Chapter 19

Sequential Analysis

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A general question for humans in coordinating social activity with one another is how to organize activities in terms of their temporal unfolding. Sequential analysis explores basic organizations that generate the orderliness of a temporally unfolding activity. This chapter discusses the ideas of sequential analysis and how it proceeds. In what follows, we first characterize sequentiality in interaction and demonstrate that participants orient to it in organizing their interactions ("What is Sequentiality?"). We then illustrate how to address the central analytic task of sequential analysis, that is, how to propose the machinery that generates the observed sequential development of interaction ("Machinery"). In the subsequent two sections ("Three Dimensions of Sequence Organization" and "Other Sequential Organizations"), we describe the structural features of the previously explicated sequential organizations. We conclude by identifing three issues that call for caution and further consideration when investigating sequentiality in social interaction.

What is Sequentiality?

Sequentiality signifies a specific type of temporal relationship between units and types of units that extends beyond their factual, temporally successive occurrence (see Lerner 1996), and, as such, constitutes a particular type of temporal feature of interaction that participants routinely attend to in organizing joint activity.

Let us begin by unpacking this notion of "sequential" as a temporal feature of activity that participants use as a resource for organizing and understanding actions. In listing features of how conversationalists understand the events they depict in conversation, Garfinkel (1967, 41) notes that "the depicted events include as their

essentially intended and sanctioned features an accompanying ‘fringe’ of determinations that are open with respect to internal relationships, relationships to other events, and relationships to retrospective and prospective possibilities.” To put this in more general terms: When conversationalists understand one another’s utterances, the understanding of what is being said at each moment has to also contain an understanding of both what preceded it and what potentially follows it. A simple example provides a case in point. Excerpt 1 below is from a Japanese conversation between two friends, where A reports to B that he almost died that day because of a bad cold. Our focus is on B’s utterance in line 12: “Did you take medicine?”

```
(1) TB
01  A:   oira jitsuwa kyoo wa kaze hiite ie de kutabat↓te
02       tanda na a[h hah hah ha:↓:: ((mock laughter))
         I almost died today because of having a cold.
03  B:             [e
                    What?
04  B:   ah soo ↓na↑no?
         Oh is that right?
05  A:   soo nano.
         That’s right.
06  B:   .hh (0.4) ara maa so:↓o
         .hh (0.4) Oh dear, is that so.
07  A:   n:n
         Yeah.
08  B:   sor’ya yoku ↓nai ne:
         That’s too bad.
09  A:   de↓[shoo:
         Yes, it is.
10  B:      [.hh
11       (0.8)
12  B: → ↓kusuri wa_ nonda_ ↑kai?
         Did you take medicine?
13  A:   nnn: nonde nai↑kedo: ↓moo tabun daijoo↓bu =
         No, I didn’t, but now I am probably fine.
14  B:   =iya demo kaze gusuri nonde hitoban neru tte noga
15       ore ni totcha ichiban iina::↑:
         Well, but for me, taking cold medicine
         and sleeping works best.
```

How do the participants understand B’s utterance in line 12? In answering, “No, I didn’t,” A first displays his understanding that B’s utterance in line 12 implements a polar question. By continuing with “now I am probably fine,” however, A also displays

an understanding that B's utterance in line 12 implicates a *kind* of advice, namely, that A should take medicine if he has not already done so. A claims that this is no longer necessary as he is probably "fine" now. In lines 14-15, B further ratifies this understanding of his prior action: He begins with *iya demo*, where both *iya* (a negative response token) and *demo* ("but") mark disagreement. If the preceding utterance was only an answer to an information-seeking question, it would not make sense for the questioner to disagree with the answer. Rather, B, the questioner himself, understands that his utterance in line 12 is not a simple question. What it disagrees with is hearable as A's resistance to the implicated advice. This hearing is further supported by what B subsequently produces (lines 14-15). He states what works best for him, but in this context (i.e., in terms of why he reveals this fact at this moment), his statement is intelligible as another (indirectly formulated and therefore mitigated) suggestion that A should take medicine.

