

Lost in Translation? :

On Using Conversation Analysis to Examine Cross-Linguistic Data

Cade BUSHNELL

Abstract

An increasing number of conversation analytic studies since the mid nineteen-nineties examine interactions involving what may be termed “cross-linguistic data,” or data featuring interactions between first and second language speakers of a common language(s), or between second language speakers of a lingua franca. To complicate matters, the language(s) of the interaction may or may not be native to the researcher. In this essay, I discuss some of the issues surrounding the use of conversation analysis to examine both foreign language data (i.e., data where the researcher is not a first language speaker of the language(s) used in the interaction), and second language data (i.e. data where one or more of the participants is not a first language speaker of the language(s) of the interaction). In particular, I consider issues specific to cross-linguistic data that are potentially problematic for conversation analysis. In discussing these issues, I give consideration to both potential problems and corresponding counter arguments, and proposed solutions. Then, I expand upon some of the counter arguments and solutions mentioned in a discussion of the (new) analytic requirements for approaching cross-linguistic data. I also comment on possible analytic gains offered in and through examining cross-linguistic data.

Keywords: Conversation analysis; Cross-linguistic data; Second language users; Analytic requirements; Ethnography

I . Introduction

Since the mid nineteen-nineties, an increasing amount of conversation analytic research is being focused to *cross-linguistic* data (CL below), or interactional data featuring foreign language(s) (i.e., data where the language of the interaction is not native to the researcher), and second language data (i.e. data where one or more of the participants is not a first language speaker of the language(s) of the interaction).¹ Below, I examine some of the issues involved in bringing conversation analysis to bear on such data. First, I consider potential problems for conversation analysis in examining CL. In so doing, I give consideration

1 For the purposes of this essay, I use the term cross-linguistic to encompass both of these situations. I will indicate points when the scope of my discussion narrows to only one or the other (i.e., foreign language or second language) in particular.

to both potential problems, and corresponding counter arguments and proposed solutions. Then, I expand upon some of these counter arguments and solutions in a discussion of the (new) analytic requirements for approaching CL. I also comment on possible analytic gains afforded by the nature of the data examined.

II . CA and cross-linguistic data: Potential problems

A general analytic goal of conversation analysis (CA) is to uncover the generic resources by which participants engage in social actions in and through their talk, and create and maintain intersubjectivity concerning both what they are doing and what they mean. CA was conceived in the 1960s by Harvey Sacks and subsequently developed by him and his colleagues. These foundational studies typically examined English talk-in-interaction by predominantly adult² members of what might be very broadly (and over simplistically) referred to as “middle-class North American” society.

CA is underpinned by an ethnomethodological view of social order as an ongoing members’ accomplishment (Garfinkel 1967). It is important to note, however, that the concept of “member” in ethnomethodology is a technical and highly specific one. It refers not to a person, but rather to a “mastery of natural language” (Garfinkel and Sacks 1970:342). Thus, as both Firth (1996) and Wagner (1996) note, CA has been developed upon an assumption of the participants in talk (and the analyst) having an equal and extensive knowledge of a common linguistic code, comparable levels of interactional competence, and a common cultural frame of reference. These assumptions raise at least three³ distinct but related issues in terms of analytical resources for CA researchers seeking to examine CL. First, second language (L2 below) interaction, by definition, is likely to involve participants whose linguistic and interactional abilities and common cultural frames of reference are not equal, and possibly not extensive. This fact may result in interactional peculiarities that could be difficult for CA to grapple with because the participants themselves either do not or cannot orient to them, or because the orientations of the participants remain ambiguous. Second, in the case of foreign language (FL below) data, the availability various kinds of members’ knowledge to the researcher becomes problematic. Third, issues surface concerning the appropriateness of applying the assumptions and findings from CA research conducted on English interactions to CL. I consider each of these issues in turn below.

1 . Ambiguities in participant orientations

Firth (1996) argues that since participants in L2 talk-in-interaction are not likely to have linguistic and interactional competencies that are “fully developed, shared, and stable” (1996:252), the potential for linguistic problems, mutual misunderstanding, and ambiguity is omni-present. It may thus be difficult,

2 Notably, however, Sacks also examined data from English-speaking children (e.g., Sacks 1995:256-7).

3 A fourth issue that I do not discuss at length below centers around potential difficulties in producing transcripts that will allow the reading audience to access the data adequately to follow the researcher’s analysis and argument, and to conduct independent analyses of their own (see, e.g., Jefferson 1996; Moerman 1988; 1990; ten Have 2007).

Firth argues, for CA to handle with such data. Firth suggests two possible complications. First, he observes that L2 interactions may be characterized by such tactics as *let it pass*, and *make it normal*. According to Firth, *let it pass* is a passive tactic employed by the hearer when “faced with problems in understanding the speaker’s utterance” (1996:243), wherein the problem utterance is not oriented to in hopes that it will be made clear in the subsequent interactional sequences. *Make it normal*, on the other hand, is an active tactic whereby an interactant actively works to “divert attention away from the linguistically infelicitous form of the other’s talk” (1996:245).⁴ Second, Firth argues that the “interactional significance” (1996:245) of actions such as restarts, gaps, filled pauses, and so forth, may be difficult to establish analytically because it may not be easy to tell whether or not the recipient of such actions is orienting to them as being related to issues of linguistic proficiency, or in the same manner in which such actions might be oriented to in L1 interaction. As an illustration of the second complication, Firth presents two analyses of a single data extract taken from an over-the-phone business interaction between two users of English as a lingua franca. The business-at-hand in the interaction is that of buying and selling cheese, and the extract begins with H (the seller) inquiring as to whether the estimate G (the buyer) had received was for fixed or variable weight cheese. Firth first performs a conventional conversation analysis on this data, and follows this with an analysis taking into account the possible limitations in English proficiency of the L2 participants. Firth’s data is reproduced as Extract 1 below.⁵

