way, this being (it is now implied) the *sort* of thing he as a speaker would say in the circumstances.

Just as we see that a response may refer to more than a whole statement, so, of course, we must see that it can refer to something less--say, the way the last word is pronounced.

To say that the subject of a response can extend back over something more or less than the prior turn's talk is another way of saying that although a *reply* is addressed to meaningful elements of whole statements, *responses* can break frame and reflexively address aspects of a statement which would ordinarily be «out of frame», ordinarily part of transmission, not content, for example, the statement's duration, tactfulness, style, origin, accent, vocabulary, and so forth [11]. And as long as the respondent can make listeners understand what he is responding to and ensure that this expression is ritually tolerable, then that might be all that is required. Thus the practice during idle talk of abstracting from a just-finished sentence something that can be punned with or jokingly understood in «literal» form or made explicit in the face of anticipated elision; thus, too, the joking or disciplining practice of ratifying another's asides and rhetorical questions as something to be officially addressed.

This skittish use of more or less than

a speaker's whole statement may, of course, be something that the speaker induces. Thus, as Roger Shuy has recently suggested, when a doctor asks two questions at the same time, it is likely that the patient will have the rather enforced option of deciding which to answer:

D: «Well how do you feel? Did you have a fever?»

P: «No»[11].

D: And in your family, was there any heart problem? Did you wake up short of breath?»

P: «No»[12].

Further, statements can be made with the clear understanding that it is not their ordinary meaning that is to be addressed but something else--an ironic or sarcastic interpretation, a joking unseriousness, the accent in which they are delivered, and a host of other «keyings», the transformative power of which seems to have largely escaped linguistic effort at appreciation, let alone conceptualization, until relatively recently[13]. In brief, statements very often have a demand function, establishing what aspect or element of them is to be responded to. But of course, speaker's implied interpretive demand can often be left unsatisfied as long as some sort of meaningful response is possible. A response that casts backward in time beyond the prior statement or abstracts an aspect of a statement or focuses on a particular piece of a statement, all this without encouragement or even anticipation on the part of the initial speaker, can nonetheless leave him with the sense that he has satisfied system constraints, that the response he evoked has done so, too, and, further, that the ritual considerations have been satisfied -or at least not unacceptably violated. When, therefore, I earlier suggested that cited interchanges might be meaningful because he who originally supplied the second pair part has done our job of uncovering the initial speaker's meaning, I was uncritical. A respondent cannot make evident that he has understood *the* meaning of a statement, because in a sense there isn't one. All he can do is respond to what he can display as *a* meaning that will carry--although, of course, he may effectively sustain the impression (and himself believe) that his *a* is the *the*.

It should be apparent that an encounter itself can be a subject for response. Thus, when (as Schegloff and Sacks have commented) a «preclosing» has been given, the recipient can respond by introducing a fresh statement in a manner suggesting that his remark is knowingly being introduced out of order[14]. The preclosing is the immediate stimulus of the last-minute contribution, but, behind this, concern is being directed to the closing that is being postponed.

The sense in which an encounter itself can be what a response refers to leads us to reconsider a basic issue, namely, that a statement looks forward to, and counts on receiving, a reply. For just as more than the prior statement can be the subject of a reply, so also more than the consequent reply can be the anticipation of a statement. Thus, the opening statement: «Have you got a minute?» can anticipate, and receive, such a reply as: «Of course», but this is certainly not all that the opening implied. For the intent is to open up a channel of communication which stays open beyond the hoped-for reply that ratifies the opening. Indeed a statement that bears on the management of some phase transition of the business at hand may anticipate no specific response, at least of an overt kind. Thus, Sinclair's recent suggestion about classroom tasks: the bracket markers employed to voice the fact that a task episode has terminated or is about to begin (e.g., «well, okay, now then») may be employed not to elicit a response but to help with the cadence and pulsing of activity[15]. (Here, along with asides and «reacting moves», we have another example of utterances that fall outside the statement-response format).

3. Another characteristic of responses. An individual can, and not infrequently does, respond to himself. Sometimes this will take the form of an actual verbal reply to the semantic content of his own utterances:

«Do you think they would do that for you?» (pause, ostensibly for recipient's possible reply, and then, with rising stress) «They certainly would not!» [56].

More commonly a «reflexive frame break» is involved, the individual responding «out of frame» to some aspect of his own just-past utterance:

Also there's a guy at Princeton you should talk to. Richard... (Christ, I'm bad with names. I can see his face now and I can't remember his last name. I'll think of it soon and tell you)» [57].

All this, perhaps, is only to be expected, for «self-responding» seems to satisfy a basic condition of meaningful communication; a move in the form of a statement occurs and the next move demonstrates that the prior one has been heard and seen to be interpretable and relevant. Note, we have added reason for distinguishing the notion of «move» from that of a speaking, since here, once again, the same turn contains more than one move. Moreover, it is evident that the notions of speaker and respondent can get us into trouble unless we keep in mind that they refer not to individuals as such, but to enacted capacities. Just as a listener can self-select himself as next speaker, so, too, apparently, can speaker.

4. All of which should prepare us for the fact that what appears to be an anomalous statement-reply form may not be anomalous at all simply because replying of any kind is not much involved. Thus the basic pair known as a greeting exchange: It turns out that the two parts of such a round can occur simultaneously or if sequenced in time, the same lexical item may be employed:

A: «Hello».
B: «Hello».

The reason for this apparent license is that the second greeting is not a *reply* to the first; *both* are reactive responses to the sudden availability of the participants to each other, and the point of performing these little rituals is not to solicit a reply or reply to a solicitation but to enact an emotion that attests to the pleasure produced by the contact. And no disorganization results from the apparent overlapping or repetition; indeed, if circumstances can be seen to prevent one of the participants from easily performing his part, then the exchange can be effected through a single person's single offering. Nor, then, need the following greeting-in-passing be as strange as it looks:

A: «How are you?»
B: «Hi».

for a question is not being asked nor an answer provided.

5. And so we can turn to the final point. If a respondent does indeed have considerable latitude in selecting the elements of prior speaker's speaking he will refer to, then surely we should see that the respondent may choose something nonlinguistic to respond to. Respondent can coerce a variety of objects and events in the current scene into a statement to which he can now respond, especially, apparently, something deriving from someone who could be a speaker.

A: (Enters wearing new hat)
B: (Shaking head) «No, I don't like it».

If such a remark is seen to leave matters in a ritually unresolved state, then the retroactively created first speaker can properly close out the interchange more to his satisfaction:

A: (Enters wearing new hat)
B: «No, I don't like it».
A: «Now I know it's right».

giving us a standard three-move interchange, albeit one that started out with something that need not have been treated as a statement at all and must be somewhat coerced into retrospectively becoming one. In general, then to repeat, it is not *the* statement of a speaker which his respondent addresses, nor even *a* statement, but rather anything the speaker and the other participants will accept as a statement he has made. Bringing together these various argu-

ments about the admixture of spoken moves and nonlinguistic ones, we can begin to see how misleading the notion of adjacency pair and ritual interchange may be as basic units of conversation. *Verbal* exchanges may be the natural unit of plays, novels, audiotapes, and other forms of literary life wherein words can be transcribed much more effectively than actions can be described. Natural conversation, however, is not subject to this recording bias - in a word, not subject to systematic transformation into words. What is basic to natural talk might not be a conversational unit at all, but an interactional one, something on the order of: mentionable event, mention, comment on mention - giving us a three-part unit, the first part of which is quite likely not to involve speech at all.

III

I have argued that the notion of statement-reply is not as useful as that of statement-response in the analysis of talk. Now we must see that the notion of a statement itself is to be questioned. True, a statement is something worth differentiating from a response. As suggested, statements precede responses in sequence time. Statements orient listeners to the upcoming; responses, to what has come up. Conversationalists seem more at liberty to choose a statement than to choose a response. And most important, a speaker is free to make statements about matters that theretofore have not been presented in the talk, whereas he who makes a response must more attend to something that has just been presented, although, of course, he may construe this material in an unanticipated way. Statements elicit; responses are elicited.

Nonetheless, there are problems. Persons who provide responses no less than those who provide statements, attend to back channel effects for a continuous guide to the reception of their contribution. And in both cases, one must wait for the actor to decide what to address himself to before one can know what is going to be said. And just as an immediately prior statement may be needed if one is to make sense out of the response which follows, so the response which follows will often be necessary if one is to make sense out of a statement one now has before oneself. Also, just as an addressed recipient can - whether encouraged to or not - respond to something smaller or larger than the speaker's statement, or to only an aspect of it, or even to nonlinguistic elements in the situation, so, too, a statement can be addressed to something more than the immediately expected response. Just as a response need only be restricted in orientation to what it can make intelligible, so also a statement.

