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Data Analysis Project

**Uhms, Repetions, and Recasts: A Review of Teacher Practices**

As part of the assignment, this paper will avoid contextual issues beyond the immediate transcript. The sole focus here is on the data contained directly on the CD provided. The researchers reviewed the data following the principles of Conversational Analysis (CA) gained through attending a graduate-level course on the same. To the extent possible, the principle of unmotivated looking was employed to see what aspects of the data came to the fore. This paper will begin with a description of the data source. It will then continue to describe the analytical framework employed and how the data was transcribed following CA conventions. This will then be followed by preliminary observations of the data along with a brief discussion of what these might mean. It will conclude with individual reflections on the value of CA as a tool for research when looking classroom interaction. A complete transcript of the data is appended with color-coding for the reader’s convenience.

The data represents an economics lecture on equilibrium price. The video recording of the class lasts 9 minutes. The class consists of about ten students. The teacher is equipped with a microphone, while the students are not, which makes it difficult to discern what the students actually say. The data was videotaped from two different camera angles: one with the focus on the teacher and one with the focus on the students.

The analytic framework for this transcription was based on our experiences reviewing previous research and completing our own transcriptions and analyses throughout the semester. The research articles we read during the past semester provided us with a basis for understanding different practices and the actions they might achieve. However, as we went about transcribing the data, we maintained the CA notion of unmotivated noticing of practices and actions in the data. In other words, while past research has provided us with a framework of understanding ideas presented with Conversation Analysis, we approached the data to look only at what existed in the data without bringing in outside knowledge and experience.

To complete the transcription of this video recording, each group member first transcribed the entire video individually. Because of the comparatively short length of the data, we felt it was important to transcribe the entire recording before determining a topic of analysis. Following the completion of the individual transcriptions, we met to review and compare our transcriptions as a group. Where any discrepancies occurred between our transcriptions, we reviewed the video recording several times until we were able to reach an agreement about the proper transcription.

We made a decision at the beginning of the transcription process not to focus on pauses, so only the location of the pauses has been noted, and not the exact length of the pauses. We used Jeffersonian transcription conventions. Upon completion of the transcription, we individually reviewed the data, met again to discuss significant practices/findings, and determined the foci of our analysis: uhs, repetition, self-repair, and echoing.

One practice examined in the analysis of the transcription was the practice of uh/um. Upon completion of the transcription process, we noticed this practice occurred quite frequently during the lecture. However, the *uhs* were located predominately in the beginning of the lecture, and in fact did not occur after line 63 (about half-way through the lecture at 4 ½ minutes.) We described the action performed by these *uhs* as *gathering thoughts*.

The embodied action in the data also becomes important with regard to the analysis of *uhs*. At the beginning of the lecture, the teacher stands stiffly with her arms straight at her sides. As she speaks, she wrings her hands or makes small gestures with them. She is standing in front of a desk at the front of the classroom at the opening, but moves to the side when a student goes up to the blackboard, and moves to the overhead projector when she utilizes it in her explanations. Her posture and gestures become somewhat more relaxed as the lecture continues.

As will later be discussed, we also observed many cases of repetition and self-repair (by the teacher) in the data. Based on this repetition, self-repair, embodied action, and uh/ums, our argument is that the teacher was somewhat nervous, particularly at the beginning of the lecture. This nervousness most likely played a role in her production of *uhs*, which would explain why the number of *uhs* decreased as time went on; her nervousness decreased as well.

Here are a few examples:

8 \*t: In today's class, we will talk about (.) equilibrium price and shift of  
9 demand (.)  
10 \*t: demand curves ((teacher gestures with left hand))  
11 \*t: uhm (.)

12 \*t: before I train these topics, let's take a short review of the previously covered concepts

In this first example, the teacher begins the class by introducing the topic of the lesson. There is repetition of the word *demand* in lines 9-10 (with a pause in between) followed by a hand gesture by the teacher. The teacher then gathers her thoughts and uses the practice *uhm*, followed by a pause. Then she reverts from discussing the current topic to review what was talked about during past lectures.

12 \*t: before I train these topics, let's take a short review of the previously covered concepts  
13 \*t: in previous (.) classes, we talked about uhm market demand and supply: ((teacher holds hands together in front of herself))

In this example, the teacher is reviewing concepts from previous classes. She gathers her thoughts as she presents the information, inserting an *uhm* between “we talked about” and the information that was talked about. Following the completion of the sentence, the teacher performs more embodied action, holding her hands at the front of her body.

31 \*t: (.) so the concepts we study in our class are about more uh representative or general cases ((teacher holds hands together in front of herself))

In this example, the teacher pauses, begins the utterance, says *uh* as she gathers her thoughts, finishes the utterance, and again holds her hands in front of herself. From these examples, the correlation between the embodied action and the *uhs* seems strong.

39 \*t: in a market graph like this one  
40 \*t: uh equilibrium price (.) °is found°((teacher points to overhead screen))  
41 \*t: (.) equilibrium price is found at intersection of the demand curve and the supply curve ((teacher indicates on overhead projector))  
42 \*t: in this graph (.) uh the product is an ice-cream  
43 \*t: how much is the equilibrium price here?((teacher indicates on overhead projector))

This last example actually includes two different *uhs*. The first one occurs in line 40 before the teacher makes a comment about the day’s topic, equilibrium price. This utterance is followed by embodied action as she uses the overhead projector in her lesson. She then pauses, repeats the phrase “equilibrium price is found” and adds more to the comment, followed by more action involving the projector. In line 42, she begins an utterance, pauses, says *uh* while she gathers her thoughts, and then completes the utterance. The appearance of these uhs and uhms at the beginning of the lecture and in conjunction with the taut body stance and verbal problems such as repetition therefore seem to indicate that the teacher may feel less comfortable at the beginning of the lecture.