Extract 1 (reproduced from Firth, 1996: 250)

```

1  H → yes .hh eh uh the quotation you have received, is that with fixed weight
2      (0.4)
3      because uh: we can get it with ah: (.) eh: ↓uh:: different weights
4      on (.) each unit=but an averayge around four hundred
5      'n' fifty=but (.) they can be from four hundred to five
6      ↓hundred gra:m. ↓
7      (0.7)
8      but we have decided to=
9  G → =NO ↓no. one uh ↑fix uh: this
10     four 'undred fifty ↓grah [m.
11  H →                                     [it's a fixed uh
12     (0.5)
13  G → f [ixed]
14  H   [ (* )
15  G   yes
16  H   yes °ah uh°
17  G → four hundred fifty gram fixed

```

Extract 1 shows two L2 speakers of English, G and H, engaging in business negotiations over the phone. In the first analysis (i.e., the conventional one), Firth notes that H’s line 3 action of accounting for his line 1 question seems to be occasioned by the fact that the second-pair part to H’s question is not forthcoming

4 It should be noted that Firth also claims that participants may often not employ these two tactics in order to attend to contingencies that “must be dealt with immediately” (1996:250).

5 See the appendix for transcription conventions.

(noting in particular the .4 second pause in line 2). Firth cites Heritage (1988) in offering an explanation of this action, arguing that such accounts may indicate the delicate nature of an action being performed by the talk (in this case, an inquiry about the weight of cheese).⁶ Firth emphasizes that H's account explains that his (H's) company is capable of supplying various-weight cheese, which, according to Firth, is more desirable than fixed-weight cheese. Following this accounting, when G again passes on taking the floor at line 7, H continues by producing "but we have decided to=" At this point, G starts up with "=NO↓no. one uh ↑fix," which, according to Firth's first analysis, seems to be doing the work of correcting H's displayed assumption that the price quote in question is based on various-weight cheese. Then, as Firth also notes, H and G go on to mutually confirm that the quote is actually based on fixed-weight cheese.

In his second analysis, however, Firth analyzes H's actions in line 3 as orienting to "the possibility that G has not adequately understood the question" (1996:251), as a result of problems related to language proficiency. Firth notes that H's stressed "different weights" appears to be working to create a contrast between the other possible option (i.e. "fixed weight", cf. line 1), and cites this as a warrant for such an analysis. He also suggests that H's continuation in line 8 may be seen to treat G as being still unable to understand. Firth further notes that H's line 8 marks a topic change, and proposes that G's line 9 interjection may be understood as G's efforts to prevent topic change before he is able to deploy his utterance in the relevant context of H's line 6. Finally Firth notes that G's self correction from *fix* (line 9) to *fixed* (line 13) seems to support the notion that G may indeed have been unfamiliar with this word, and was thus experiencing difficulties with understanding.

Firth concludes his analytic illustration by arguing that it shows that CA's typical analytic approach of using the "next-turn proof procedure" (see Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974) in order to develop a participant-relevant understanding of the interaction may be of ambiguous usefulness in the case of L2 interactions. He argues that this is because the participants' linguistic and interactional competencies are not necessarily equal or stable, and that as a result they may employ tactics such as *let it pass* or *make it normal*, or display ambiguous orientations to peculiarities in their interaction. Firth stresses that this fact may make it difficult for CA to clarify the interactional implications of the participants' actions.

My analysis of Extract 1 is commensurate with Firth's on many points. I agree, for example, that H's line 3 is occasioned by the lack of a second-pair part from G, and that H's "different weights" works to create a contrast between the line 1 "fixed weight." I analyze H's line 3 as being a repair of his line 1 in light of a displayed problem with understanding (in this case possible *non*-understanding) by his interlocutor in line 2. Thus, as Firth notes in his second analysis, H's actions in line 3 *do* appear to orient to

6 It must be noted, however, that H's account beginning in line 3 of Extract 1 is quite different from the accounts examined by Heritage (1988). While H produces his account in reference to the absence of a response from G, the accounts that Heritage (1988:133) is concerned with involve "a range of instances in which a second speaker's failure to accomplish a projected, or looked for, action is accompanied by an explanation or account of some kind."

G's actions (or lack thereof) as displaying a problem with understanding.⁷ However, I do not find Firth's analyses to be entirely unproblematic. In particular, Firth's second analysis seems to attempt to invoke the psychological states of the participants (i.e., their intentions) as an analytic resource. As Heritage (1990) argues, however, the intentionality of participant actions is beyond the analytical scope of the CA program. Thus, assigning intention (whether such intentions be related to an assessment of G's language proficiency, or to a wish to sell a more desirable kind of cheese) to H's actions in lines 1 through 8 is problematic from a CA perspective. On the other hand, the issue of language proficiency *is* a warrantably-oriented-to concern of at least one of the participants: G. In line 9, as Firth also notes, G produces "fix," and does so notably in an environment which also indicates some interactional trouble (note the speech perturbations and filled pauses before and after "fix"). In line 11, H produces "it's a fixed uh," from which G then uptakes the item "fixed" into his own utterance in line 13 (note also the identical stress pattern). By this action, G treats H's line 11 as performing an "embedded correction" (Jefferson, 1983) of his line 9 "fix." In so doing, G notably orients to his own linguistic ability (regarding this specific item) as being at fault. My analysis thus does not find the same kinds of ambiguities suggested by Firth (1996). Such ambiguities, it would seem, stem from an attempt to get at the intentionality of participant actions.

2. Members' knowledge

A key concept in CA is the importance of basing analyses on the actual hearable/visible phenomena in the data (Schegloff 1991; 1997c). However, a number of researchers (e.g., Schegloff in Wong and Olsher 2000, and especially ethnomethodologists such as Francis and Hester 2004; Hester and Francis 2000; Watson 1997) also maintain that the analyst's understanding of the actions in which the participants engage in their interactions is necessarily informed by members' knowledge. According to Francis and Hester (2004:26), a basic and fundamental starting point for ethnomethodological inquiry is "common sense appearances of the social world." I would argue that, in order for a researcher to draw upon such "common sense appearances," he or she must meet the ethnomethodological requirement of "unique adequacy" (Garfinkel and Weider 1992), that is, he or she must have obtained a level of competence in the social practice being examined.