And beyond the system constraints of intelligibility, there are the somewhat more ritualized constraints of topicality. Often the subject matter must be adhered to, or a proper bridge provided to another, or, if a new conversation is to be initiated, then the statement which opens it must demonstrate that this opening has proper warrant. To all of these conversational demands, statements must themselves provide an appropriate coping seen to be such, and in a sense thereby constitute responses to these constraints.

To complicate matters even more, we find that responses themselves can be acceptably read as calling for a response to them, as when a question is answered with a question, and this second asking is accepted as an answering to the first. (It is even the case that should two individuals meet under circumstances in which both know that one of them is waiting for the other's answer to a particular question, the other may *open* the conversation with the awaited response). It follows that the term statement itself might be a little ill-suited, and we might want to look for a word encompassing all the things that could be responded to by a person presenting something in the guise of a response. Call this the *reference* of the response. Our basic conversational unit then becomes reference-response, where the reference may, but need not, center in the semantic meaning of the talk just supplied by previous speaker. And now the issue of how chaining occurs in conversation becomes that of how reference-response units are (if at all) linked.

You will note that this formulation ra-

ther oddly recommends a backward look to the structuring of talk. Each response provides its auditors with an appreciation not only of what the respondent is saying, but also of what it is he is saying this about; and for this latter intelligence, surely auditors must wait until the respondent has disclosed what his reference is, since they will have no other way of discovering for sure what it will be. It is true, of course, that some verbal pronouncements can be seen to condition responses closely, especially, for example, when social arrangements have underwritten this, as in interrogation sessions; but this mode of constraint is precisely what provides these occasions with their special and individual character. And it is true, of course, that when we examine or present a *record* of a conversation - real, literary, or got up - and read or listen backwards and forwards in it, the indeterminacy I am speaking of will be lost to our senses. For as suggested, in many cases we need only read on (or listen on) a little and it will be clear that the reference proves to be only what we readers expected thus encouraging the illusion that its selection was determined all along. But, of course, the issue had not really been settled until the moment the purported respondent provided his purported response. Only then could the actual auditors (let alone we readers) actually have known who the person then beginning to speak was to be and what he has hit upon to respond to out of what had already gone on. Even when listeners can properly feel that there is a very high probability that the forthcoming response will address itself in a certain way to a certain aspect of what has been stated, they must wait for the outcome before they can be sure[31]. A similar argument is to be made concerning place of transition from one speaker to another. If a speaker may provide additional transition points after his first one is not taken up, so it follows that he will not know which of his offers is to be accepted until it has been, and we, upon reading a transcript, will only know which possible transition point was taken up, not why an earlier actual one or later possible one was not used. Nor is that the end of it. For after it has been disclosed who will be speaking, and at what precise point he will take up his speaking, and what reference his speaking will address itself to, there is still the open question of *what* he will say--and no interchange is so perfunctory as to allow a first pair part to totally constrain a second pair part in that connection.

In sum, we can find lots of strips of verbal interaction which clearly manifest a dialogic form, clearly establishing a difference between statements and replies (and consequently jumping along an interchange at a time), but this differentiation is sometimes hardly to be found, and in any case is variable. Instead of replies, we have less tidy responses. Such responses can bear so little on the immediate statement that they are indistinguishable from statements; and statements can be so closely guided by understandings of what constitutes an appropriate topic as to be reduced to something much like a response.

It follows, then, that our basic model for talk perhaps ought not to be dialogic couplets and their chaining, but rather a sequence of response moves with each in the series carving out its own reference, and each incorporating a variable balance of function in regard to statement-reply properties. In the right setting, a person next in line to speak can elect to deny the dialogic frame, accept it, or carve out such a format when none is apparent. This formulation would finally allow us to give proper credit to the flexibility of talk--a property distinguishing talk, for example, from the interaction of moves occurring in formal games--and to see why so much interrupting, nonanswering, restarting, and overlapping occurs in it.

We could also see that when four or more persons participate, even this degree of flexibility is extended, for here statements and replies can function as part of the running effort of speakers either to prevent their recipients from getting drawn into another state of talk or to extend the cast of their talk, or, contrariwise, to induce a division. (Thus, a speaker who has obtained the attention of one participant may shift his concern to the next person in line, ne-

glecting someone who can be assumed to be committed in favor of someone not yet recruited). Similarly, an addressed recipient can turn from the addressor to initiate what he hopes will be a separate state of talk with another party, minimizing any tendency to reply in order to invoke the boundary required by the conversation he himself is fostering. Nor does the issue of splitting end it. Two out of three or more coparticipants can enter a jocular, mocked-up interchange in which each loyally plays out his appropriate part, ostensibly providing appropriate statements and ostensibly responding with appropriate replies, while all the while the other participants look on, prepared to enter with a laugh that will let the jokesters off the hook, assuring them that their set piece was appreciated--and with this tactful appreciation provide a response to a statement which is itself an unserious dialogue embedded in a less lightly toned encounter[9]. (Here instead of a story being narrated, it is--in a manner of speaking--enacted, but no less to be treated as an embedded whole). More commonly, the difference between what is said and what is meant, and the various different things that can be meant by what is said, allow a speaker to knowingly convey through the same words one meaning to one auditor and a different meaning (or additional meanings) to another. For if statements or responses can draw their interpretability from the knowingly joint experience of speaker and hearer, then a speaker with more than one hearer is likely to be able to find a way of sustaining collusive communication with one of them through the winks and under-the-breath remarks that words themselves can be tricked into providing. (This three-party horizontal play can be matched in two-person talk through the use of innuendo, the common practice of phrasing an utterance so that two readings of it will be relevant, both of which are meant to be received as meanings intended but one deniably so.

So, too, we would be prepared to appreciate that the social setting of talk not only can provide something we call «context» but also can penetrate into and determine the very structure of the interaction. For example, it has been argued recently that in classroom talk between teacher and students it can be understood that the teacher's purpose is to uncover what each and every pupil has learned about a given matter and to correct and amplify from this base. The consequence of this educational, not conversational, imperative is that classroom interaction can come to be parcelled out into three-move interchanges:

Teacher: query
Pupil : answer
Teacher: evaluative comment on answer

the word «turn» here taken to mean sequencing of pupil obligations to participate in this testing process; furthermore, it is understood that the teacher's concern is to check up on and extend what pupils know, not add to her knowledge from their knowledge[10], and that it would not be proper for a pupil to try to reverse these roles[11].

IV

Given an interactional perspective that recommends «move» as a minimal unit, that is concerned with ritual constraints as well as system ones, and that shifts attention from answers to replies and then from replies to responses in general, we can return to perfunctory interchanges and make a closer pass at analyzing them.

1. Take, for example, a standard rerun signal. A simple embedding can apparently result, this involving a «side sequence» whereby one two-part exchange is held open so that another can occur within it:

A_1: «It costs five».
[B_2: «How much did you say?»
[A_2: «Five dollars».
B_1: «I'll take it».

This is (apparently) an «unhearing». In the case of a misunderstanding, something less tidy can result, something less neatly parceled into two-part exchanges:

(i) D: «Have you ever had a history of cardiac arrest in your family?»

(ii) P: «We never had no trouble with the police».

(iii) D: «No. Did you have any heart trouble in your family?»

(iv) P: «Oh, that. Not that I Know of» [12].

The structural difference between an unhearing and a misunderstanding is to be found in terms of how the difficulty gets corrected. With unhearings, the recipient signals there is trouble; with misunderstandings, the speaker. Consequently, unhearings can be nicely managed with turns containing only one move, but misunderstandings lead to a two-move third turn, its first part signalling that trouble has occurred, and its second providing a rerun. Therefore (iii) could be seen as an elision and contraction of something like this:

iii (a) D: «No, tha's not what I said».

P: «What did you say?»

D: «Did you have any heart trouble in your family?»

and its collapse into one turn perhaps based on the maxim that in serious matters, anyone who misunderstands another will rather be corrected than protected. Note that (iv) is more complicated than (iii). For although elision does not seem involved in what the speaking accomplishes, it still seems that three different kinds of work are ventured, indeed, three different moves, two involving system constraints and one involving ritual ones. A gloss might go like this:

1. «Oh». [Now I see what you really said and I tell you that I do].

