

Making Arrangements:

Remote proposal sequences and attendant structural phenomena in social interaction

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Abstract

In this thesis, I contribute to the study of how arrangements are made in social interaction. Using conversation analysis, I examine a corpus of 375 telephone calls between employees and clients of three Community Home Care (CHC) service agencies in metropolitan Adelaide, South Australia. My analysis of the CHC data corpus draws upon existing empirical findings within conversation analysis in order to generate novel findings about how people make arrangements with one another, and some of the attendant considerations that parties to such an activity can engage in:

Prospective informings as remote proposals for a future arrangement – Focusing on how employees make arrangements with clients, I show how the employees in the CHC data corpus use ‘prospective informings’ to detail a future course of action that will involve the recipient of that informing. These informings routinely occasion a double-paired sequence, where informers pursue a response to their informing. This pursuit often occurs even after recipients have provided an initial response. This practice for making arrangements has been previously described by Houtkoop (1987) as ‘remote proposing.’ I develop Houtkoop’s analysis to show how an informing of a future arrangement can be recompleted, with response solicitation, as a proposal that is contingent upon a recipient’s acceptance.

Participants’ understanding of references to non-present third parties – In the process of making arrangements, references are routinely made to non-present third parties. In the CHC data corpus, these third parties are usually care workers. Prior research (e.g., Sacks & Schegloff, 1979; Schegloff, 1996b) explains how the use of ‘recognitional references’ (such as the bare name ‘Kerry’), conveys to recipients that they should be able to locate the referent from amongst their acquaintances. Conversely, the use of ‘non-recognitional references’ (such as the description ‘a lady called Kerry’), conveys that recipients are unacquainted with the referent. I examine instances where the selection of a recognitional or non-recognitional reference form is followed by a recipient initiating repair on that reference. My analysis provides further evidence that

the existing analytic account of these references corresponds to the way in which participants themselves make sense of them. My analysis also advances an understanding of how repair can be used, by recipients, to indicate the inappropriateness of a prior turn.

Post-possible-completion accounts – In a case study of a problematic interaction, I examine a misunderstanding that is not resolved within the repair space, the usual defence of intersubjectivity in interaction (cf. Schegloff, 1992b). Rather, I explore how the source of trouble is addressed, outside of the sequence of its production, with a ‘post-possible-completion account.’ This account specifies the basis of a misunderstanding and yet, unlike repair, does so without occasioning a revised response to a trouble-source turn.

By considering various aspects of making arrangements in social interaction, I highlight some of the rich order that underpins the maintenance of human relationships across time. In the concluding section of this thesis I review this order, while also discussing practical implications of this analysis for CHC practice.

Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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