The requirement for unique adequacy poses a special problem for conversation analysts examining FL interaction. Such problems are at least two fold. First, CA requires an exceedingly high level of detail and precision in its data transcripts. However, as Bilmes (1996) and Moerman (1996) note, problems with correctly hearing and transcribing naturally occurring FL interactional data may be extensive and pervasive even for those with highly advanced proficiency in the language of the interaction.⁸ In dealing with this

7 As discussed in Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977), the mechanism of repair is systematically implemented by the participants to deal with problems in speaking, hearing, or understanding in their talk-in-interaction. In the case of line 3, by not providing a restating or paraphrasing of line 1, H's self repair is notably not treating G's lack of response as displaying a problem with hearing.

8 Indeed, these tasks often pose formidable difficulties even for L1 speakers.

problem, Moerman (1996) admits that he initially considered delegating transcription to an L1 speaker of the language(s) of his data. However, unlike some other kinds of discourse analysis, CA views the process of transcription as a vital part of the analysis itself, and therefore requires that the analyst transcribe his or her own data (Moerman 1990; see also ten Have 2007). Instead, Moerman recommends “working with a native colleague or consultant” (1996:150) during the process of transcription and analysis in order to ensure accuracy.

A second problem, beyond the relatively simple matter of being able to hear and transcribe the sounds of the language of the interaction, is that a researcher must be able to draw upon the kinds of cultural knowledge and resources that members use to comprehend and create implicatures, create, negotiate, and maintain intersubjectivity, and assemble social actions. Without meeting this requirement, the analyst will be blinded to the “common sense appearances” mentioned by Francis and Hester (2004:26). Some researchers (e.g., Bilmes 1996; Moerman 1988; 1990; 1996) have therefore argued for the necessity of the inclusion of ethnographic information to provide both the analyst and the reading audience with the members’ knowledge required to see and hear the interactions from the eyes and ears of the participants. Working with Northern Thai data, Bilmes (1996), for example, demonstrates in detail how the absence of members’ knowledge (available, in Bilmes’ case, through ethnographic research) concerning the Thai legal system and the customs and laws involved in dividing rice among sharecroppers and landlords would significantly alter the analysis of a particular interaction. He also notes that such problems may be very delicate because an ethnographically uninformed analysis may appear on its surface to adequately describe and account for the interactional practices visible in the data. However, Bilmes emphasizes, such an analysis would not permit an accurate or adequate understanding of the interaction from the viewpoint of its participants — a violation of a crucial construct of validity for CA research. I discuss the place of ethnography in CA in more detail in Section 3.

III. Applicability of findings from English data

In addition to problems concerning members’ knowledge and unique adequacy, there is also the related issue of whether or not CA findings and assumptions based on English data are wholly or partially applicable to FL interactions. A number of researchers have suggested that certain aspects of FL interaction may possibly differ from English interaction in various ways (e.g., Moerman 1988; 1990; Schegloff 2000a; Tanaka 1999; Wong 2000). As noted above, conversation analysts looking at English data have developed a considerable body of findings concerning various resources, devices, structures, and mechanisms⁹ in talk-in-interaction. However, the applicability of such findings to FL data is not entirely

9 E.g., turn-taking (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974; Schegloff 2000b); repair (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977; Schegloff 1979; 1992; 1997a; 1997b; 2000a); preference organization (Bilmes 1988; 1993; 1995; Pomerantz 1984; Sacks 1987; Schegloff 2007); “standard silences” (Jefferson 1989); discursive devices (Heritage 1984; 2002; Raymond 2004); etc.

behavior of the *Ixodes* species in lines 4 and 6. In line 5, B further displays an orientation to this information as newsworthy by producing the news receipt token *hoo* (Mori 2006), greatly emphasized by elongation. This action offers further support to an analysis of B's line 2 “^a” as displaying a change of state.

Heritage (2002) examines another function of the token *oh* in English: to display a disagreement to a disagreement. The Japanese token *a* also appears to occasionally function in a similar capacity, as in Extract 3.

Extract 3

1. A: demo zu::tto un-deiru kara nan janai?
 but all-along birth-ing so N NG
 But isn't (it) because (they are) laying (eggs) a::ll alo:ng?
2. B:→ .hhh ^a, demo zu::tto un-de↓-te: (1.4)
 oh but all-along birth-ing-L
 .hhh oh, but (they are) laying (eggs) a::ll alo:ng ↓ a:nd (1.4)
3. aru jiki ni naru to, me:tingu suru janai ° desu ka. °
 certain time G become if mating do NG C Q
 when (it) becomes a certain time, (they) mate don't (they).

Here, A and B (the same interactants in Extract 2) are discussing the reproductive practices of bees. In the prior turns, B has suggested that bees might be a special case among insects in that there appear to be relatively few timing restrictions on their mating behaviors. In line 1, A produces a *demo* (however)-prefaced disagreement with B's suggestion, maintaining that this is simply a function of the queen bee's perennial egg laying. B's response in line 2 is marked as opposition relevant by a turn initial *a* + *demo*. As Heritage notes, *oh*-prefaced disagreements are often used as a “holding a position” device, and that they “overwhelmingly manifest themselves as disagreements to disagreements” (2002:217). It would appear that B's use of *a* in Extract 3 functions in a way similar to Heritage's (2002) *oh*.

However, there also appear to be additional ways in which *a* is used in Japanese that does not resemble the use of *oh* in English. I will consider two instances below. In both of the extracts below, C and D are chatting over a dinner that D has prepared. Just prior to Extract 4, C and D had been discussing how it had been difficult for them to get together even though business had recently brought C near D's town several times. D apologizes for not being able to meet during those times, and in line 1, C produces “*isogai mon ne:*” (it's that you are busy, huh.). Just prior to Extract 5, on the other hand, C and D had been talking about D's typical cooking routine.