2. «That». [Although I didn't get you the first time around, what you said comes from a corpus of questions not unfamiliar to me that I can readily deal with].

3. «Not that I know of». [An answer to the now correctly heard question].

Here, resolving the interchange into two-move couplets doesn't help very much. For although (i) and (ii) can be seen as a two-part exchange of sorts, (iii) is a rejection of (ii) and a restatement of (i), and (iv) is a redoing of (ii) along with a defense against (iii). Observe that an admitted failure to hear (an unhearing) need expose the unhearing recipient to nothing more deprecatory than the imputation of inattentiveness. A misunderstanding, however, causes the misunderstanding recipient to expose what he thinks the speaker might have said and thereby a view both of what he thought might be expected from the speaker and what the recipient himself might expect to receive by way of a question–all this to the possible embarrassment of the definition of self and other that actually comes to prevail.

2. In examining (iv) we found that different moves within the same turn at talk were sustained by *different* words, a convenient fact also true of the chaining examples given at the beginning of the paper. But there is no reason why this must be so. The *same* words can embody different moves in different games. This dismal fact allows us to return to the five dollar example of an unhearing and examine some of its complications.

There is a way of saying «How much did you say?» so as to imply a «literal» reading, that is, a reading (whether actually literal or not) that stresses what is taken to be the standard meaning of the sentence–its propositional content–and suppresses all other possibilities. But work and care will be required to secure this locutionary effect, as much, perhaps, as would be required to speak the line with any of its other freightings.

About these other freightings. Obviously, in context, «How much did you say?» can mean «That's an awfully high price» - at least in a manner of speaking [13]. And when it does, the fact that a move of this kind has been made, a move which questions the honesty and integrity of the informant, will show up in the rerun that comes at the next turn, for then that line («Five dollars.») is likely to be spoken in an apologetic way, its speaker commiserating with the unhearer for the

way prices are now; or in a slightly taunting tone, meeting the implied accusation head on and not giving way before it; or, most complicated of all, in what amounts to a serious mimicking of a straightforward standard rerun, providing thereby the functional equivalent of a silence produced and heard as something to take note of. Observe, the practicality of the customer using a sarcastic or ironic phrasing of a rerun signal not only depends on there being a rerun signal to overlay in this way, but also upon there being a conventionalized interchange into which the server's response to this sally can be neatly fitted-whether «directly», by openly addressing the implied meaning of the customer's query, or «indirectly», by inducing through intonation and stress a special reading of what is otherwise a standard response to a standard request for a rerun. Observe that the same general interchange format will allow the customer to begin the display of disgruntlement in another way, namely, by means of an utterance such as «You gotta be kidding», which in its turn can lead on to «I know what you mean», or (straight-faced) «No, that's what it really costs», and we are back once again to the same position: a customer who reserves the right to complete a transaction even as he injects note of the fact that he feels the pricing is out of line. May I add that an important possibility in the analysis of talk is to uncover the consequence of a particular move for the anticipated sequence; for that is a way to study the move's functioning[6]. One should examine, then, the way in which a move can precipitously bring an interchange to an end before its initial design would have prefigured or extend the interchange after its termination had been expected or induce an interchange without using up the first slot to do so or cause a «break in step», as when he who gives up the floor in a manner to ensure getting it back after the next turn finds that the person who obtained the floor has managed matters so as to undercut the built-in return, or when someone being presented at court asks the royal personage questions instead of merely answering them, thereby committing *lèse-majesté* linguistically, for although monarchs may deign to penetrate a commoner's preserve conversationally, the understanding is that the exposure is not to be reciprocated.

3. Consider now that just as interchanges can incorporate nonlinguistic actions along with verbal utterances concerning these actions, so interchanges can incorporate references to past doings as occasions for now doing praise or blame, thereby placing responses to wider circumstances before or after verbal reference to these circumstances and thus bringing them into the interchange:

B comes home from work, apparently not having brought what he promised to bring, and shows no sign that he is mindful of his failure.

A_1: «You forgot!» [an utterance whose propositional form is that of an assertion of fact, but here can be understood as blamegiving, for here it is to be taken that the doer of an act can hardly be ignorant of what he has done].

B_1: «Yes. I *am* sorry».

A_2: «You're always doing it».

B_2: «I know».

However, since the accuser cannot be sure of the accused's situation, a tactful hedge may be employed, and sometimes with good reason:

A_1: «Did you forget?»
B_1: «No».
A_2: «Where is it?»
B_2: «It's in the car».
A_3: «Well?»
B_3: «I'm on my way out to get it».

an interchange that can be nicely managed in a more elliptical form:

A_1 : «Did you forget?»
$B_1/B_2/B_3$: «No, it's in the car; I'm just on my way to get it».

Observe that the accuser can extend this sort of strategic hedging by asking a question, the affirmative answer to which constitutes an acceptable excuse for the action at fault, thereby giving the apparent offender an easy opportu-

nity either to demonstrate that indeed this (or a similarly effective accounting) can be given or to initiate an admission of guilt (along with an apology) without actually having been asked for either. Thus:

A: «The store was closed by the time you got out?»

B: Darn it. I'm afraid it was».

etc: . . . . .

A: «The store was closed by the time you got out?»

B: «It was open but they won't have any 'til next week».

etc: . . . . .

are possibilities (as initial rounds) the asker leaves open while actually priming the following self-rebuke, thereby allowing the blameworthy person first slot in an apology interchange:

A: «The store was closed by the time you got out?»

B: (striking head) «God. I'm sorry. I'm hopeless».

etc: . . . . .

4. Finally, observe how passing interchanges can bear on nonlinguistic actions and balance the claims of different games off against each other, presenting us with utterances that are routine yet functionally complex:

At an airport a man approaches a stranger, a female, who is seated at one end of a three-seat row. He places his small bag on the far seat of the three and prepares to walk away to a distant ticket counter.

The basic alternatives open to the man seem to be:

i. Leave his bag, civilly disattend the sitter (thus neither obliging her to do anything nor presuming on her in any other manner), and go on his way, leaving his bag at risk.

ii. Openly approach the sitter in the manner of someone politely initiating talk with an unacquainted cross-sexed other, saying, for example, «Excuse me, Ma'am, I'll only be gone a minute. If you're going to be here, would you mind keeping an eye on my bag?» (To which the response would likely be a granting of the request or the provision of an explained decline).

With these possibilities as part of the actual situation confronting the two, the following interchange can easily transpire:

He: (laconically, almost *sotto voce*, as if already lodged in conversation with the recipient): «Don't let them steal it».

She: (immediately utters an appreciative conspiratorial chuckle as speaker continues on his way).

Here a man is taking license to treat a woman with whom he is unacquainted as though they were in a state of «open talk», i.e., the right but not the obligation to initiate brief states of talk at will. But the price for taking this liberty - and what neutralizes it as a liberty and therefore permits it - is that the speaker not only thereby foregoes the outright possibility of obtaining a formal commitment concerning the guarding of his bag, but also physically removes himself from the possibility of further threatening the sitter with an extension of the contact. The recipient responds with a laugh patently directed to the sally - the little joke that is to bring the two momentarily together in acknowledgement of the theft level at the airport - and not to the man's underlying need to have his bag guarded. But the sitter's response does not deny outright that she will indeed be responsive to the man's unstated hope, that prospect being scrupulously left open. The little laugh that follows the unserious command is, then, not merely a sign of appreciation for a joke made, but also evidence of a strategic position which neither denies nor accepts the buried request. (Thus, she is free to leave before the man returns and is free to help out without formally having to accept talk from a stranger). And this hedged response to the man's deeply hedged request is what he was all along ready to settle for, namely, a hope, not a promise. Thus, an interchange that is entirely verbal and apparently unserious

can yet draw upon and implicate wider nonlinguistic matters, such as guardianship, the rules for initiating spoken contact between strangers, and the like. Different strips of interaction, different interaction games, are simultaneously in progress, each involving a different amalgam of linguistic and nonlinguistic doings, and yet the same stretch of words must serve. Note that here the words that realize a move in one game can do so because they can be presented as realizing a move in another[45].

V

1. Help in the study of the structuring of interchanges has recently come from ordinary language philosophers, for these units of interaction appear to contain and to meld together what students of Austin would refer to as quite different speech acts. Drawing on John Searle's analysis[46], consider that the following argument is possible.

