Maynard (1989), *Japanese Conversation: Self-contextualization through Structure and Interactional Management*  
Class Notes, pp. 3-23

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1. Introduction (pp. 3-9)
   1.1. Background

SQ1. What is the definition of ‘CASUAL conversation’?
   → Verbal interaction requiring at least 2 participants who exchange variable turns.

SQ2. What are some of the characteristics of CASUAL conv.?
   → (1) At least one THEME must be recognized and shared by one turn exchange
   → (2) The content of the turn must be semantically or interactionally meaningful.
   → (3) The interaction itself must be casual; i.e. it is NOT conducted for an explicitly stated purpose.

What would be an example of a turn that is interactionally meaningful, though it may not be semantically?
→ A: *Na ni mo arimasen ga, doozo.* [offering food]

SQ3. What are the two main areas of research in conversation analysis (CA)?
   → (1) how talk is ORGANIZED
   → (2) how interaction is REGULATED

What is the purpose of this book?
→ Investigation of casual conversation in JPN to find out which aspects of conversational structure and interaction are more or less JPN-specific.

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As conversational exchanges are complex behavior, it is difficult to decide on a general methodological framework in which to study them.

Conversation analysis (commonly abbreviated as CA) is the study of talk in interaction (both verbal and non-verbal in situations of everyday life).
CA generally attempts to describe the orderliness, structure and sequential patterns of interaction, whether institutional (in school, a doctor's surgery, court, or elsewhere) or in casual conversation.
Inspired by ethnomethodology,.. CA was developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s principally by the sociologist Harvey Sacks and his close associates Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson.
Today CA is an established method used in sociology, anthropology, linguistics, speech-communication and psychology.

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1.2. Self-contextualization in Conversational Interaction

What is ‘CONTEXT’?
→ Who is talking to whom, when, where, for what purpose, etc.

SQ4. What is ‘SELF-CONTEXTUALIZATION’ in plain words?
→ The process by which conversation participants continually perceive, identify, and evaluate the immediate & overall context of the conversation, & interact properly in each.

Give a specific example (of your own).
→ ____________________________________

What are the 2 interacting stages of ‘self-contextualization’?

(1) Contextual interpretation of verbal & nonverbal signs (e.g. ‘listener responses’ (aiuzuchi), head mvt, gaze) & other abstract structural & interactional facts
(2) Contextual transformation of ideas & intentions to suit each situation of talk & to conform to the context

How often does self-contextualization occur?
→ Continually, because the actual situation in conversation keeps changing, and each change is incorporated in each participant’s self-contextualization.
What types of information must a conversation participant integrate in order to self-contextualize?
1. **linguistic info.**; e.g. grammar, lexical & sentential meaning
2. **social & environmental info.**; e.g. physical settings, sociocultural assumptions re. self & the interlocutor
3. **discourse organization**; e.g. thematic & narrative structure
4. **other info.**; e.g. the interlocutor’s personality & attitude, feelings toward each other

Does everyone self-contextualize to the same degree?
→ No, sometimes people diverge from the acknowledged norm.

How do people acquire such sensitivity to conversational context?
→ By socializing with other members within a culture.

How important is such interactive competence in everyday conversation?
→ It is crucial in achieving successful communication.

Is such competence important for nonnative learners, too?
→

What are the 2 foci of this study?
1. Discourse organizational structure; i.e. thematic & narrative organizations
2. Interactional/conversational management
   e.g. ability to
   - start conversation,
   - take turns appropriately,
   - develop topics of conversation interactively,
   - perform appropriate back-channel (aizuchi) behavior,
   - select what is to be said & unsaid,
   - send appropriate paralinguistic & nonverbal signs.

What type of approach is adopted for this study?
→ Combination of example-based argumentation & quantitatively based explanation.

What is the essential quality of conversational language in JPN, according to Maynard?
→ **Fragmentedness.**

How is it ‘technically & ethically problematic to collect natural samples in completely undisturbed day-to-day life situations’?
→

What is the advantage of a research design in which conversation sessions conducted by adult native-speaker pairs of same-sex friends with similar social status are video-/audio-recorded?
→ The design is replicable across speakers and across speech communities, which is useful for statistical reason & for conducting contrastive studies, etc.
Cf. Scientific findings must be testable.

In the field of sociolinguistics, the term Observer’s Paradox was coined by William Labov, who stated with regards to the term:
“the aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain this data by systematic observation.”
SQ6. (1) What type of data source is the best for conversation analysis, according to Maynard & why?
→ Speech samples obtained in controlled situations with NO outsider present.
Because it offers a reasonable balance between practical & ethical needs.

(2) What are the problems with other types of data sources?

2.3. Procedures for Data Collection

SQ7. What sort of factors must be taken into account to describe speech events for conversational analysis?
- Participants
- Setting
- Ends; e.g. to carry on casual conversation as directed by the researcher
- Act Sequence; e.g. conversational turns
- Key; e.g. casual
- Instrumentalities; e.g. oral
- Norms; e.g. norms of interpretation (=literal), norms of interaction (=nonadversarial)
- Genre; e.g. casual conversation, interview

SQ8. How should one decide which notations to use for transcribing the data?
→ It depends on the focus of the research
  e.g. sounds → narrow transcription (e.g. using IPA)
  occurrences of a grammatical item → broad transcription

3. The language of Conversation

3.1. Spoken and Written Language (pp. 19-23)

By what do conversation participants self-contextualize?
→ linguistic devices (e.g. words) & how the language is used.

SQ10. What are the characteristic differences between spoken and written English?

Ochs (1979): 2 types of discourse
  (1) relatively planned (typically, written language) &
  (2) relatively unplanned (typically, spoken language)

Compared to relatively planned discourse, relatively unplanned discourse is less complex & has a looser integration; e.g.
- more use of simpler structures acquired early
- more frequent deletion, repetition, left-dislocation (e.g. This I do not understand), etc.
Chafe (1980, 1982):
Written ~: more complex, coherent, & integrated
Spoken ~: produced in ‘spurts’ of ideas,
linguistically fragmented & emotionally involved

Written ~: more integrated or compact.
Spoken ~: fragmented as a result of numerous pauses,
false starts, fillers, repetitions, & backtracks.

What is a ‘idea unit’ (Chafe 1980, 1985)?

SQ11. What is ‘involvement’ (opp. ‘detachment’)?

What types of involvement are there?
(1) ego involvement
(2) involvement with the hearer
(3) involvement with the subject matter

Conversational discourse may be characterized by its
unplannedness, fragmentedness, & involvement.

In JPN the tendency for fragmentation & involvement
seems to be expressed to an even greater degree than in
American English.

In JPN, fragmentation is emphasized & made prominent due
to the particles & other devices attached at the final position.

SQ12. How is a ‘sentence’ defined?
Generally, asyntactically complete clause (i.e. contains a
VP), but it is more complicated in actual data.

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