In line 4 of Extract 4, C prefaces his utterance with *a* + *demo*. However, in contrast to the identical token deployed by B in Extract 3, C's utterance does not display opposition or disagreement with the previous utterance (which is notably not displaying disagreement either; cf. Heritage 2002). Instead, C's “^a” seems to function as a kind of new topic opener (note the long gap directly preceding C's turn) — marking a shift to a topic which is obliquely related to talk from several sequences ago. Thus, in Extract 4,

Extract 4

1. C: isogasii mon [ne::.
 busy N I
 (You're) busy, huh::.
2. D: [uhheh heh heh
 uhheh heh heh
 uhheh heh heh
3. ?: ((long gap filled with eating sounds))
4. C:→ ^a demo, ima: ano: (sniffs) M-san n uti wa:
 a but now um M-title M house T
5. doko da kke.
 where C Q
 A *but*, u:h (sniffs) where is it that Mrs. M's house is no:w?

Extract 5

1. D: kekkoo tukutteru [yo,
 quite making I
 (I actually) often cook,
2. C: [a kore n- nan niti ka bun no:.,
 a this n- what day Q portion M
3. yatu?
 thing
 A (is) this s- several days worth?
4. D: u:h ↓u:h (.) kore: (.4)
 uh uh this
 No (.) this:=
5. C: iti niti?
 one day
 =One day?
6. D:→ ^a kore, u:h ↓u:h (j)itu wa kinoo tukutta.
 a this uh uh when oh yesterday made
 A this, no when= oh (I) made (it) yesterday.

α seems to be devoid of any implications of disagreement or change of state, and therefore not analogous to the uses of *oh* in English described by Heritage (1984; 2002).

In line 6 of Extract 5, D deploys α before the indexical expression *kore* ("this"). *Kore* here refers to the food that D had made. It seems unlikely that D would display a change of state regarding "kore" when it has already been topicalized by C in line 2, and when D himself has already deployed the term in line 4. The fact that C's line 5 seems to be a question in regard to the length of time the food Dan has prepared should last may suggest that Dan's α in line 6 could be analogous to English *oh*-prefaced responses to inquiry, described by Heritage (1998). According to Heritage (1998:296), however, such *oh*-prefaced responses "[i]ndicate that the inquiry being responded to is problematic as to its relevance, presuppositions, or context," and that they may "foreshadow reluctance to advance the conversational topic invoked by the inquiry." A closer examination of line 6 reveals that it does not fit well with the characteristics described by Heritage (1998) because, not only is it not interpretable as indicating that C's inquiry is problematic in some respect, it is not doing responding to C's question in the first place; note that the response to C's *yes/*

no question comes later in D's line 6 utterance as "u:h ↓u:h."

Sacks (1987:57-58) notes that participants work to maintain a "contiguity" across successive turns, such that "[a] question goes at the end of its turn, and [an] answer at the beginning of its turn." It may be noted that D constructs his line 6 as a continuation of his line 4 through the use of "kore." However, in so doing, he pushes the response to C's line 5 back further into his (D's) turn, thus breaking the contiguity mentioned by Sacks (1987). In this way, his deployment of *a* here seems to mark this momentary rupture in the contiguity of question/answer.¹¹ However, such a function has not been described in relation to the English token *oh*.

While this may seem like an insignificant bone to pick, I argue that it points to a larger problem concerning the straightforward applicability of English CA findings to interactions in other languages. Of course, as ten Have (2007:121) maintains, the previous findings of English-based CA provide the researcher with a "conceptual apparatus" that "would be silly to ignore completely." However, a fundamental and key concept in CA is that pre-held notions must be suspended during data analysis. I would argue that the free application of English CA findings to FL data is tantamount to the application of pre-held notions. As the above analyses have shown, it would, for instance, be problematic to attempt an importation of the notions of "change of state token" or "disagreeing to disagreement" and unreflectively associate them with the Japanese token α . Such an endeavor would result in (a) a reification of the notions themselves, (b) a researcher-relevant (i.e. "etic") analysis of the data for at least the token α , and (c) a failure to provide an understanding of the actual interactional work being done by α . Though there may indeed be many similarities between interactions in English and other languages, there will also be linguistically, culturally, and contextually sensitive applications of the context-free resources for talk-in-interaction, which result in important differences that may be consequential for analyses of data (see Moerman 1990). Thus, I argue that while analysts should certainly be guided by an awareness of the body of CA findings for English, they must also proceed in a cautiously exploratory fashion when dealing with FL data. Such data must be viewed afresh in order to uncover its own unique characteristics. I will further elaborate upon this argument in the following section.

IV. Analytic resources: New requirements, and possible gains

The preceding discussion has considered several potential difficulties for CA in examining cross-linguistic data. I have considered the issues of ambiguity in participant orientation in L2 interaction, difficulties with developing accurate transcriptions of the data when the language of the interaction is not the researcher's L1, the availability of members' knowledge to the analyst (and reading audience), and the appropriateness of applying CA findings from English to FL interaction. In addition to re-analyzing Firth's (1996) data in order to show that the "ambiguities" which he argues problematize the use of CA in looking

11 My analysis of this point benefits greatly from insightful comments by the anonymous reviewer.

at L2 data stem from an attempt to assign intentionality to the participants' actions, I have also alluded to several methods that have been suggested for ameliorating the remaining problems. In particular, in regard to the problem of members' knowledge for the analyst in the case of FL data, I noted that (a) Moerman (1990) advises working with an L1 speaker during the transcription process, and that (b) Bilmes (1996) and Moerman (1988; 1990; 1996) argue that ethnographic information must be used to provide the kind of members' knowledge necessary to see the interaction from a participant-relevant perspective. Furthermore, in the case of analyzing FL data, I argued that analysts must exercise caution in importing CA findings from English to describe and account for their FL data. I suggested that analysts must proceed in an exploratory manner while maintaining a general awareness of the English findings. In the sections below, I will further elaborate on each of these points. I will conclude the section by commenting on some of the possible analytic gains related to using CA in examining cross-linguistic data.