Repair in conversation refers to “fixing a piece of talk, either in the course of its production or in subsequent turns” (Macbeth 2004). One of the different kinds of conversational repair is self-initiated self-repair. It refers to speaker-started self-correction of a specific utterance. Schegloff et al. (1977) note that self-initiated self-repairs within the same turn “use a variety of non-lexical speech perturbations (cut-offs, sound stretches, “uh’s”, etc.) to signal the possibility of repair-initiation immediately following”.

Data analysis reveals occurrence of different types of self-initiated self-repairs which can be grouped together under the following categories: linguistic reformulations, gathering thoughts, phonology related, and pedagogical clarifications. Some cases represent ambiguity in terms of the primary action achieved through the practice of self-repair (examples to follow below).

Thus, the first group of self-initiated self-repairs can be described as linguistic reformulations since the speaker self-corrects her grammar, word choice, syntax, or a combination of several designated problem areas.

* 14: \*t: would anyone (.) would any volunteer draw a demand curve and a supply curve on the blackboard ((teacher indicates to blackboard)) WORDCHOICE
* 53 \*t: we call these change (.)  
  54 \*t: in the case of demand curve  
  55 \*t: we call this change as ↑shift of demand curve (.) GRAMMAR
* 67 \*t: lastly, what other factors, beside income,  
  68 \*t: what factors other than income ((teacher points to overhead screen)) SYNTAX
* 70 \*t: i'll give you about one more, one minute to start ((teacher gestures and then rolls up sleeve and looks at wrist area)) WORDCHOICE
* 122 \*t: in next class we're talk about, we'll talk about the shift of supply curves and the characteristics of (healthcare) market, (healthcare) service market ((teacher points to overhead screen)) GRAMMAR
* 123 \*t: is anyone have questions?  
  124 \*t: if you have any questions, (you) (can) come to my office or e-mail me GRAMMAR and SYNTAX

The second group of self-initiated self-repairs are represented by the category named “gathering thoughts”. This group differs from the first one because there is no explicit self-correction accomplished by the speaker. What we see here is the extension of the initial phrase, which is preceded by a pause and/or physical action (such as teacher’s moving to the overhead projector in line 40).

* 8 \*t: In today's class, we will talk about (.) equilibrium price and shift of  
  9 demand (.)  
  10 \*t: demand curves ((teacher gestures with left hand))
* 40 \*t: equilibrium price (.) °is found° ((teacher points to overhead screen))  
  41 \*t: (.) equilibrium price is found at intersection of the demand curve and the supply curve ((teacher indicates on overhead projector))

Another group of self-initiated self-repairs can be related to the phonological issues: the speaker either repeats the same word again (as in line 49) or produces the word after the cut-off of the first syllable of the same word (lines 48 and 84). All of the examples in this group of self-initiated self-repairs contain problematic consonants and consonant clusters, such as as the interdental consonant “th” in the “other”, bilabial “m” and the consonant cluster “incr-.” We can also argue that stopping and saying the word over again allows the speaker gather her thoughts and continue with a more clear idea of what he wants to say to her students. This would indicate an overlap of two (or more) actions. It is our contention that a practice such as repetition, while it may have a primary action, can have a secondary action as well. In this case, we might argue that phonological repair with aspects of gathering thoughts can be seen

* 49 \*t: (.) if all (variables) other other than price changes, if only price changes the result shows 48 as the moo- movement along the supply curve or demand curve (.) along the curve, ((teacher points to diagram drawn on blackboard))
* 84 \*t: the first question if income incr- increases, how would this demand curve shift ((teacher points to overhead screen))

Lastly, the next group of self-initiated self-repairs in the teacher’s talk represent pedagogical clarifications. The teacher can either go from more professional jargon into layperson terms, as in line 90:

* 90 \*t: as a result of this (.) shift, this change, how will the equilibrium price change?

Or, the teacher may choose to replace layperson or less professional terms with the exact professional jargon from her field of study (in this case, economics):

* 8 \*t: In today's class, we will talk about (.) equilibrium price and shift of  
  9 demand (.)  
  10 \*t: demand curves ((teacher gestures with left hand))
* 120 \*t: and some factors can influence on demand  
  121 \*t: can cause shift of demand curves and then equilibrium price can change
* 122 \*t: in next class we're talk about, we'll talk about the shift of supply curves and the characteristics of (healthcare) market, (healthcare) service market ((teacher points to overhead screen))

The data in this last group of self-initiated self-repairs also allows other kinds of analytical interpretation (such as, speaker’s search for a better word, gatherings thoughts), but the pedagogical clarification seems to be primary action.