In theory at least, a speaker should be able to present a statement that solely reports pure fact (an «assertion») and receive a reply that simply attests to system constraints having been satisfied:

(i) A: «I think I'll do the wrapping».
B: «Oh».

Very often, in contrast, a speaker presents a «directive», that is, words whose point (or illocutionary force) is to urge the hearer to do something, the urging varying in degree from gentle requests to harsh commands.

One basic kind of directive is aimed at inducing the hearer to impart verbal information on a particular matter, giving us again the question-answer pair[47].

ii (a) A: «Is that the parcel I'm supposed to start with?»
B: «Yes».

Observe that instead of speaking simply of system and ritual constraints, we might want to see B's «Yes» as a move in three different games; the requested information is provided but *also* (by implication) assurance is given that the question was correctly heard, *and* that it was not intrusive, stupid, overeager, out of order, and the like. Consequently the following recovery of two preliminary exchanges is thinkable:

A_1: «Can you hear and understand me?»
B: «Yes».
A_2: «Is it alright to ask you a question about the wrapping?»
B_2: «Yes».
A_3: «Is that the parcel I'm supposed to start with?»
B_3: «Yes».

The possibility that the asker needs assurance either that he has gotten across or that his question is proper seems quite remote here, and consequently the argument for elision seems extremely labored. But, of course, there are lots of circumstances in which these two considerations (especially the ritual one) are acutely problematic, being expressed either explicitly in preliminary exchanges or tacitly through intonation and stress.

Move on now to a second basic kind of directive, to the request or command for a nonlinguistic doing:

iii (a) A: «Would you put your finger on the knot?»
B: (puts finger on knot)

Here again the response (a doing) performs triple work: it does what was requested and simultaneously affirms that the request was correctly heard and deemed to be in order. But now we can see more readily that directives involve (among other things) a timing condition, and this can imply a tacit back pair, or at least the expansion is thinkable in which this underlying possibility is exhibited:

iii (b) A: «Would you put your finger on the knot when I say now?»
B: «Yes».
A: «Now».
B: (puts finger on knot)

which almost surfaces in the following:

iii (c) A: «Would you put your finger on the knot nnnnnnnnnow!»
B: (puts finger on knot)

The examples given here of requests for information and requests for nonlinguistic doings are simpler than ordinarily found in nature, for there quite commonly what is *meant* as a request for information or action is *said* as a request for yes/no information either about having information or about being able to perform an action. («Do you know the time?»; «Can you reach the salt?») So in many examples of both kinds of directives a further expansion is thinkable in order to recover another elided back pair:

A_1: «Do you know the time?»
B_1: «Yes».
A_2: «What is it?»
B_2: «Five o'clock».

A_1 : «Can you reach the salt?»
B_1 : «Yes».
A_2 : «Would you?»
B_2B_2: «Yes». (gets it, gives it).
A_3: «Thanks».

Furthermore, although what is «literally» said in these cases can be so thoroughly a dead issue as to provide the basis for joking «literal» replies, there will, as suggested, be other occasions when both understandings are relevant, allowing for the possibilities of one utterance figuring as a move in four games: a request for evidence that one is being correctly heard; a request for information about possessing information or ability; a request for divulgence of the information or performance of the capacity; a stand taken concerning the social propriety of making these requests. Now just as directives aim at inducing words or actions from the addressed recipient, so we can anticipate a class of speech acts through which speaker commits himself to a course of action-«commissives», in Searle's phrasing-comprising promises, pledges, threats, offerings, and the like[4].
Commissives are similar to directives in that interchanges involving either can intimately interweave words and actions. Further, both commissives and directives raise the issue of the character of the ritual tags typically associated with them, namely, some variant of please and thank you. Thus:

directive
A_1: «Would you put your finger on the knot?»
B_1: (Does so).
A_2: «Thanks».
B_2: «'t's okay».

commissive
A_1: «Would you like me to put my finger on the knot?»
B_1: «Yes».
A_2: (Puts finger on knot).
B_2: «Thanks».

Although these politeness forms consist of lexicalized verbal utterances, the feeling with which they are spoken is always an important element; as already suggested, the point of employing these forms is not so much to state something as to exhibit feeling. In turn, we might want to distinguish this sort of verbal doing from a second sort, the sort identifiable as involving classic performatives, whereby uttering a formulaic statement in the proper circumstances accomplishes the doing of something, the formula and the circumstances being required, not the feelings of the speaker[5].
2. A classification of speech acts--such as the one recommended by Searle--provides us with an opportunity to see that how an interchange unfolds will depend somewhat on the type of speech act involved, especially upon the type that initiates the interchange. Thus, a simple declarative statement of fact (if indeed there is such a thing in natural talk) creates a quite different second pair part from a request for information, and such a request has different sequencing implications from a request for a nonlinguistic doing. A «commissive» has still other sequential consequences. And an interpersonal ritual such as a greeting proves to be linked with a matching expression, but now much more loosely

than is true of other adjacency pairs. But if a typology of speech acts is to guide us, we must see that something equally fundamental is presumed.

In English, speech acts tend to be identified with particular syntactic structures (such as imperative and interrogative forms) and particular lexical items (such as «please» and «pardon»), the position being that here the locutionary form «directly» conveys a speech act. It is said that the speech form can «literally» express or realize the corresponding speech act". It is then reasoned that a particular speech form may be routinely employed in accomplishing a speech act different from the one that would be performed were the speech form to be understood literally, that is, taken directly. So a given speech form can come to have a standard significance as a speech act different from its literal significance as a speech act". Only one more step is needed to appreciate that in a particular context, a speech form having a standard significance as a speech act can be employed in a still further way to convey something not ordinarily conveyed by it--whatever, of course, it happens to say. (Indeed, on occasion the special meaning conveyed by a speech form may consist of its «literal» meaning, as when James Bond leaves his recently shot dancing partner at a stranger's table, saying that she is dead on her feet).

Given all of this, an attempt must be made to uncover the principles which account for whatever contrast is found on a particular occasion between what is said (locutionary effect), what is *usually* meant by this (standard illocutionary force), and what in fact is meant on that particular occasion of use. Further, consideration must be given to the fact that in some cases, standard meaning is closely dependent on literal meaning, in other cases not; in some cases, particular force is closely dependent on the standard one (either as a contrast or as something that can retroactively be claimed as what was intended), in other cases there seems hardly any relation at all between them".

One problem with this perspective is that a set of prearranged harmonies tends to be assumed. Speech forms are taken to be of the same number and kind as are standard speech acts; and the latter are taken to provide a matching for the variety of meanings that occur in particular contexts. The same list of possibilities is assumed to be found in each of the three classes of cases, the only issue being which instances of this list are to appear together, as when, for example, a question is said but an order is meant or an order is said but an offer is meant or an offer is what is usually meant but in this case a request is intended". (A similar argument can be made about the issue of «strength»; the «strength» of an utterance is ordinarily attached to, and indicated by, a set speech form, but in context a particular usage can convey much less or much more force". The point, of course, is that although standard speech acts may form a relatively small, well-demarcated set, this applies largely to what is said; what is meant seems to draw on additional sets of meanings, too. For example, the interruptive utterance, «What?», presents the proposition that something has been heard and illocutionary intent of inducing a rerun. But in very many cases of actual use, these possibilities are the cover for some sort of boggling at what is occurring, and these various bogglings don't aptly fit into the standard speech act boxes.

Further, there is a degenerative relation between what is said and what is conveyed, for the special use to which a standard speech act is put on occasion can after a time become itself a standard overlayed meaning, which can then, in turn, allow for a second-order use to be employed for still other purposes. For example, «I shall hate you if you do not come to my party» has to do with issuing strong invitations, not with warning of strong dislike consequent on failure to perform a particular act. But what is here conveyed as opposed to what is said may well itself be employed in a mock voice as mimicry of refinement. And some of these mockeries have themselves become rather standardized, opening up the prospect of a still further twist between what is said and what is meant. Moreover, two different standardized meanings may be

established. For example, rerun signals very commonly constitute a sanctioning move against a speaker, pointedly giving him a chance to recast the way he has said something or to proceed now to account for why he did what he has just reported having done; however, the same signals are also used in their more «literal» sense to accomplish improved communication.