1. (New) requirements when dealing with cross-linguistic data

(1) Ethnographically informed analysis

Much debate has gone on over the relationship between conversation analysis and ethnography. Moerman (1988), advocates a "culturally contexted conversation analysis," i.e., an ethnographically informed approach to CA. However, his proposal has been subjected to criticism by several "conventional" conversation analysts (e.g. Beach 1990; Heritage 1990; Mandelbaum 1990; Pomerantz 1990; see also Nelson 1994 for an overview). Such criticism has generally focused on two distinct issues. The first issue is concerned with how ethnographic data is regarded by CA in general. One of the most fundamental precepts of CA is that objects such as accounts, explanations, stories, tellings, etc. constitute data for analysis themselves, *not* analysts' resources. This means that typical ethnographic research methodologies such as interviews, self reports, questionnaires, fieldnotes, participant observations, etc. are viewed by CA as either possibly providing one form of interactional data for analysis (i.e., in the case of interviews), or as being of dubious value for providing a participant-based (i.e., "emic") view of interactional practices. In other words, CA requires that its data be constituted by the actual interactional practices themselves, and *not* by participants' accounts of such practices. The theoretical reason for this is that participants' accounts of interactional practices are never produced in a vacuum — they are always interactionally occasioned, and designed and formulated specifically and precisely for (a) the sequential context in which they are deployed, and (b) for their recipient(s). Therefore, such accounts are not treated by conversation analysts as unproblematic reflections of "what really happened" or "how things really are."

However, as Moerman argues, "how could the conversation analyst recognize an utterance as a pre-invitation, for example, without trading on covert native knowledge of dating practices and the special significance for them of Saturday night" (1988:4)? In other words, even the most mundane of talk-in-interaction is deeply and ineluctably embedded in and dependent for its interpretation upon members'

knowledge¹² — members' knowledge that is tacitly drawn upon by many CA analysts in examining their data.¹³ However, Hester and Francis (2000) and Watson (1997), for example, strongly criticize this tacit employment of members' knowledge by many CA researchers. They argue instead that such members' knowledge should be made a topic of analysis and explication itself.

The second criticism is based on the notion that interactional data is fundamentally describable and accountable from within itself. An important finding of CA is that every current utterance in talk-in-interaction is both context-shaped (i.e. displays an analysis of and is deployed in relevant relation to the prior utterance) and context-renewing (i.e. creates a context to which the next turn must orient, and of which it must display an analysis) (see, e.g., Heritage 1988). This fact is a fundamental principle of talk-in-interaction, and provides for the interactional co-accomplishment of intersubjectivity. It is also the foundation for the CA practice of basing analytic claims on the orientations of the participants themselves, which they publicly document for each other (and thus simultaneously make them available to the researcher) in their interactions (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974). Because of the availability of the participants' orientations in the actual interactional sequences, it is argued that the unwarranted invocation of exogenous information may be superfluous, or even obstruct the development of a participant-relevant view (see Schegloff 1991; 1997c).

Recognizing that within their publicly documented actions participants also often display orientations to a second kind of context, i.e. "social structure" (in a macro sense), however, Schegloff (1991) does allow for the *data-warranted* inclusion of exogenous contextual information. However, in order for an analyst to warrant such an inclusion, Schegloff requires that the participants themselves make such contextual information *relevant* (e.g., by demonstrably orienting to it in their interaction), and that the context-so-made-relevant has *procedural consequence* (i.e. repercussions on the "shape, form, trajectory, content, or character of the interaction" [1991:53]). Drawing upon Schegloff (1991), Maynard (2003:65) proposes that CA researchers develop a "limited affinity" with ethnography. Maynard argues that such a limited affinity would allow for ethnographic support on three occasions: for describing settings and identities; explicating unfamiliar terms, phrases, or courses of action; and to explain "curious" sequential patterns. However, Maynard's notion of limited affinity seems to be mainly concerned with data presentation, that is showing the data in a form which will facilitate an objective reading and independent analyses by the reading audience. Thus, while I fundamentally agree with Maynard's argument in regard to this point, I would additionally argue that an analyst must also work to gain members' knowledge in the

12 This fact is amplified significantly when the data under examination is FL, but it remains equally true in the case of English data.

13 One possible reason for a general lack of recognition of this point by conventional CA may be that it has been developed by researchers examining interactions in their own L1, thus leaving the intertwined relationship between talk and members' knowledge "seen but unnoticed" (Garfinkel 1967). However, in my opinion, there is somewhat of a double-standard at work here. CA researchers that criticize the inclusion of ethnographic information while tacitly drawing upon members' knowledge in their own analyses have failed to consider from whence they themselves have obtained such members' knowledge. We are all, in a sense, ethnographers of our own cultures.

form of the kinds of social and linguistic competencies that will facilitate seeing and hearing the interaction as the participants do, i.e. in terms of “common sense appearances of the social world” (Francis and Hester 2004:26) — especially in the case of FL data. Thus my stance may be more harmonious with Bilmes (1996), who relaxes Schegloff’s (1991) strictures one step by requiring only that the participants make exogenous context relevant in their interaction. Such a modification, Bilmes maintains, allows for an ethnographic accounting of even the kinds of members’ knowledge (of possible interest from an anthropological perspective) which are “seen but unnoticed” by the participants themselves (i.e., they are made relevant in the interaction, but do not necessarily have procedural consequence — like Moerman’s (1988:5) pre-invitation/Saturday night date scenario).

(2) Data sessions

Moerman (1996) advises analysts looking at FL interactions to enlist the aid of an L1 speaker of the language. In addition to this, I would argue for a requirement to present the data at CA data sessions which have a significant population of L1 and near-native speakers of the language of the interaction.¹⁴ I personally have benefited greatly from presenting my data to audiences of L1 speakers of Japanese, even if it has only ended up confirming my own intuitions and observations. Such support makes available a certain kind of epistemic authority, which may be a critical form of “credibility” for analysts looking at FL data. Furthermore, presentation of one’s data to other conversation analysts also allows for a dialogue in which new, fresh views of certain sequences may be brought to light. Through this process, a researcher may come in touch with and draw upon a much more comprehensive socially distributed body of knowledge concerning the research literature, etc. than would be available on an individual level.