This situated understanding of B's utterance in line 12 as implicating a kind of advice is provided for by its sequential placement, where it is heard as responsive to A's initial news delivery in lines 01-02 and as such projects certain trajectories that could follow. Sequentiality as a feature of interaction is thus a resource that participants use to produce utterances and understand one another's utterances in talk-in-interaction. Why those utterances are produced at those particular sequential positions is a central issue that the participants face as they engage in their activities. In this sense, sequential analysis may also be one of the participants' primary methods of sense-making in interaction (see Macbeth, this volume).

Machinery

The first task for the professional analyst in investigating social interaction lies in explicating the participants' understanding of one another's utterances. As participants' understanding of talk is made accessible to one another in the sequential development of the interaction, the analyst can use this as a resource in analyzing the work achieved by each utterance. In the analysis of line 12 in Excerpt 1, for instance, we drew on the participants' understandings of the utterance as exhibited in their subsequent talk. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974, 728) refer to a proof procedure: Wherever possible, the analyst should ground their reasoning in participants' exhibited understanding.

This alone, however, would not lead the analyst toward explicating the mechanism or "machinery" (Sacks 1992) that generates the actual sequential development of the interaction. Regarding Excerpt 1, the issue for the analyst is to provide accounts of what *kind* of advice the utterance in line 12 implicates and how it comes to be understandable as such. The proof procedure should therefore be understood as a preparatory analytic step for the explication of such a machinery—what Schegloff (1996a, 173) refers to as "the methodical, or procedural, or "practice-d" grounds of [the] production" of the target phenomenon:

> It is not enough to show that some utterance was understood by its recipient to implement a particular action […]. In order to provide analytically the grounds for the possibility of such an understanding, an account must be offered of what about the production of that talk/conduct provided for its recognizability as such an action; that is, what were the methodical, or procedural, or "practice-d" grounds of its production. Once explicated and established, this serves as part of the account of the utterance/action, *whether or not it was so understood by its recipient on any particular occasion*. (Emphasis original.)

Thus the machineries to be explicated are not theoretical models that explain causal relationships between objects; rather, they are procedural grounds that participants use

for the organization of their interaction; they are sets of ordered practices.

The method usually employed for explicating machineries is to create a collection of conversational fragments that seem to contain a single phenomenon or a particular practice (Schegloff 1996a). If one collects fragments of questions that seek the addressee's current condition, for instance, one may realize that many of these questions preface certain actions or in other words, initiate what is called a "pre-sequence" (Schegloff 2007), instead of merely seeking information. We illustrate some of the basic features of pre-sequences by juxtaposing two Japanese examples (Excerpts 2 and 3) between two close friends from different telephone conversations. In Excerpt 2, A inquires as to whether B has a particular book (line 01).

```
(2) MU
01  A: → ano sa:, eburidee rangeeji motte nai?
         Uhm do you have Everyday Language ((title of a book))?
02       (1.0)
03  B:   aa: sore wa <motte> nai kedo.
         Well I don't have it, but.
04  A:   a so(h)kka(hh) hh [hh
         Oh, I(h) see(hh) hh hh
05  B:                     [nn:.
                            Yeah.
06  A:   iya: shegurofu no: (.) i-i-y- sankoo ni shi yoo to
         Well I wanted to look at Schegloff's ((chapter))=
07       ommotte=ronbun kaku toki sa::,
         =to write a paper
```

In line 03, B answers negatively to A's question; A receipts B's answer (line 04) and then provides an account of why he asked the question (lines 06-07): He wanted to borrow the book for a specific chapter. We note two things. First, B's answer (line 03) is marked as contrastive (to something) by the conjunctive *kedo* "but." In this context, the answer, which describes B's current situation, potentially addresses the project implicated by the question, whatever it may be; in other words, B, in the construction of his answer, displays that he orients to the fact that A's question has projected that something will ensue and that his answer is blocking the emergence of the projected

action. Second, A's account of his intention to ask the question displays A's orientation to the incompleteness of the complete Q–A sequence, that is, the expectation that something should have ensued following it. In sum, both participants orient to the 'pre-ness' of the question in focus, irrespective of whether the question is a 'pre-' to occurs or not.