3. Commonly, critiques of orthodox linguistic analysis argue that although meaning depends on context, context itself is left as a residual category, something undifferentiated and global that is to be called in whenever, and only whenever, an account is needed for any noticeable deviation between what is said and what is meant. This tack fails to allow that when no such discrepancy is found, the context is still crucial--but in this case the context is one that is usually found when the utterance occurs. (Indeed, to find an utterance with only one possible reading is to find an utterance that can occur in only one possible context). More important, traditionally no analysis was provided of what it is in contexts that makes them determinative of the significance of utterances, nor any statement concerning the classes of contexts that would thus emerge--all of which, if explicated, would allow us to say something other than merely that the context matters.

Here Austin has helped. He raises the question of how a speech act can fail to come off and suggests an analysis: there are infelicities (including misfirings and abuses), restrictions on responsibility, misunderstanding, and etiolations, namely, the reframings illustrated when an act turns out to be embeded in a report, a poem, a movie, and so on". In asking how a speech act can fail, Austin points to conditions that must be fulfilled if the act is to succeed, this in turn suggesting how contexts might be classified according to the way they affect the illocutionary force of statements, made in them. And indeed, the prospect is implied that a whole framework might be uncovered which establishes the variety of ways in which an act can be reread and a determinative account of the relations among these several bases for reinterpretation.

Say that there is in any given culture a limited conceptual resource for defining situations differently, a limited set of basic reinterpretive schemas (each, of course, realized in an infinite number of ways), such that the whole set is potentially applicable to the «same» event. Assume, too, that these fundamental frameworks themselves form a framework--a framework of frameworks. Starting, then, from a single event in our own culture, in this case, an utterance, we ought to be able to show that a multitude of meanings are possible, that these fall into distinct classes limited in number, and that the classes are different from each other in ways that might appear as fundamental, somehow providing not merely an endless catalogue but an entree to the structure of experience. It will then seem obvious that the schema of schemas applicable to (and even derived from) the possible meanings of our chosen event will similarly apply to any other event. Of course, the shape of such a meta-schema need only be limned in to provide the reader with a focus for easy complaint; but complaints can lead to what we are looking for.

Start, then, with a conventionalized, perfunctory social litany, one that begins with A's «Do you have the time?» and restricting ourselves to B's verbal inps: response, consider the following unfoldings:

A. Consensual

1. The «standard» response, comprising variants of a more or less functionally equivalent kind:

   — Five o'clock.

   — Yes I do. It's five o'clock.

   — Sorry, my watch isn't working.

   — There it is [pointing to big wall clock].

2. A standard schema of interpretation fundamentally different from the one pertaining to clocks proves to be the one that both participants are applying:
   — No, but I still have the *Newsweek*.
   — Sure. Anyway, what you want won't take but a minute.
   — No, I left it with the basil.

3. A mutually and openly sustained full transformation of the original (a «keying») proves to prevail:
   — [director to actress]. No, Natasha. Turn your head or you'll never reach beyond the footlights.
   — [librarian]. No, that wasn't the title, but it was something like that".
   — [language teacher] That's just fine, Johann. A few more times and you'll have the «t» right.

4. Indirect meaning given direct reply:
   — Stop worrying. They'll be here.
   — Alright, alright, so I did lose your present.
   — [prospective john]. How much for the whole night?

B. Procedural problems holding off illocutionary concerns

1. System constraints not satisfied:
   — What did you say?
   — Bitte, ich kann nur Deutsch sprechen.
   — What dime?

2. Ritual constraints not satisfied:
   — I'm sorry, we are not allowed to give out the time. Please phone TI 6-6666.
   — Nurse, can't you see I'm trying to tie off this bleeder?
   — Shh, that mike carries.

C. Addressing ritual presuppositions so that the illocutionary point of the initial statement is denied at least temporarily, and a side sequence is established in which the erstwhile respondent becomes the initiator
   — Why the formality, love?
   — Could I ask where you learned your English?
   — Don't you remember me?

D. Warranted or unwarranted treatment of asker's move as trickery--in this particular case the assumption being that once a claim is established for initiating talk, it will come to be exploited
   — No (not meeting the asker's eyes and hurrying on away from him on the assumption that the question might be an instance of the now standard ploy to ready a robbery).
   — Say, are you trying to pick me up?
   — Never mind the time, Peterkins, you know you're supposed to be in bed.

E. Jointly sustained fabrication relative to passers-by; e. g.:
   — [spy recognition signal]. Yes. Do you happen to have a match?

F. Unilateral use of features of interaction for the open purpose of play or derision

1. Failure to perform anticipated ellipsis:
   — Yes, I do . . . .

2. Use of unanticipated schema of interpretation:
   — Yes, do you have the inclination?
   — [in mock Scots accent]. And may I ask what you want it for?

3. Anything covered in A through E but reframed for playful use, e. g.:
   — (Huge, tough-looking black in black neighborhood, on being asked the time by a slight, middle-class, white youth, looks into youth's eyes while reaching for watch): You ain' fixin' to rob me, is you?

It is some such framework of frameworks that we must seek out; it is some such meta-schema that will allow us to accumulate systematic understanding about contexts, not merely warnings that in another context, meaning could be different.

PART FOUR

What, then, is talk viewed interactionally? It is an example of that arrangement by which individuals come together and sustain matters having a ratified, joint, current, and running claim upon attention. Games provide another example, for here the play consciously and awaredly made by one participant must be attended to by the other participants and has much the same meaning for all of them. A sudden «striking» event can constitute another source for this joint arrangement; for at such moments, and typically only for a moment, a common focus of attention is provided that is clearly not the doing of the witnesses, which witnessing is mutually witnessed, the event then having the power to collapse persons theretofore not in a state of talk into a momentary social encounter. But no resource is more effective as a basis for joint involvement than speakings. Words are the great device for fetching speaker and hearer into the same focus of attention and into the same interpretive schema that applies to what is thus attended. But that words are the best means to this end does not mean that words are the only one or that the resulting social organization is intrinsically verbal in character. Indeed, it is when a set of individuals have joined together to maintain a state of talk that nonlinguistic events can most easily function as moves in a conversation. Yet, of course, conversation constitutes an encounter of a special kind. It is not positional moves of tokens on a board that figure as the prime concern; it is utterances, very often ones designed to elicit other utterances or designed to be verbal responses to these elicitations.

Now when an individual is engaged in talk, some of his utterances and nonlinguistic behavior will be taken to have a special temporal relevance, being directed to others present as something he wants assessed, appreciated, understood, *now*. I have spoken here of a move. Now it seems that sometimes the speaker and his hearers will understand this move to be primarily a comment on what has just been said, in that degree allowing us to speak of a response; at other times the move will be primarily seen as something to which a response is called for, in which degree it can be called a statement.

And the possibility of each leaves radically open another possibility, namely, that some mixture of the two will occur and in such a way as to discourage the value of the differentiation in the first place. Left open also will be the status of the reference and also the question as to whether or not the move involves action or talk or both. What we are left with, then, is the conversational move involves action or talk or both. What we are left with, then, is the conversational move carving out a reference, such that the reference and the move may, but need not, be verbal. And what conversation becomes then is a sustained strip or tract of referencings, each referencing tending to bear, but often deviously, some retrospectively perceivable connection to the immediately prior one.

In recommending the notion of talk as a sequence of reference-response moves on the part of participants, such that each choice of reference must be awaited before participants can know what that choice will be (and each next speaker must be awaited before it can be known who he is), I do not mean to argue against formalistic analysis.

However tortured the connection can become between last person's talk and current speaker's utterance, that connection must be explored under the auspices of determinism, as though all the degrees of freedom available to whomsoever is about to talk can somehow be mapped out, conceptualized, and ordered, somehow neatly grasped and held, somehow made to submit to the patterning-out effected by analysis. If contexts can be grouped into categories according to the way in which they render the standard force of an utterance inapplicable and principles thus developed for determining when this meaning will be set aside, then such must be attempted. Similarly, sequencing must be anticipated and described. We must see, for example, that current speaker's shift from the ordinarily meant meaning of last speaker's statement to an ordinarily excluded one, with humorous intent, can lead to a groan intoned jointly and simultaneously by all other participants and then return to seriousness; or the maneuver can lead to the temporary establishment of a punning rule, thus encouraging an answering pun from next speaker. Standard sequences are thus involved, but these are not sequences of statement and reply but rather sequences at a higher level, ones regarding choice with respect to reach and to the construing of what is reached for. (A compliment seems totally different from an insult, but a likeness is involved if each has been elicited by its kind). It is thus that uniformities might be uncovered in regard to reference selection, including how standard utterances will be construed as a reference basis for response. In this way we could recognize that talk is full of twists and turns and yet go on to examine routinized sequences of these shiftings. Conversational moves could then be seen to induce or allow affirming moves or countermoves, but this game-like back-and-forth process might better be called interplay than dialogue.