The data also contains examples of repetitions (practice) in the teacher’s talk which serves as reinforcement (action) of particular concepts to ensure students’ uptake. The repetitions of this kind also follow a particular pattern: the teacher first introduces the concept or theme (line 34), asks a rhetorical question (line 35), answers it herself (line 36) and then paraphrases the definition of the concept to ensure students’ understanding (line 38 and 39):

* 34 \*t: (.) first one is equilibrium price  
  35 \*t: what is equilibrium price  
  36 \*t: equilibrium price means a price at which the quantity supplied matches the quantity demand  
  37 \*t: in other words (.)  
  38 \*t: equilibrium price is a price at which the quantity of (uh) (.) good that uh sellers want to 39 sell matches the quantity of the good that buyers wants to buy ((teacher gestures with both hands))

Sequencing in the classroom frequently demonstrates a familiar pattern, namely initiation, response and evaluation/feedback (IRE) (Young 1992). This lecture, where the teacher generates the overwhelming majority of utterances, is no exception. As noted above, the microphone is attached to the teacher. This is complicates the task of analyzing student utterances. It could also be argued that this decision might reflect a focus on teacher utterances. Despite this logistical obstacle, there do not seem to be any clear cases where students initiated speech. In all cases, student utterances were at the teacher’s initiation, whether it was asking for a volunteer, assigning a pair-work task, or asking the class questions. After almost all audible student response phases, the instructor echoed most or all of the words used by the students. Vasilopoulos (in preparation:1) tells us that such echoing can play a number of roles including “…positive assessment, correction initiation, understanding check or they can register receipt of the prior turn.” Her work relies heavily on the prosody of the echo to convey meaning. Given the somewhat stilted character of the instructor’s prosody in the lecture under review, it is difficult to attribute a particular action based on prosody to her practices of echoing.

Vianos and Conejos (1998) similarly note that the practice of echoing can perform a variety of actions including giving information, cuing for eliciting, confirmation, other repair, and emphasis. They also show that most echoing is done by the teacher rather than the students. Given that many of the above actions that the practice can perform are typically associated with teachers (e.g. eliciting, assessment, correction), this is not a surprise. The brief excerpt that we are considering here likewise demonstrates a heavy bias toward the teacher. Indeed, all echoing in the transcript was the product of the teacher and not of the students, although it should again be noted that the audio limitations may be hiding part of the story. Lyster (1998) notes that the varying actions of echoing can lead to confusion, especially given that it can sometimes be ‘positive’ and sometimes ‘negative’.

Dashwood (2005) looks at one aspect of echoing, namely the one following what she calls ‘display questions.’ These questions are ones where there is a predetermined and ‘known’ answer. She goes on to say: “Display questions are typical of teacher-fronted lessons in which transmission of knowledge from teacher to student is the expected form of interaction.” (Dashwood 2005:2). These questions elicit a specific and limited response, which can then be repeated by the instructor as a form of positive assessment and emphasis of the target answer.

In the lecture we see a number of these actions (marked on the transcript in blue).

40 \*t: uh equilibrium price (.) °is found°((teacher points to overhead screen))  
41 \*t: (.) equilibrium price is found at intersection of the demand curve and the supply curve ((teacher indicates on overhead projector))  
42 \*t: in this graph (.) uh the product is an ice-cream  
43 \*t: how much is the equilibrium price here?((teacher indicates on overhead projector))  
44 \*s2: °two dollars°=  
45 \*t: =two dollars, exactly

Here we see there is a display question; one which has a single short answer (two dollars). The student answers the question and there is an immediate echoing. We can see from the latched speech that the teacher most likely had the same answer in mind and could respond quickly. We further see from the word ‘exactly’, that the teacher is evaluating this as the exact answer.

A similar pattern can be seen in line 85-87.

83 \*t: all right everyone((teacher points to overhead screen))  
84 \*t: the first question if income incr increases, how would this demand curve shift((teacher points to overhead screen))  
85 \*s3: (.)shift to right? ((another student gestures with hand moving to the right))  
86 \*t: yes, exactly.((teacher points to overhead screen))  
87 \*t: the demand curve will shift to the right  
88 \*t: that means demand increases

In this instance we again see the echoing of the single short and correct answer (shift to the right). It is preceded by a “yes, exactly” and the semantically salient ‘right’ is emphasized. The question also displays strong characteristics of a display question. There is one short and correct expected answer. Although it might be phrased somewhat differently, there are not a variety of possible interpretations allowable.

In the example below, there is a one word answer on line 91.

90 \*t: as a result of this (.) shift, this change, how will the equilibrium price change?  
91 \*s2: °increase°  
92 \*t: °right°, see (.)((teacher draws on overhead transparency))  
93 \*t: °right and° (.)  
94 \*t: °is that° (.)  
95 \*t: as a result of the shift of demand curve, equilibrium price will increase, right?((teacher points to overhead screen))

Although the one word answer is not repeated until line 95, when it is echoed, it is emphasized. Furthermore, the instructor indicates on the overhead screen in manner consistent with showing the increase in the equilibrium price. It is also worth noting that the intervening utterances also support the general correctness of the student’s answer and restate the question. These are also indicative of the instructor’s utterances emphasizing the instructional targets.

The above examples have been argued to be display questions where there is one correct answer. The instructor finished with one broader question on line 98.

98 \*t: <what other factors> can also cause a shift of demand curve of ice-cream A (.)  
99 \*s4: weather  
100 \*t: weather exactly

101 \*t: if temperature rises, demand curve will shift to the right side (.) and <equilibrium price increases>((teacher points to overhead screen))

It can be argued that in this case, the first answer to this broader question is a more anticipated one. A simple google search on ice-cream consumption will quickly support the intuition that weather changes the demand for ice-cream. In this case, the instructor is treating the answer as the (or at least an) expected one. Her addition of the word ‘exactly’ supports this claim. Her strong support for this answer contrasts with the progressively less strong support for the answers considered below.