(3) Ethnomethodological indifference and unmotivated looking

I have argued above that, in the case of FL data, an attempt by the analyst to import CA findings from English instantiates a violation of the analytical requirement to suspend pre-held notions. I would like to expand my argument to include L2 data. This is because L2 participants may potentially use certain established linguistic resources in ways that diverge from their established use, or accomplish interactional work typically accomplished through deploying certain established resources by deploying novel resources instead. In an examination of interactions between Japanese novice L2 speakers of English, Carroll (2005), for example, focuses on a practice not typically observed in L1 interaction, i.e. vowel epenthesis (e.g. “dogu” instead of “dog”). Although vowel epenthesis has generally been viewed by non-CA research simply as a phonological error stemming from L1 transfer, Carroll (2005) shows that the participants were actually deploying it in a socially organized way as a floor-holding device — a finding not likely to have

¹⁴ It may of course be argued that this is not a new requirement in that it is considered “best practice” for all CA researchers regardless of the nature of their data (see ten Have 2007). I maintain, however, that it may be more of an imperative practice in the case of analysts dealing with interactions in languages other than their L1.

been made without the suspension of pre-held notions through applying the principles of unmotivated looking and ethnomethodological indifference. Thus, I argue that researchers must maintain a strict adherence to the fundamental CA principles of ethnomethodological indifference and unmotivated looking in the case of L2 data as well (see, e.g., Mori 2007; Schegloff 2000a).

2. Possible analytic gains

I believe that there are at least two important analytical gains involved with using CA to examine cross-linguistic data. The first gain comes to the conversation analyst from the nature of the data, and especially relates to the case of FL data. When analysts are L1 speakers of the language(s) used in the interactions they examine, the CA requirement for the suspension of any pre-held notions when performing an analysis can be challenging, as researchers often may not even be aware that they are using such resources. In my opinion, however, when the interaction is not conducted in the researcher's L1, it may put the researcher at an analytical advantage. I believe that the task of suspending pre-held notions becomes much easier when analysts can approach the data somewhat with the eyes and ears of an "outsider." In other words, it may be easier for the analyst to set aside any pre-held expectations and engage in unmotivated looking because the data is already made "anthropologically strange" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:8) by its very nature.

The second analytic gain comes to the data from CA, and is related to the fundamental principle of unmotivated looking — especially in cases where at least one of the participants is a L2 speaker of the language(s) used in the interaction. Firth and Wagner (1997), for example, note that non-CA research on such data has tended to assume that the interactants are linguistically and interactionally "deficient." According to Scott Saft (p.c.), however, though "it might be true that [such participants] have not yet acquired some desired aspects of language such as vocabulary and grammar," CA has the analytic capability to show us "how interactionally competent L2 speakers actually are." I would therefore argue that an important analytic gain is afforded in the sense that CA can allow analysts to avoid *a priori* seeing the interaction in terms of deficiencies, and thus uncover unexpected new findings (cf. Carroll 2005). Furthermore, CA allows analysts to develop a participant relevant perspective through which they can understand "non-target" language use in light of the interactional work it performs rather than in terms of prescriptive linguistic appropriateness.

V. Conclusion

In this essay, I have discussed a number of issues related to using CA to examine cross-linguistic data. In particular, I have considered three issues that have been suggested by some researchers to be potentially problematic for CA. First, I discussed Firth's (1996) argument that certain ambiguities and special practices present in L2 interactions may make it difficult for CA to rely on its "conventional" analytical practices. In

a reanalysis of Firth's data, I showed that Firth's "ambiguities" appear to stem from an attempt by Firth to assign intention to the participants' actions. Next, I discussed the problem of members' knowledge for analysts who are not L1 speakers of the language(s) of the interactions they examine. I proposed that such difficulties are at least two fold. First, the CA requirement for detailed and accurate transcriptions of spoken interaction may be problematic for such analysts. Second, I discussed the issue of members' knowledge in light of the ethnomethodological requirement for unique adequacy, i.e. a functional competence in the social practices under examination. In a preliminary consideration of possible solutions to these two problems, I touched upon Moerman's suggestion to secure the assistance of a L1 speaker associate and upon the argument made by some researchers (e.g., Bilmes 1996; Moerman 1988; 1990; 1996) for the necessity of informing conversation analysis with ethnographic research. Finally, I discussed the issue of the applicability of CA findings for English to FL interaction. In relation to this problem, I provided a discussion of the Japanese token α . In an analysis of Japanese interactional data, I showed that although α is highly analogous to the English token *oh* in some contexts, there also appear to be several domains of usage that are dissimilar. I argued that this fact points to the problematicity of attempting to import CA findings from English when dealing with FL data. Instead, I argued, analysts should cautiously explore FL data on its own terms.

In the third section, I turned to a discussion of some (new) requirements for CA created by cross-linguistic data. First, I expanded upon the discussion of the necessity for ethnographic information. I noted that a number of researchers have recognized the inseparably co-dependent nature of talk-in-interaction and members' knowledge. I also considered Scheloff's (1991) criteria for the inclusion of exogenous contextual information, relevance and procedural consequence, and the application and adaptation of Schegloff (1991) by Maynard (2003) and Bilmes (1996) in producing defensible syntheses of CA and ethnography. Second, I provided a brief addendum to Moerman's (1990) advice to enlist the aid of a L1 speaker of the language(s) used in the data. Finally, I further argued for a cautionary stance in applying CA findings from English to FL data, and expanded my argument to include L2 data as well. My discussion emphasized the special relevance of the concepts of ethnomethodological indifference and unmotivated looking for the analysis of cross-linguistic data.

Lastly, in a consideration of possible analytic gains in the case of researchers examining FL interactions, I argued that the CA requirement for the suspension of pre-held notions during analysis may be easier to fulfill because the data is naturally "anthropologically strange" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:8). In the case of L2 data, I noted that CA allows the analyst to avoid approaching the data with pre-held assumptions of the "deficiency" of the participants, and may thus afford deeper analytical insights than other approaches. Furthermore, I argued that CA can help the analyst to see the local interactional work being performed by language that might otherwise be viewed as "non-target."