And with that, the dance in talk might finally be available to us. Without diffidence, we could attend fully to what it means to be in play and we could gain appreciation of the considerable resources available to a speaker each time he holds the floor. For he can use what he is pleased to of the immediate scene as the reference and context of his response, providing only that intelligibility and decorum are maintained. His responses themselves he can present with hedges of various sorts, with routine reservations, so that he can withdraw from the standpoint, and hence the self, these remarks would ordinarily imply. Partway through his turn he can break frame and introduce an aside, alluding to extraneous matters, or, reflexively, to the current effort at communication now in progress--his own--either case temporarily presenting himself to his listeners on a changed footing. And after he is ostensibly finished speaking, he can beat his listeners to the punch by gesturing a final bracketing comment on what he has just said and upon the person who would engage in such a saying, this comment, too, requiring a shift in stance, the taking up of a new relationship to, a new footing with, his audience. And in artfully managing this sequence of altered footings, he can but succeed, however else he fails, in extending the choices in depth available to the speakers who follow--choices as to what to address their own remarks to. Every conversation, it seems, can raise itself by its own bootstraps, can provide its participants with something to flail at, which process in its entirety can then be made the reference of an aside, this side remark then responsively provoking a joking refusal to disattend it. The box that conversation stuffs us into is Pandora's.

But worse still. By selecting occasions when participants have tacitly agreed to orient themselves to stereotypes about conversation, we can, of course, find that tight constraints obtain, that, for example, a statement by A will be followed by a demonstration from B that he found this statement meaningful and within bounds, and here supplies a response that displays the relevance of this statement and relevance for it. And we can collect elegantly structured interchanges, whether by drawing on occasions when incidental mutual impingement is handled by perfunctory politeness on both sides, or conversely,

when two individuals are positioned to sustain having a verbal go at each other, or better still, by drawing on literary texts. But there are other arrangements to draw upon. Individuals who are on familiar, ritually easy terms can find themselves involved close together (whether jointly or merely similarly) in a nonlinguistic doing claiming their main attention. While thusly stationed, one amongst them may occasionally speak his passing thoughts aloud, half to himself, something equivalent to scratching, yawning, or humming. These ventings call on and allow the license available to those sustaining an open state of talk. An adjacent hearer can elect to let the matter entirely pass, tacitly framing it as though it were the stomach rumblings of another's mind, and continue on undeflected from his task involvements or can hit upon the venting as an occasion to bring the remaining company into a focus of conversational attention for a jibe made at the expense of the person who introduced the initial distraction, which efforts these others may decline to support, and if declining, provide no display of excuse for doing so. Thus the whole framework of conversational constraints--both system and ritual--can become something to honor, to invert, or to disregard, depending as the mood strikes. It's not that the lid can't be closed; there is no box.

ERVING GOFFMAN

[1] I am grateful to Theresa Labov, William Labov, Susan Philips and Lee Ann Draud for critical suggestions, many of which have been incorporated without further acknowledgement. I alone, therefore, am not responsible for all of the paper's shortcomings.

[2] Harvey Sacks, lecture notes, Summer Institute of Linguistics, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Summer 1973.

[3] Richard Gunter, «Elliptical Sentences in American English», in his *Sentences in Dialog* (Columbia, South Carolina: Hornbeam Press, 1974), p. 17 (first published in *Lingua*, XII [1963], 137-150).

[4] Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen, «The Repertoire of Nonverbal Behavior: Categories, Origins, Usage and Coding», *Semiotica*, I (1969), 63-68.

[5] See the useful paper by Gail Jefferson, «Side Sequences», in *Studies in Social Interaction*, David Sudnow, ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1972).

[6] Emanuel Schegloff, «Sequencing in Conversational Openings», *American Anthropologist*, LXX (1968), 1080-1081.

[7] Marilyn Merritt, Ph. D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, forthcoming.

[8] Michael Stubbs, «Some Structural Complexities of Talk in Meetings», *Working Papers in Discourse Analysis, No. 5*, English Language Research, University of Birmingham, Nov. 1973, p. 18. Stubbs recommends that a simple substitution rule can be at work not involving deletion.

[9] *Ibid.* p. 21.

[10] The student, of course, can find another significance in this working agreement, namely, evidence of the work that must be engaged in locally on each occasion of apparently smooth mutual understanding and evidence for how thin the ice is that everyone skates on. More to the point, it seems that such cloudiness as might exist is usually located in higher order laminations. Thus, A and B may have the same understanding about what A said and meant, but one or both can fail to understand that this agreement exists. If A and B both appreciate that they both have the same understanding about what A said and meant, one or both can still fail to realize that they both appreciate that they both have the same understanding.

[11] See Victor H. Yngve, «On Getting a Word in Edgewise», *Papers from the Sixth Regional Meeting, Chicago Linguistic Society*, M. A. Campbell et al., eds. (Chicago: Department of Linguistics, University of Chicago, 1970), pp. 567-578; and Starkey Duncan, Jr., «Some Signals and Rules for Taking Speaking Turns in Conversations», *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, XXIII (1972), 283-292.

[12] See Erving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), p. 38; and Emanuel Schegloff and Harvey Sacks, «Opening Up Closings», *Semiotica*, VIII (1973), 297-298.

[13] Arno A. Bellack et al., *The Language of the Classroom* (New York: Columbia Teachers College Press, 1966), p. 2.

[14] Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson, «A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation», *Language*, L (1974), 696-735.

[15] Harvey Sacks, *op. cit.*

[16] Charles Goodwin, Ph. D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, forthcoming.

[17] In this paper, following the practice in sociolinguistics, «conversation» will be used in a loose way as an equivalent of talk or spoken encounter. This neglects the special sense in which the term tends to be used in daily life, which use, perhaps, warrant a narrow, restricted definition. Thus, conversation, restrictively defined, might be identified as the talk occurring when a small number of participants come together and settle into what they perceive to be a few moments cut off from (or carried on to the side of) instrumental tasks; a period of idling felt to be an end in itself, during which everyone is accorded the right to talk as well as to listen and without reference to a fixed schedule; everyone is accorded the status of someone whose overall evaluation of the subject matter at hand-whose editorial comments, as it were-is to be encouraged and treated with respect; and no final agreement or synthesis is demanded, differences of opinion to be treated as unprejudicial to the continuing relationship of the participants.

[18] In the manner of H. P. Grice's «conversational maxims», deriving from the «cooperative principle». See his unpublished chapter, «Logic and Conversation», 1967.

[19] See Erving Goffman, *Relations in Public* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp. 139-143.

[20] Erving Goffman, «On Face Work», in *Interaction Ritual, op. cit.*, pp. 19-22. The notion of ritual interchange allows one to treat two-part rounds, that is, adjacency pairs, as one variety and to see that ritual as well as system considerations have explanatory power here; that ritual considerations help produce many naturally bounded interchanges that have, for example, three or four parts, not merely two; and that delayed or nonadjacent sequencing is possible.

The term «ritual» is not particularly satisfactory because of connotations of otherworldliness and automaticity. Gluckman's recommendation, «ceremonious» (in his «Les Rites de Passage», in *Essays in the Ritual of Social Relations*, Max Gluckman, ed. [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962] pp. 20-23), has merit except that the available nouns (ceremony and ceremonial) carry a sense of multi-person official celebration. «Politeness» has some merit, but rather too closely refers to matters necessarily of no substantive import, and furthermore cannot, be used to refer to pointed offensiveness, «impoliteness» being too mild a term. The term «expressive» is close because the behavior involved is always treated as a means through which the actor portrays his relation to objects of value in their own right, but «expressive» also carries an implication of «natural» sign or symptom.

[21] We thus find that participants have recourse to a series of «weak bridges» - transparent shifts in topic hedged with a comment which shows that the maker is alive to the duties of a proper interactant: «reminds me of the time», «not to change the subject», «oh, by the way», «now that you mention it», «speaking of», «incidentally», «apropos of», etc. These locutions provide little real *subject-matter* continuity between currently-ending and proposed topic, merely deference to the need for it. (Less precarious bridges are found when one individual «matches» another's story with one from his own repertoire).