102 \*:t anything else?  
103 \*s5: the new product is introduced into the market [(unclear)]  
104 \*t: [right], excellent  
105 \*t: new product or the prices of rival product  
106 \*t: what else?  
107 \*s6: (deappreciation) of the currency  
108 \*t: appreciation of currency  
109 \*t: yeah, maybe (.) yes [(if it)]

In the above two answers, the teacher echoes both of these. The first one the new product is introduced into the market [(unclear)] has positive reinforcement ([right], excellent) as other answers have had (exactly, etc.). This would seem to indicate that it is an anticipated response. The second one(deappreciation) of the currency is echoed, yet it is qualified with a maybe and a pause. It should be noted that the reviewers believed the student answer to be somewhat different from the teacher’s echo (deappreciaton vs. appreciation). It also lacks the other reinforcement that accompanied previous answers. The excerpt below continues on this trajectory.

109 \*t: yeah, maybe (.) yes [(if it)]  
110 \*s7: [if the country] has more and more babies,  
111 \*t: yes, yes  
112 \*s7: °more and more kids°  
113 \*t: if the babies likes ice-cream or dislike=((teacher points to overhead screen))  
114 \*s7: =kids always like ice-cream  
115 \*t: yes  
116 \*t: (related) preference  
117 \*t: (unclear) good

Here the instructor appears less convinced of the appropriateness of the answer. This is indicated by her use of the conditional. She also fails to echo the answer for the first time, although she does incorporate the key word (babies) in her conditional.

In sum, we see that the teacher has a strong preference for echoing the student answers to her initiated questions. In all but one case, she does so. In the beginning, she uses display questions and echoes the student answers to all of these, always supported by other practices. These echoes perform an action. It can be argued that this action combines aspects of providing confirmation feedback, emphasis, and registering receipt. It is also noteworthy that in all cases but the last, the students do not continue to argue their answer. The teacher indicates receipt of the answer through echoing and then continues with the lesson, considering the answers sufficient. This is not true of the last question, where the student continues the discussion. The penultimate student answer is also somewhat ambiguous as discussion appears cut off by the final student answer “[if the country] has more and more babies,”. This indicates that the answers above are accepted by both the teacher and students as correct unlike the final two which are given less reinforcement.

The pattern of display questions is continued with the somewhat broader question on line 98 of “<what other factors> can also cause a shift of demand curve of ice-cream A (.)” The first two answers appear somewhat canonical and therefore are echoed with accompanying support (excellent, exactly). The third factor (line 107) suggested was less enthusiastically received although it did merit an echo. Further elucidation on this factor was cut off by the proposal of the fourth factor (line 110). This fourth suggestion is again received somewhat differently. The answer does not seem to fit the standard answers and the teacher does not echo and welcome the answer with the same immediateness with which she welcomed the first two.

Here we see indications of Lyster’s (1998) fear that confusion can ensue with overechoing. It is however, important to note that there remain other aspects of the teacher’s talk and demeanor that can help us to determine the action of the echoing. Words such as “exactly”; positive reinforcement such as “right”, “yes”, or “excellent”; emphasis of the echoed words; and physical actions all seem to support the practice of echoing to convey to the student the ideas of confirmation feedback, emphasis, and registering receipt.

For pedagogical implications, it may be worth raising both student and teacher awareness of the role of echoing in terms of both positive and negative echoing as well as what accompanying practices can be used to indicate the desired action of the echoing practice.

Alyson O’Shea

**Individual Reflections**

Conversation Analysis (CA) examines the details in interaction that are often overlooked by other forms of analysis. Throughout the semester, I have learned how to transcribe data using CA and how to perform a CA analysis of the data. Research articles analyzing practices and their actions have provided me with an analytic framework for a CA analysis of data. This project was our first experience using CA to analyze a video recording, and the process can be challenging.

A CA approach to analysis uses unmotivated looking at the data. When I first watched the video recording, I did not see anything obvious that would be suitable for analysis. Keeping in mind the practices and sequencing we had learned from previous readings, I became a bit nervous when I did not notice any particular items for analysis as I watched the video. However, upon beginning the transcription process, it quickly became clear that there was ample interactional data to analyze. The transcription process is vital to analyzing the data in CA.

The transcription itself has a great impact on the accuracy of the analysis. Naturally, it is best if the transcript is as faithful to the video recording as possible. However, there were many transcription difficulties we found that might affect the analysis. In our video recording, for example, it was nearly impossible to hear anything said by the students. Even the teacher spoke very quietly on occasion. This limited our ability to analyze teacher-student and student-student interactions. The transcription process can also be very subjective. For example, some analysts might transcribe talk as having continuing intonation, while others transcribe it as rising intonation.

This was one of the many reasons it is useful to work in a group. We could compare transcripts and hear others’ interpretations about the data. During our data sessions, we discussed what we had noticed in the data and different possible analyses of the actions performed. I found it interesting that we all noticed the same practices that could be analyzed. In our data, repetitions (also in the form of self-repair and echoing) were most noticeable. The most difficult part of the analysis was deciding precisely what actions the practices were performing and providing enough evidence to support that claim. It is not always clear what actions a practice is performing.