Though an increasing number of researchers are employing CA to examine cross-linguistic data, we are still a long way off from a view of the full picture of the possibly universal generic interactional

competencies (see Schegloff 2006) which underpin the accomplishment of our various and varied social realities. It is hoped that the current essay may provide some direction and encouragement for those seeking to bring the analytical apparatus of CA to bear on foreign and second language data.

Appendix

Transcription Conventions:

| | |
|--------------|---|
| ^ | glottal stop |
| heh hah | laughter tokens |
| ↑ ↓ | high or low pitch (placed prior to affected element) |
| >words< | quicker than surrounding talk |
| <words> | slower than the surrounding talk |
| [| beginning of overlapped speech |
|] | end of overlapped speech |
| = | latching (i.e. no pause after the completion of one utterance and the beginning of another) |
| (1.3) | length of pause (measured in seconds and tenths of seconds) |
| (.) | pause less than one tenth of a second |
| (words) | unclear utterance |
| (***) | unrecoverable utterance (number of syllables indicated by asterisks) |
| ((words)) | commentary by transcriptionist |
| wo::rd | geminate sound |
| WORDS | louder than surrounding talk |
| ° words ° | softer than surrounding talk |
| <u>words</u> | more emphasis than surrounding talk |
| wo- | cut-off |
| , | continuing intonation |
| . | final intonation |
| ¿ | rising but not questioning intonation |
| ? | question intonation |

Interlinear Key for Japanese

| | |
|--|---|
| C: Copula | P: Past tense PA: Passive |
| CT: Continuer | Q: Question marker |
| D: Double particle (<i>kamo, toka, etc.</i>) | QT: Quotation marker |
| DA: Dative particle (<i>he, ni</i>) | S: Subject marker |
| F: Speech filler | T: Topic marker |
| IP: Interactional particle (<i>yo, ne, sa, na, etc.</i>) | |
| IT: Interjection (<i>e, a, ^e, ^a, etc.</i>) | <u>Stylistic indicators (when necessary):</u> |
| L: Linking device (<i>-te, de, si, kedo etc.</i>) | DS: Distal style |
| M: Noun modification particle (<i>no, na, etc.</i>) | FS: Formal style |
| N: Nominalizer | H: Honorific |
| NG: Negative | HU: Humble |
| O: Object marker | PS: Plain style |

Works cited

- Beach, Wayne A. 1990 "Searching for universal features of conversation," *Research on Language & Social Interaction* 24, pp.351-368.
- Bilmes, Jack 1988 "The concept of preference in conversation analysis," *Language in Society* 17, pp.161-181.
- 1993 "Ethnomethodology, culture and implicature: Toward an empirical pragmatics," *Pragmatics* 3, pp.387-409.
- 1995 "Negotiation and Compromise," in Alan Firth (ed.), *The Discourse of Negotiation: Studies of Language in the Workplace*, Oxford, Pergamon Press Oxford, pp.61-81.
- 1996 "Problems and resources in analyzing Northern Thai conversation for English language readers," *Journal of Pragmatics* 26(2), pp.171-188.
- Carroll, Donald 2005 "Vowel-marking as an Interactional Resource in Japanese Novice ESL Conversation," in Keith Richards and Paul Seedhouse (eds.), *Applying Conversation Analysis*, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, pp.214-234.
- Chapman, Audrey and Patrick Ball 2001 "The Truth of Truth Commissions: Comparative Lessons from Haiti, South Africa, and Guatemala," *Human Rights Quarterly* 23(1), February, pp.1-43.
- Firth, Alan 1996 "The discursive accomplishment of normality: On 'lingua franca' English and conversation analysis," *Journal of Pragmatics* 26(2), pp.237-259.
- Firth, Alan, and Johannes Wagner 1997 "On discourse, communication, and (some) fundamental concepts in SLA research," *The Modern Language Journal* 81(3), pp.285-300.
- Francis, David, and Stephen Hester 2004 *An Invitation to Ethnomethodology: Language, Society and Interaction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Furo, Hiroko 2001 *Turn Taking in English and Japanese: Projectability in Grammar, Intonation, and Semantics*. New York: Routledge.

- Gafaranga, Joseph 1999 "Language choice as a significant aspect of talk organization: The orderliness of language alternation," *Text* 19(2), pp.201-225.
- 2001 "Linguistic identities in talk-in-interaction: Order in bilingual conversation," *Journal of Pragmatics* 33(12), pp.1901-1925.
- Garfinkel, Harold and Harvey Sacks 1970 "On formal structures of practical actions," in John McKinney and Edward Tiryakian (eds.), *Theoretical Sociology: Perspectives and Developments*, New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Educational Division, pp.160-193.
- Garfinkel, Harold 1967 *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Garfinkel, Harold and Lawrence Wieder 1992 "Two incommensurable, asymmetrically alternate technologies of social analysis," in Graham Watson, and Robert Seiler (eds.), *Text in Context: Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Newbury Park, Sage, pp.175-206.
- Goodwin, Charles 1980 "Restarts, pauses, and the achievement of a state of mutual gaze at turn-beginning," *Sociological Inquiry* 50(3-4), pp.272-302.
- Hammersley, Martyn and Paul Atkinson 1983 *Ethnography, Principles in Practice*. London: Tavistock.
- Hauser, Eric 2005 "Coding 'corrective recasts': The maintenance of meaning and more fundamental problems," *Applied Linguistics* 26(3), pp.293-316.
- 2008 "Co-constructing an opinion of Japaneseness," paper presented at the 10th international conference of the Japanese Society for Language Sciences, University of Shizuoka, Shizuoka, Japan.
- Have, Paul ten 2007 *Doing Conversation Analysis*. Boston: Sage.
- Heritage, John 1984 "A change-of-state token and aspects of its sequential placement," in J. Maxwell Atkinson and John Heritage (eds.), *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp.299-345.
- 1988 "Explanations as accounts: A conversation analytic perspective," in Charles Antaki (ed.), *Analysing everyday explanation: A casebook of methods*, London, Sage, pp.127-144.
- 1990 "Intention, meaning and strategy: Observations on constraints on interaction analysis," *Research on Language & Social Interaction* 24, pp.311-332.
- 1998 "Oh-prefaced responses to inquiry," *Language in Society* 27(3), pp.291-334.
- 2002 "Oh-prefaced responses to assessments: A method of modifying agreement/disagreement," in Cecilia Ford, Barbara Fox, and Sandra Thompson (eds.), *The Language of Turn and Sequence*, New York, Oxford University Press, pp.196-224.
- Hester, Stephen and Peter Eglin (eds.) 1997 *Culture in Action: Studies in Membership Categorization Analysis, Studies in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis*. Washington, D.C: International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis, University Press of America.
- Hester, Stephen and David Francis 2000 "Ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, and 'institutional talk'," *Text* 20(3), pp.391-413.
- Jefferson, Gail 1983 "On exposed and embedded correction in conversation," in John Lee and Graham Button (eds.), *Talk and Social Organization*, Clevedon, UK, Multilingual Matters, pp.86-100.
- 1989 "Notes on a possible metric which provides for a 'standard maximum' silence of approximately one second in conversation," in Derek Roger and Peter Bull (eds.), *Conversation: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*.

- Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- 1996 “A case of transcriptional stereotyping,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 26(2), pp.159-170.
- Mandelbaum, Jenny 1990 “Beyond mundane reason: Conversation analysis and context,” *Research on Language & Social Interaction* 24, pp.333-350.
- Mori, Junko 2006 “The workings of the Japanese token hee in informing sequences: An analysis of sequential context, turn shape, and prosody,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 38(8), pp.1175-1205.
- 2007 “Border crossings? Exploring the intersection of second language acquisition, conversation analysis, and foreign language pedagogy,” *The Modern Language Journal* 91(5), pp.849-862.
- Moerman, Michael 1988 *Talking Culture: Ethnography and Conversation Analysis*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- 1990 “Exploring talk and interaction,” *Research on Language & Social Interaction* 24, pp.173-187.
- 1996 “The field of analyzing foreign language conversations,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 26(2), pp.147-158.
- Nelson, Christian 1994 “Ethnomethodological positions on the use of ethnographic data in conversation analytic research,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 23(3), pp.307-329.
- Pomerantz, Anita 1984 “Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes,” in J. Maxwell Atkinson and John Heritage (eds.), *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp.57-101.
- 1990 “Mental concepts in the analysis of social action,” *Research on Language & Social Interaction* 24, pp.299-310.
- Raymond, Geoffrey 2004 “Prompting action: The stand-alone ‘so’ in ordinary conversation,” *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 37(2), pp.185-218.
- Sacks, Harvey 1987 “On the preferences for agreement and contiguity in sequences in conversation,” in Graham Button and John Lee (eds.), *Talk and Social Organization*, Clevedon, England, Multilingual Matters Limited, pp.54-69.
- 1995 *Lectures on Conversation*. Boston: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Sacks, Harvey, Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson 1974 “A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation,” *Language* 50(4), pp.696-735.
- Schegloff, Emanuel 1979 “The relevance of repair to syntax-for-conversation,” in Talmy Givon (ed.), *Discourse and Syntax*, New York, Academic Press, pp.261-286.
- 1987 “Recycled turn beginnings: A precise repair mechanism in conversation’s turn-taking organization,” in Graham Button and John Lee (eds.), *Talk and Social Organisation*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters, pp.70-85.
- 1991 “Reflections on talk and social structure,” in Deirdre Boden and Don Zimmerman (eds.), *Talk and Social Structure: Studies in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis*, Berkeley, University of California Press, pp.44-70.
- 1992 “Repair after next turn: The last structurally provided defense of intersubjectivity in conversation,” *American Journal of Sociology* 97(5), pp.1295-1345.
- 1997a “Third turn repair,” in Gregory Guy, Crawford Feagin, Deborah Schiffrin, and John Baugh (eds.), *Towards a Social Science of Language 2*, Philadelphia, John Benjamins, pp.261-286.
- 1997b “Practices and actions: Boundary cases of other-initiated repair,” *Discourse Processes* 23, pp.499-

545.

- 1997c “Whose text? Whose context?” *Discourse & Society* 8(2), pp.165-187.
- 2000a “When ‘others’ initiate repair,” *Applied Linguistics* 21(2), pp.205-243.
- 2000b “Overlapping talk and the organization of turn-taking for conversation,” *Language in Society* 29(1), pp.1-63.
- 2006 “Interaction: The infrastructure for social institutions, the natural ecological niche for language, and the arena in which culture is enacted,” in Nicholas Enfield and Stephen Levinson (eds.), *Roots of Human Sociality: Culture, cognition and interaction*, Oxford, Berg, pp.70-96.
- 2007 *Sequence Organization in Interaction: Volume 1: A Primer in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schegloff, Emanuel, Gail Jefferson and Harvey Sacks 1977 “The preference for self-correction in the organization of repair in conversation,” *Language* 53(2), pp.361-382.
- Seedhouse, Paul 1998 “CA and the analysis of foreign language interaction: A reply to Wagner,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 30(1), pp.85-102.
- Tanaka, Hiroko 1999 *Turn-taking in Japanese Conversation: A Study in Grammar and Interaction*. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins.
- Wagner, Johannes 1996 “Foreign language acquisition through interaction: A critical review of research on conversational adjustments,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 26(2), pp.215-235.
- Wong, Jean 2000 “Delayed next turn repair initiation in native/non-native speaker English conversation,” *Applied Linguistics* 21(2), pp.244-267.
- Wong, Jean, and David Olsher 2000 “Reflections on conversation analysis and nonnative speaker talk: An interview with Emanuel A. Schegloff,” *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 11(1), pp.111-128.