[22] *Op. cit.*, 300ff.

[23] See Goffman, *Relations in Public, op. cit.*, pp. 67-94.

[24] A point made by Stubbs, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

[25] Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1946), p. 170. Bloomfield's definition seems to have been a little optimistic.

Grammatical elements of well-formed sentences can be dependent on neighboring sentences. See Gunter, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

[26] By which Zellig Harris in *Structural Linguistics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Phoenix Books, 1951), p. 14, defines utterance. Bloomfield, *op. cit.*, apparently also used «utterance» to refer to talk done during one turn.

[27] Susan Philips, in «The Invisible Culture: Communication in Classroom and Community on the Warm Springs Reservation», unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, 1974, p. 160, has suggested use of the term «a speaking» in this latter connection, and I have in places followed her practice, as well as Sacks' locution, «a turn's talk».

[28] Harvey Sacks, lecture notes, University of California, Irvine 1967.

[29] A point also made, and made well, by J. McH. Sinclair et al., «The English Used by Teachers and Pupils», unpublished Final Report to SSRC for the period September 1970 to August 1972, p. 72.

[30] See Erving Goffman, *Encounters* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961), p. 35; *Relations in Public*, *op. cit.*, pp. 138ff. Sinclair et al., *op. cit.*, following A. A.Bellack et al., *op. cit.*, uses the term move in a somewhat similar way.

[31] Bellack et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

[32] Silences *during* the completion of a move differently figure, recommending concern for cognitive, as much as ritual, matters. Thus there appears to be a difference between a «juncture pause» occurring after an encoding unit such as a «phonemic clause» and one occurring during such a unit. The first is likely to be easily disattendable, the second is more likely to be seen as a break in fluency. Here see Donald S. Boomer, «Hesitation and Grammatical Encoding», *Language and Speech*, VIII (1965), 148-158; and Allen T. Dittmann, «The Body Movement-Speech Rhythm Relationship as a Cue to Speech Encoding», in *Studies in Dyadic Communication*, A. W. Siegman and B. Pope, eds. (New York: Pergamon Press, 1972), pp. 135-151.

[33] Virginia Hymes, «The Ethnography of Linguistic Intuitions at Warm Springs», paper presented at NWAVE III, Georgetown University, October 25, 1974, pp. 7-8.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[35] Close recordings and analysis of chronic set-tos are available in Marjorie Goodwin's Ph. D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, forthcoming. See also her unpublished paper, «Aspects of the Social Organization of Children's Arguments: Some Procedures and Resources for Restructuring Positions», 1975. An attempt at structural analysis of some standard adult gambits is made in Goffman, *Relations in Public*, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-183. Polite forms of these inversionary tactics constitute the repartee in plays and other literary texts, these neat packagings of aggression being taken as the essence of conversation, when in fact they are probably anything but that. Note, it is children more than adults who are subject to open blaming and given to making open jibes, so it is children who are the mature practitioners here. In any case, the great catalogue of inversionary interchanges was published some time ago in two volumes in connection with children by Lewis Carroll, thereby providing the Englishry with linguistic models to follow in the pursuit of bickering as an art form.

[36] As reported and analyzed in Philips, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 166.

[38] Bellack et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

[39] Of course, sentences can have structural ambiguity. «Flying airplanes can be dangerous» has two quite different possible meanings. But like a reversing picture, these two possibilities are themselves clearly established solely by the sentence itself, which thus retains the power all on its own to do the work required of it as an illustration of what linguistic analysis can disambiguate. The same can be said for deictic terms. Their analysis treats *classes* of terms whose members carry meanings that are situation-locked in a special way, but the analysis itself apparently is not hindered in any way by virtue of having to draw on these terms as illustrations, and instead of being constrained by indexicals is made possible by them. «The man just hit my ball over there» leaves us radically ignorant of whose ball was hit, when, and where it went, unless we can look out upon the world from the physical and temporal standpoint of the speaker; but just as obviously this sentence all by itself can be used as an apparently context-free illustration of this indexical feature of «just», «my» and «there».

[40] Gunter, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

[41] An encouraging exception is provided by those attempting to formulate rules for the «valid» performance of various speech acts (such as commands, requests, offers) and therefore generalizations concerning circumstances in which alternate meanings are imputed. See Grice, *op. cit.*; John R. Searle, «Indirect Speech Acts», unpublished paper; David Gordon and George Lakoff, «Conversational Postulates», in *Papers of the Chicago Linguistic Society* (Chicago: Department of Linguistics, University of Chicago, 1971), pp. 63-84; William Labov and David Fanshel, *Therapeutic Discourse: Psychotherapy as Conversation*, Chap. 3, «Rules of Discourse», in press; and Susan Ervin-Tripp, «Is Sybil There: The Structure of American Directives», *Language in Society*, forthcoming. One problem with this line of work so far is that it tends to end up considering a sort of check list individuals might apply in the rare circumstances when they are genuinely uncertain as to intended meaning, circumstances, in short, when usual determinants had failed. How individuals arrive at an effective interpretation on all those occasions when the stream of experience makes this easy and instantaneous is not much explored, this exploration being rather difficult to undertake from a sitting position. Most promising of all, perhaps, is the argument by Gordon and Lakoff, *op. cit.*, p. 77, that what is conveyed as opposed to what is said may be marked grammatically through the distribution of particular words in the sentence. Whether such a distribution determines the reading to be given or merely confirms it might still be an open question, however.

[42] Gunter, *op. cit.*, pp. 94ff.

[43] Grice, *op. cit.*, argues for a distinction between conventional maxims and conversational ones, the latter presumably special to talk. However, although the maxims that seem special to an effective communication system allow us to account for certain presuppositions, implications, and laconicities in speech - a reason for formulating the maxims in the first place - other maxims of conduct allow for this accounting, too.

[44] And, of course, standard sequences could involve a nonlinguistic doing *then* a verbal response. Indeed, under the term «completives», Jerome Bruner has recently argued that the sequence consisting of a nonlinguistic act by an infant and an affirming comment by a parent is a very basic way in which the child is induced to articulate the stream of behavior into repeatable, identifiable,

terminally-bracketed segments. (See Jerome Bruner, «The Ontogenesis of Speech Acts», in Peter Collett, ed., *Social Rules and Social Behavior*, Department of Experimental Psychology, Oxford University, 1974, multigraph, p. 75). In later years the parent will monitor the child's behavior, ready to respond with a verbal or gestural sanction each time a lapse in acceptable conduct occurs. Ontogenetically, then, it could be argued that one basic model for talk (in addition to a greeting version of statement and reply) is deed and evaluative comment. And what we take to be a tidy adjacency pair is often a three-part interchange, the first part being a bit of improper or exemplary conduct.

[45] Willard Van Quine, *Mathematical Logic*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 26.

[46] Sinclair et al., *op. cit.*, p. 80.

[47] See Marilyn Shatz, «The Comprehension of Indirect Directives: Can Two-Year-Olds Shut the Door?» paper presented at the summer meeting, Linguistic Society of America, 1974, Amherst, Massachusetts.

[48] Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 503-506.

[49] Another expression of this possibility is found in the tendency, noted by Roger Shuy («Problems of Communication in the Cross-Cultural Medical Interview», *Working Papers in Sociolinguistics*, No. 19, December, 1974, p. 21) for a respondent to provide increasingly truncated same-answers to progressive items in a series of questions, the series coming thus to function somewhat as a single whole.

[50] «It's time for you to answer now», the Queen said, looking at her watch: «open your mouth a *little* wider when you speak, and always say 'your Majesty'». «I only wanted to see what the garden was like, your Majesty». «That's right», said the Queen, patting her on the head, which Alice didn't like at all: . . . .

[51] *Op. cit.*

[52] *Ibid.*

[53] A useful current statement may be found in John J. Gumperz, «Language, Communication and Public Negotiation», in *Anthropology and the Public Interest: Fieldwork and Theory*, Peggy R. Sanday, ed. (New York: Academic Press, forthcoming).

[54] Schegloff and Sacks, *op. cit.*, under the term «misplacement marking», 319-320.

[55] J. McH. Sinclair and R. M. Coulthard, *Towards an Analysis of Discourse: The English Used by Teachers and Pupils* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 22. These writers use the term «frame» here. A general treatment of bracket markers may be found in Goffman, *Frame Analysis*, *op. cit.*, pp. 251-269.