At first, I was not convinced that CA would be a practical tool for research on interaction in educational settings. However, after further discussion and review of research examining the use of CA-for-SLA and CA in other educational settings, I am optimistic that CA would be effective for research in institutional settings. CA is a useful tool in showing what teachers (and students) actually do and say (and how they do and say these things) in the classroom. This is something that seems to be unique to CA—it only examines what can be found in the data. While this can seem restrictive at some points, it could be useful in institutional settings for showing what teachers say and do in a class, regardless of what may be on the syllabus.

This information about the practices and actions performed by teachers could potentially be useful for other teachers. New teachers and particularly international teachers may find this data extremely helpful. Some examples of the types of information gathered from CA data that may be beneficial for new teachers include: openings, closings, IRE sequencing, teacher echoing, and *okays*. As a caveat, however, it is important to remember that even though we observe some types of interactions and practices in the classroom, they may not necessarily be solely pedagogical in nature.

I am of the opinion that CA has the potential for use in research on interactions in institutional settings. CA could be used in teacher training and perhaps for students in language classrooms as well. There are many areas of CA still open for research—in different settings as well as for the analysis of practices, sequences, or embodied actions not previously researched. CA might also be utilized in areas other than Applied Linguistics; it has great potential as a research tool in many fields.

Katya Arshavskaya

***Reflections***

CA as a tool can be used in raising teachers’ attention to their classroom talk and to what actually is achieved through this talk in their classes. Hsiao (2005) analyses student-teacher communicative patterns in a junior high school EFL classroom and concludes that the teacher predominantly follows the IRE sequence, without any further uptake or development of students’ contributions. The author cites Wells (1993) who distinguishes between the IRF (initiation-response-follow-up) and IRE (initiation-response-evaluation) sequences and who argues that the former is used to “extend, draw out of the significance, or to make connections”, while the latter is merely evaluative in nature. Further, Hsiao (2005) notes that the teacher half of the time produces exact repetitions of students’ responses and less often the teacher makes expanded repetitions. The researcher also notices that the teacher predominantly asks Wh-questions, which do not allow for students’ discussion and analysis of the texts but are used to elicit general information about the poems.

Likewise, in our data, we found several examples of the teacher’s mere echoing of students’ answers (lines 45, 87, 95, 100, 105). We concur with Hsiao (2005) that the practice of echoing is closely related to the kinds of questions that the teachers ask of their students. In our data set we observe a predominance of display questions (lines 43, 84, 90), which require production of a single right answer, already known to the teacher. In contrast, if a teacher asks a more open-ended question (lines 98 and 102), we observe that less echoing of students’ answers occurs since students come up with unexpected answers and this leads to teacher-students meaningful interactions, or discussions (lines 110-117). Since the process of teaching and learning can be understood as both a knowledge-transmission model (from a teacher or a more knowledgeable peer to another student) and as dialogic co-construction of knowledge (by students and the teacher), both display and open-ended questions are important in fostering students’ learning.

CA can be also used in tracing a student’s language development overtime. Thus, Hellerman (2008) undertakes a holistic approach to investigate one student’s learning of English in a beginner language class. Hellerman (2008) illustrates the approach with the data from the openings and disengagements from dyadic class tasks by the learner. While in other SLA research, this data could be considered as off-task conversations and therefore deemed as irrelevant, CA allows us to see the linguistic and non-linguistic affordances that the learner is provided with in the class and how he utilizes them to achieve the social actions expected of him. In the first two weeks of classes as well at the end of the course, the learner uses similar practices to initiate the task with another classmate, such as physical alignment, address terms, discourse markers, etc. However, in his fortieth week in the class the student also inquires about the other classmate’s readiness for the task, e.g., “Are you ready?”, “You finish?” Even though the learner may not always use the correct forms, we can see the learner’s expanded degree of participation in the classroom activities, which signals language development. Comparison of how the student disengages from the classroom tasks in his first two weeks vs. the fortieth week also shows a greater linguistic and non-linguistic repertoire of practices used by the learner (discourse markers, task expansion, etc.).

In our data set, we could as well observe that a more holistic, CA approach to teachers’ talk allows us to trace the process of the teacher’s becoming more comfortable with teaching her students as the class unfolds. As the data shows, the beginning of the class is characterized by the teacher’s stiff physical movements and an abundance of self-repairs and uh’s. Towards the end of the class, however, the teacher’s uh’s decrease and physical movements look less strained.

Lastly, CA can provide practical models of how teacher’s talk is “done” for novice teachers and/or teachers undertaking professional development. Novice teachers, especially NNS-s, often ask for concrete illustrations of teacher’s talk. As we see in our data, CA can provide us with these models: we see how the action of pedagogical clarification is accomplished (lines 8-10, 90, 120-122) and how the teacher introduces a new concept to her students (lines 34-38). In our data set, the teacher’s intonational patterns seem idiosyncratic. However, other CA researchers’ investigatition of teachers’ and students’ prosodies reveal interesting patterns. Thus, Hellerman (2003) found that teacher’s repetitions of students’ answers (echoing) do positive assessments if accompanied with a falling intonation and, on the opposite, signal that a student’s answer is incorrect or incomplete if pronounced with a slight rise. Closer attention to intonation patterns through CA can assist NNS teachers in becoming more aware of their own intonational patterns and, perhaps, in using some models as a guide for improvement.

