

Pragmatics 7 - Conversational analysis

Some important terms:

floor - turn - turn-taking - floor-holding devices - local management system - transition relevance place - overlap (overlapping speech) - simultaneous speech - backchannels (backchannel signals/backchannelling) - pause - attributable silence - conversational style - high involvement style - high considerateness style - adjacency pair - first part - second part - insertion sequence - question-answer sequence - preference structure - preferred and dispreferred social acts - preface - hesitation

Example 1:

Jane: *Dave I'm going to the store.*

(2 seconds)

Jane: *Dave?*

(2 seconds)

Jane: *Dave - is something wrong?*

Dave: *What? What's wrong?*

Jane: *Never mind.*

floor-holding devices:

2a. *There are three points I'd like to make - first ...*

b. *There's more than one way to do this - one example would be ...*

c. *Did you hear about Cindy's new car? - she got it in ...*

- | | FIRST PART | SECOND PART |
|----|--|--|
| 3. | A: <i>What's up?</i>
A: <i>How's it going?</i>
A: <i>How are things?</i>
A: <i>How ya doin'?</i> | B: <i>Nothing much.</i>
B: <i>Jus' hangin' in there.</i>
B: <i>The usual.</i>
B: <i>Can't complain.</i> |
| 4. | A: <i>What time is it?</i>
A: <i>Thanks.</i>
A: <i>Could you help me with this?</i> | B: <i>About eight-thirty.</i>
B: <i>You're welcome.</i>
B: <i>Sure.</i> |
| 5. | Jean: <i>Could you mail this letter for me?</i>
Fred: <i>Does it have a stamp on?</i>
Jean: <i>Yeah.</i>
Fred: <i>Okay.</i> | (Q1 - Request)
(Q2)
(A2)
(A1 - Acceptance) |

- | 6. | FIRST PART | SECOND PART | DISPREFERRED |
|----|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| | Assessment | agree | disagree |
| | Invitation | accept | refuse |
| | Offer | accept | decline |
| | Proposal | agree | disagree |
| | Request | accept | refuse |

FIRST PART	SECOND PART
7a. <i>Can you help me?</i>	<i>Sure.</i>
b. <i>Want some coffee?</i>	<i>Yes, please.</i>
c. <i>Maybe we could go for a walk.</i>	<i>That'd be great.</i>

restatement of assessment in order to avoid silence:

8. Sandy: *But I'm sure they'll have good food there.*
 (2 seconds)
 Sandy: *Hmm - I guess the food isn't great.*
 Jack: *Nah - people mostly go for the music.*

hesitations and prefaces in dispreferred second parts:

9. Becky: *Come over for some coffee later.*
 Wally: *Oh - eh - I'd love to - but you see - I - I'm supposed to get this finished - you know.*

Note: **Adjacency pairs** represent social actions. Not all social actions are equal when they occur as **second parts of some pairs**, some are preferred and some are dispreferred. For example, an acceptance is structurally more likely than a refusal. This structural likelihood is called preference. **Preference structure** divides second parts into **preferred** (the structurally expected next acts) and **dispreferred** (the structurally unexpected next acts). In any adjacency pair, **silence** in the second part is always an indication of a dispreferred response.

How to do a dispreferred second

1. delay/hesitate
2. preface
3. express doubt
4. token Yes
5. apology
6. mention obligation
7. appeal for understanding
8. make it non-personal
9. give an account
10. use mitigators
11. hedge the negative

Examples

pause; *er; em; ah, well; oh*
I'm not sure;
I don't know
that's great; I'd love to
I'm sorry; what a pity
I must do X;
I'm expected in Y
you see; you know
everybody else; out there
too much work; no time left
really; mostly; sort of; kinda
I guess not; not possible

Some symbols from *A Corpus of English Conversation*:

A,B,C	speaker identity (surreptitious speaker – doesn't know about recording)
a,b,c	speaker identity (non-surreptitious speaker)
* yes *	simultaneous talk
(laughs)	contextual comment
<<yes>>	incomprehensible words
.. _ _ _ .	pauses