[56] It should be added that performers of all kinds - including, interestingly, auctioneers - can find it impractical for various reasons to engage in actual repartee with members of the audience, and so as a substitute end up feeding themselves their own statements to reply to or making a statement in the name of a member of the audience, to which they can then respond. Engendered, thus, on situational grounds, is expropriation of the dialogic other.

[57] Out of frame comments open up the possibility of being incorrectly framed by recipients, in this case heard as part of the unparenthesized material. Here speakers will be particularly dependent on obtaining back channel expressions from hearers confirming that the reframing has been effectively conveyed. And here radio speakers will have a very special problem, being cut off from this source of confirmation. They can try to deal with this issue by laughing at their own out of frame comments, assuming in effect the role of the listener, but this tack will have the effect of interrupting the flow of utterances and of underlining a joke, the merit of which is often dependent on its striking the hearer as a well-timed throw-away line, an interjection that the interjector can make offhandedly and without missing a stroke. In consequence there has emerged the «displaced bracket». The speaker makes no pause after his aside has terminated, gets established in the next line of his main text, and then, part way through this, and while continuing on with this text, allows his voice to bulge out a little with a laugh, a laugh his hearers ideally would have contributed right after the frame breaking remark, were they in the studio with him. What is thus accomplished, in effect, is a parenthesized parenthesis. The announcer's little laugh allows him to stand back from the person who saw fit to dissociate himself by means of a wry aside from the text he was required to read. Alas, this distancing from distance sometimes takes the speaker back to the position the script originally afforded him.

[58] Schegloff and Sacks, *op cit.*, 299, provide an extreme statement: «Finding an utterance to be an answer, to be accomplishing answering, cannot be achieved by reference to phonological, syntactic, semantic, or logical features of the utterance itself, but only by consulting its sequential placement, e.g., its placement after a question».

One problem with this view is that while throwing back upon the asker's question the burden of determining what will qualify as an answer, it implies that what is a question will itself have to be determined in a like manner, by reference to the sequence it establishes--so where can one start? Another issue is that this formulation leaves no way open for disproof, for how could one show that what followed a particular question was in no way an answer to it? Granted, an utterance which appears to provide no answer to a prior question can fail pointedly, so that part of its meaning is, and is meant to be, understood in reference to its not being a proper answer--an implication that the adjacency pair format itself helps us to explicate. But surely assessments about how pointed is the rejection of the claims of a question can vary greatly, depending on whether it is the questioner or nonanswerer to whom one appeals, and in fact there seems to be no absolute reason why an individual can't deliver a next remark with no concern at all for its failure to address itself to the prior question. Finally, to say that an answer of a sort can certainly be provided to a prior question without employing the conventional markers of an answer (and that the slot itself must be attended, not what apparently gets put into it) need not deny that answers will *typically* be marked phonologically, syntactically, semantically, etc., and that these markers will be looked to as a means of deciding that what has been said is an answer.

[59] Another glimpse of this sort of complexity can be found in Jefferson's illustration of the «horizontal», as opposed to the «vertical», interplay of moves in a multi-person conversation. See Jefferson, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

[60] Sinclair et al., *op. cit.*, esp. p. 88. Shuy, *op. cit.*, p. 12, also provides examples of three-move play. Riddles might be thought to have a three-move structure: (1) question, (2) thought and

give-up, (3) answer. Again, the purpose of the asked person's move is not to inform the asker about the answer but to show whether he is smart enough to uncover what the asker already knows. But here the interaction falls flat if indeed the correct answer is uncovered (unlike the asking done by teachers) or if, upon being told the answer, the asked person does not do an appreciable «take», this latter constituting a fourth move.

[60] Sinclair et al., *op. cit.*, p. 104.

[61] The first two lines are drawn from Shuy, *op. cit.*, p. 22, and are real; the second two I have added myself, and aren't.

[62] Two kinds of qualifications are always necessary. First, the translation from what is said to what is meant is necessarily an approximation. One should really say, «. . . can mean something like 'That's an awfully high price'». But I take this to be an instance of «normatively residual ambiguity». More important, an utterance designed to be made a convenience of, that is, intended to be accepted solely for what it indirectly conveys, never has *only* this significance--apart from the inherent ambiguity of this significance. For, as suggested, a directly-made statement inevitably leaves its maker in a different strategic position from the one in which an indirectly equivalent statement would leave him. For example, if a recipient takes violent exception to what a speaker meant to convey indirectly, the speaker can always take the line that he meant the literal meaning all along.

[63] Again, see Goffman, *Relations in Public*, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-183.

[64] Puns and other «double meanings» are not mere double meanings, for without the occurrence of the straight meaning in the context in which it occurs (and thus in the context which allows it to occur) the sophisticated meaning could not be introduced. There is thus a hierarchical ordering of the two meanings, that is, of the unmarked and marked forms; one must be introducible before the other can be introduced.

[65] John R. Searle, «A Classification of Illocutionary Acts», unpublished paper.

[66] A directive in the sense that «I request that you tell me» is implied. See Gordon and Lakoff, *op. cit.*, p. 66; Searle, «A Classification . . .», *op. cit.*, p. 17.

[67] Searle, «A Classification . . .», *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

[68] Note that all classical performatives are moves in at least two games, one that of informing hearers about, say, the name to be given, the bid to be made, the judgment to be rendered, and the other that of achieving this naming, bidding, judging (Here see Searle, «Indirect Speech Acts», *op. cit.*). Words are not alone in having this capacity. Every move in a board game similarly figures, both informing what move the player is to take and committing him to having taken this move. Here see Goffman, *Encounters*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

[69] «Literal» here is a wonderfully confusing notion, something that should constitute a topic of linguistic study, not a conceptual tool to use in making studies. Sometimes the dictionary meaning of one or more of the words of the utterance is meant, although how *that* meaning is arrived at is left an open question. And the underlying, commonsense notion is preserved that a word *in isolation* will have a general, basic or most down-to-earth meaning, that this basic meaning is sustained in how the word is commonly used in phrases and clauses, but that in many cases words are used «metaphorically» to convey something that they don't really mean.

[70] In fact, as recently suggested (Shatz, *op. cit.*), indirect significance may be learned *before* literal meaning is appreciated.

[71] A good example of this latter, one that did not show respect for linguistic doctrines of the time, can be found in the once-popular John-Marsha record, wherein a male voice repeating only the female name and a female voice repeating only the male name managed to convey through timing, stress and other paralinguistic cues a complete seduction. Dostoyevsky's version is reviewed in V. N. Vološinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (New York: Seminar Press, 1973), pp. 103-105; and L. S. Vygotsky, *Thought and Language* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1962), pp. 142-144.

[72] Here, as Ervin-Tripp, *op. cit.*, suggests, misunderstandigs are to be located; so also seriously pretended misunderstandings, openly unserious misunderstandings, concern by speaker about misunderstanding, etc.

[73] Linguists seem to have a special commitment to the analysis of directives. They start with a series that is marked syntactically and phonetically, beginning with imperative forms and then on to the various «mitigations» until something like a vague wish is being said. And there does seem to be a general social understanding that such a series exists; witness the fact that the series is drawn upon as a resource when formulating joking moves. But what sort of series, if any (and if only one), any particular social circle of users actually employs and what relation this may have, if any, to the grammarian's stereotypes is an open question, no doubt to be differently answered by every group one might study. Here see the useful analysis in Ervin-Tripp, *op. cit.*

[74] John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 12-24.

[75] Borrowed from Charles J. Fillmore, «May We Come In?» *Semiotica* IX (1973), 100, who not only provides some illustrations (in connection with his article's title), but also goes on to offer an injunction: «We must allow ourselves, first of all, to disregard the infinite range of possible situations in which the sentence was *mentioned* or merely *pronounced*, rather than *used*. It may be that somebody was asked, for example, to pronounce four English monosyllables, putting heavy stress and rising intonation on the last one, and he accidentally came up with our sentence; or a speaker of a foreign language might have been imitating an English sentence he once overheard; or a librarian might have been reading aloud the title of a short story. Since the properties of this infinitely large range of possibilities are in no way constrained by the structure or meaning of this particular sentence this whole set of possibilities can safely be set aside as an uninteresting problem». Here I think Fillmore is over-despairing, confusing members and classes. There is an unmanageable number of different ways a sentence can figure, but perhaps not so many *classes* of ways it can figure, and the delineation of these classes can be an interesting problem. That different students will be free to come up with different classes does not undermine the value of examining various attempts to see which seems currently the most useful.

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