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**T. Leo Schmitt**

**Individual reflections on the analytic process and CA as a tool for research on interaction in educational settings**

I believe it is inevitable that individual researchers will base their understandings on a variety of premises which do not necessarily overlap with those of other researchers. Human beings are made up of various genetic codes and they undergo often vastly different life experiences. While those who enter academia or scholarship may share some similar traits, I believe it would be foolhardy to expect them to approach any research question in exactly the same way and with exactly the same expectations. Indeed, were such a situation to exist, the entire nature of society would be entirely different. Accepting such individual differences in paradigm and world view, we can then look at the panoply of tools available within each discipline and which ones dovetail most exactly with each paradigm and with each individual. With this caveat in mind, I shall endeavor to explain how the methodology of conversational analysis (CA) and its associated aspects interact with my own views of knowledge and how it relates to work that I may do to further my own understanding of interaction in an educational[[1]](#footnote-1) context.

It is also important to note here that definitions of CA vary widely. From ten Have’s (2007) separation of ‘pure’ and ‘applied’ CA to questions on the validity of theories and ‘outside’ information and to questions of ‘linguistifying’ CA, CA seems to mean different things to different researchers. This reflection is based upon some of the generally accepted aspects of CA, but does not and cannot broach each individual conceptualization of what CA actually comprises.

First I think it is important to stress that I personally regard human interaction as an incredibly complex and sophisticated phenomenon. While Ockham’s razor is an attractive proposition for researchers, I believe it runs into serious opposition when trying to understand how human beings function. For me, this means that a single theory or methodology has a huge burden to bear, more so if it attempts to reduce the nature of human interaction to a few trite phrases. While the many philosophical and intellectual approaches to human interaction offer features of value, I question whether any one truly encompasses all that is universally relevant and all-encompassing. This applies to CA also. Any value that it may have must be qualified by the information on interaction that it does not contain or attempt to measure. Within the educational context, this would include intentionality, the written word, and historical and cultural context, all of which are excluded from the CA canon to a greater or lesser extent.

In the words of Shakespeare, what is past is prologue. Duff Johnson noted (in class 10/28/2009) that previous interactions often impact later interactions. Indeed, previous actions and communications can also impact current interactions. For example, the use of the definite article in something like “I saw the cat.” can be clear even if the ‘the cat’ has not been mentioned by the participants in months. Thus one of my concerns about CA is that it narrows itself excessively. A fish out of water is not the same as a fish swimming in a river. I believe context makes a significant difference.

CA seems to have attempted to have started its life posing as an atheoretical methodology. I am personally highly skeptical of the possibility of any methodology being truly atheoretical. Either no thought was given, in which case it is mere blundering; or a decision was made to avoid theory, which is in itself indicative of a theoretical underpinning. While it is, as Dr. Hall said (in class, 12/9/09) “…no longer conceptually vacuous”, its lack of clarity in where it stands makes it more difficult to evaluate as a methodology. If it is open to the researcher to attach the theory of his choice, then I suspect that an attempt to impose an unusual theory to guide CA would raise the hackles of many CA enthusiasts. If it rejects theory in its entirety, then its value in an educational concept would seem either questionable in the extreme or nihilistically revolutionary. If a theory is gelling as the result of scholarly debate by CA enthusiasts, then we can look forward to evaluating its validity at the point in the future.

Along with the atheoretical aspect comes the concept of ‘unmotivated noticing’. While this concept has been refined and more and more CA work seems to be based on previously noted aspects on talk-in-interaction, I find it somewhat worrying that these new studies are based on the work of earlier researchers claiming to have engaged in ‘unmotivated noticing.’ As noted above, I consider researchers to be impacted by their own experiences. Hence, I am skeptical of the idea that any individual listening to the earliest interactions used by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson would have been inexorably drawn to the same features and conclusions as they. What we notice, I would argue, is heavily influenced by who we are. In simple terms, I could probably go through my entire life without noticing what shoes any other individual is wearing, yet there are others who consistently note the footwear of others. If CA proponents can accept this fact, then it would seem that, in theory, any set of eyes may focus on a different set of features. Given my enthusiasm for multiple factors to be considered in human interaction, this is a position I can support. On the other hand, if CA proponents expect any talk-in-interaction to have fixed salient features that should be noticed by most researchers, then I am less convinced of its value. The inductive nature of CA can be commended, yet it seems that many proponents believe that deduction can only be fairly introduced after the first step is conducted inductively. I fail to see the need for such rigidity. If an overarching theory can be created and then inductively tested, why is this a problem? The idea of having no theory to start with appears to be another theory. It may be useful in some cases, but so might other approaches.

Of course a key aspect of CA seems to be its use of intersubjectivity. I appreciate the value of this paradigm. I believe that human interaction can often best be understood, not by a reliance on cold numbers or physics equations, but rather by a dialog between human beings. I feel that a discussion between researchers looking at data can improve the understanding each individual researcher gains from his/her own review of the data. The more people who look at this data, the better approximation we can gain of what the interaction actually ‘means’.

Naturally one problem of CA, as with most human interaction research, is Labov’s (1972) ‘Observer’s paradox’. The impact of having researchers set up cameras and having subjects fill out release forms can be expected to have some impact, but by how much is again difficult to measure. Of related concern is the researcher’s interpretation of talk-in-interaction between two (or more) participants. CA contends that it is best done in an emic situation wherein the researcher understands the cultural relationship between the speakers. While groups of individuals do share cultural knowledge, no two individuals share exactly the same knowledge and experience. It seems that CA might argue that an observer who shares the speakers’ culture knows enough to comment wisely on their alignment. However, I believe that differences at the individual and pair level can be opaque even to an observer ostensibly from the same group. Although this variance may appear slight, I fear that it could potentially be significant. A possible example would be a researcher observing two identical twins who have grown up together and lived closely throughout their life. Although the researcher may understand the language and culture fluently, many slight nuances in interaction can be overlooked by one who considers himself emic, yet is etic on another level.

Another concern I have about CA is its apparent shallowness. I have mentioned already my contention that complexity may best inform our understanding of human interaction. CA focuses on the local level, avoiding some of the overarching issues such as context and theory. However, it also seems not to delve deeper. While CA seems to represent an advance on classic discourse analysis with its emphasis on features such as stance, prosody, and intonation, I would like to see it go deeper. Jeffersonian transcription details basic changes in pitch and intonation, yet any musician will tell you that there are many more ways to detail differences in the volume and pitch of the human voice. Similarly with stance, we see CA scholars discuss some aspects of physical posture, yet I believe that subtle changes could indicate significant differences. Of course, at the practical level CA is already highly complex and detail-oriented; however, a truly clear picture may require a much deeper level of data collection and analysis.

In conclusion, I have a number of strong reservations about CA as a stand-alone methodology. However, I believe that it can be a very useful interactional tool when combined with other approaches. It has introduced a number of valuable insights into how humans interact. Nevertheless, relying on CA as the centerpiece of research and then building up from there does not suit my intellectual viewpoint. My own disposition and experience indicate that understanding an educational situation is best achieved by combining multiple viewpoints and striving to balance them into a coherent picture. CA is an additional tool in this approach. Its value and weight are qualities that I will likely not know until I have combined it with other approaches over many years.

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**Appendix: Complete Transcript,**

1 @language: en,ca  
2 @participants: t teacher, s1 student1, s2 student 2, s3 student 3, s4  
3 student 4, s5 student 5, s6 student 6  
4 @media: lecture3, video  
5 @comment:  
6 \*t: (.)((teacher nods in direction of camera))

7 \*t: Good morning everyone   
8 \*t: In today's class, we will talk about (.) equilibrium price and shift of  
9 demand (.)  
10 \*t: demand curves ((teacher gestures with left hand))  
11 \*t: uhm (.)

12 \*t:before I train these topics, let's take a short review of the previously covered concepts  
13 \*t: in previous (.) classes, we talked about uhm market demand and supply: ((teacher holds hands together in front of herself))  
14: \*t: would anyone (.) would any volunteer draw a demand curve and a supply curve on the blackboard ((teacher indicates to blackboard))  
15 ((student looks at other students and gets up)) (5.5)

16 \*s1: (May I?)  
17 \*t: Yes((laughter)) ((student comes to blackboard and draws, moves quickly back to seat after completion))(.)((teacher turns away from class and looks in direction of student drawing on the blackboard))  
18 \*t: Excellent

19 \*t:Thanks, (Alan)

20 \*t:yes (.) this is supply curve ((teacher points to diagram drawn on blackboard))  
21 \*t: amount means quantity supply((teacher points to diagram drawn on blackboard))  
22 \*t: this is demand curve ((teacher points to diagram drawn on blackboard))  
23 \*t: quantity demanded((teacher points to diagram drawn on blackboard))  
24 \*t: these graphs represent the relationship between the price and the quantity supplied,((teacher points to diagram drawn on blackboard))  
25 \*t: and between the price and the quantity demanded ((teacher points to diagram drawn on blackboard))  
26 \*t: actually, there are many concepts related to demand and supply  
27 \*t: uh more advanced concepts will be covered in (microeconomics) class  
28 \*t: and (.) I'd like to remind you of the fact that many economic models and concepts are the results of simplification((teacher holds hands together in front of herself))  
29 \*t: or abstraction of the real world  
30 \*t: for the purpose of study  
31 \*t: (.) so the concepts we study in our class are about more uh representative or general cases ((teacher holds hands together in front of herself))  
32 \*t: ok, now let's move on to today's topic

33: ((teacher turns on overhead projector))  
34 \*t: (.) first one is equilibrium price  
35 \*t: what is equilibrium price.  
36 \*t: equilibrium price means a price at which the quantity supplied matches the quantity demand  
37 \*t: in other words (.)  
38 \*t: equilibrium price is a price at which the quantity of (uh) (.)good that uh sellers want to sell matches the quantity of the good that buyers wants to buy ((teacher gestures with both hands))  
39 \*t: in a market graph like this one  
40 \*t: uh equilibrium price (.) °is found°((teacher points to overhead screen))  
41 \*t: (.) equilibrium price is found at intersection of the demand curve and the supply curve ((teacher indicates on overhead projector))  
42 \*t: in this graph (.) uh the product is an ice-cream  
43 \*t: how much is the equilibrium price here?((teacher indicates on overhead projector))  
44 \*s2: °two dollars°=  
45 \*t: =two dollars, exactly  
46 \*t: equilibrium price is determined by (.) demand and supply and it can change because demand and supply can change((teacher indicates on overhead screen))  
47 \*t: so:, now let us take a look at shift of the demand curves ((teacher changes overhead transparency))  
48 \*t: (.) as you can see he:re  
49 \*t: (.) if all (variables) other other than price changes, if only price changes the result shows as the moo- movement along the supply curve or demand curve (.)along the curve,((teacher points to diagram drawn on blackboard))  
50 \*t: but (.) if the price is the same and some other variable changes((teacher points to diagram drawn on blackboard))  
51 \*t: for example, income of consumers changes((teacher holds hands together in front of herself))  
52 \*t: uh then supply curve or demand curve itself can move to the right side or to the left side ,((teacher points to diagram drawn on blackboard))  
53 \*t: we call these change (.)  
54 \*t: in the case of demand curve  
55 \*t: we call this change as ↑shift of demand curve (.)  
56 \*t: °now)° (.) in this graph, (.)  
57 \*t: the product is (.) an ice-cream  
58 \*t: let's say ice cream A  
59 \*t: the one of the most popular ice-creams in the united states  
60 \*t: and these are marking demand curves and supply curves((teacher indicates on overhead projector))  
61 \*t: equilibrium price is here about one (point) five dollar ((squeaky sound))  
62 \*t: under this assumed situation, I want you to do a pair work with your partner next to your seats((teacher gestures with right hand))  
63 \*t: to find out uh  
64 \*t: the possible answers to these three questions((teacher points to overhead screen))  
65 \*t: first one is if income of consumers increases, how demand - how demand curve changed. ((teacher looks from overhead screen to class and back again))  
66 \*t: second one, as result of this shift, how would the equilibrium price change.  
67 \*t: lastly, what other factors, beside income,  
68 \*t: what factors other than income((teacher points to overhead screen))  
69 \*t: can also cause the shift of this demand curve of ice-cream A((teacher points to overhead screen))  
70 \*t: i'll give you about one more, one minute to start ((teacher gestures and then rolls up sleeve and looks at wrist area))   
71 \*: (.) ((teacher looks at watch)  
72 \*s2: (inaudible)  
73 \*s: (inaudible) ((teacher nods in direction of camera)) ((students appear to be talking to each other))  
74 \*s: (inaudible)  
75 \*s: (inaudible)((teacher looks at wrist again))  
76 \*s: (inaudible)  
77 \*s: (inaudible)  
78 \*s: (inaudible)  
79 \*s: (inaudible) ((teacher goes to the back of the classroom))  
80 \*s: (inaudible)((teacher puts a pen on the desk of a student))  
81 \*s: (inaudible)  
82 \*s: (inaudible)  
83 \*t: all right everyone((teacher points to overhead screen))  
84 \*t: the first question if income incr increases, how would this demand curve shift((teacher points to overhead screen))  
85 \*s3: (.)shift to right? ((another student gestures with hand moving to the right))  
86 \*t: yes, exactly.((teacher points to overhead screen))  
87 \*t: the demand curve will shift to the right  
88 \*t: that means demand increases  
89 \*t: second question  
90 \*t: as a result of this (.) shift, this change, how will the equilibrium price change?  
91 \*s2: °increase°  
92 \*t: °right°, see (.)((teacher draws on overhead transparency))  
93 \*t: °right and° (.)  
94 \*t: °is that° (.)  
95 \*t: as a result of the shift of demand curve, equilibrium price will increase, right?((teacher points to overhead screen))  
96 \*t: if income increases, demand curve will shift to the left side, and equilibrium price will decrease((teacher points to overhead screen))  
97 \*t: last question,  
98 \*t: <what other factors> can also cause a shift of demand curve of ice-cream A (.)  
99 \*s4: weather  
100 \*t: weather exactly  
101 \*t: if temperature rises, demand curve will shift to the right side (.) and <equilibrium price increases>((teacher points to overhead screen))  
102 \*:t anything else?  
103 \*s5: the new product is introduced into the market [(unclear)]  
104 \*t: [right], excellent  
105 \*t: new product or the prices of rival product  
106 \*t: what else?  
107 \*s6: (deappreciation) of the currency  
108 \*t: appreciation of currency  
109 \*t: yeah, maybe (.) yes [(if it)]  
110 \*s7: [if the country] has more and more babies,  
111 \*t: yes, yes  
112 \*s7: °more and more kids°  
113 \*t: if the babies likes ice-cream or dislike=((teacher points to overhead screen))  
114 \*s7: =kids always like ice-cream  
115 \*t: yes  
116 \*t: (related) preference  
117 \*t: (unclear) good  
118 \*t: so today we talk about equilibrium price and shift of demand curves.  
119 \*t: equilibrium price means a price at which the quantity supplied matches the quantity demanded  
120 \*t: and some factors can influence on demand  
121 \*t: can cause shift of demand curves and then equilibrium price can change  
122 \*t: in next class we're talk about, we'll talk about the shift of supply curves and the characteristics of (healthcare) market, (healthcare) service market((teacher points to overhead screen))  
123 \*t: is anyone have questions?  
124 \*t: if you have any questions, (you) (can) come to my office or e-mail me  
125 \*t: okay?  
126 \*t: so have a nice weekend  
127 \*t: i see you next week  
128 \*t: thank you  
129

1. I consider ‘education’ to be a loaded word. I will not deal with the implicit connotations here and restrict myself to noting that it is a problematic term. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)