In Excerpt 3, A launches a pre-sequence in lines 04 and 06; he inquires as to B's availability during a particular period in the future.

```
(3) FF
01  A: → omae sa:
          Hey, you,
02  B:   nn,
          Yeah
03        (1.6)
04  A: → <kongetsu> matsu gurai i- (.) hima?
          Around the end of this month, will you be free?
05  B:   .h[h
06  A: →   [ma- (.) sanjuu ichi ka ichi gurai.
            Wel- (.) around the thirty first or first.
07        (0.8)
08  B:   .hh choto matte:?, (1.2) n- aru to sureba baito
          Just a minute? (1.2) wel- if anything, only a part-time job,
09        dakedo chotto matte:?,
          but just a minute?
10  A:   nn.
          Yeah.
          ((6 lines omitted))
11  B:   a, <sanjuu ichi ka:> i- tsuitachi dattara: zenzen hima.
          Oh, on the thirty first or one- the first, I will be free.
12  A:   n_ hima?
          You will?
13  B:   nn.
          Yeah.
14  A:   iya- 'teyuuka:::: (0.6) y- yotchan kara ne:
          Well- or to put it better, (0.4) from Yotchan,
15  B:   n[:.
          Mm.
16  A:    [tsui saikin denwa ga atte:
          very recently I got a phone call, and
17  B:   n:[n
          Mm hmm
18  A:     [kondo:: (.) bandoo n'chi de nomoo ttekoto ni natta
19        kara:.
          we decided to have drinks at Bandoo's ((B's)) place, so.
20  B:   n(hh) hh nani(h) sore(h).
          Huh(hh) hh what's(h) that(h).
```

In line 11, B answers A's question affirmatively; then, based on the answer, A

proceeds to report on what he and his and A's mutual friend have decided. What is interesting about this excerpt is that A introduces his report with *iya*, which literally means "no," and *'teyuuka*, which roughly means "or to put it better." These terms contrast the incipient action with the projected. Thus, the construction of A's report displays his orientation to the fact that such a report is not what the question as having projected. In other words, he orients to the pre-sequence question projected a limited set of action types irrespective of whether one of the projected action types appeared; in fact, we hear it as projecting an invitation or proposal to ensue once a "yes" answer is given.

We argue that the 'pre-ness' of pre-sequences does not depend on factual developments in the subsequent interaction; rather, it provides a normative expectation that a limited set of action types will occur once a go-ahead answer is given to the pre-sequence question, whether or not it is the case. Returning to Excerpt 1, we can see how this observation equips us with a perspective that more fully reveals the sequential development of the interaction.

```
(1) [lines 12-13]
12  B: → ↓kusuri wa_ nonda_ ↑kai?
         Did you take medicine?
13  A:   nnn: nonde nai↑kedo: ↓moo tabun daijoo↓bu =
         No, I didn't, but now I am probably fine.
```

First, we now see that B's question in line 12 is a "pre-advice" (rather than actual advice); it projects that advice will be given depending on the recipient's answer. Second, A knows at the moment of his answer that his answer ("no") allows B to proceed to provide the projected advice. Third, if he is to reject the projected advice once it is offered, A can preemptively block the emergence of the advice through his response to the pre-advice—to avoid explicitly rejecting it (see Sacks 1992, vol. 1, 304).

Fourth, finally, he actually does this by adding “but now I am probably fine.” This is the machinery that generates the development of interaction—the machinery that hinges on the parties’ orientations to the nature of projection.

Finally, participants’ orientation towards sequentiality can further be seen in the temporal arrangement of the items *within* B’s answer turn in line 13. The answer consists of two parts: first, the answer to the question and, second, the report that discourages the emergence of advice. These two parts are sequentially ordered within a turn according to how A’s question is constructed; first, responding to the question and, second, responding to what is done *through* the question (i.e., pre-advice) (Schegloff 2007, 75-76).

Three Dimensions of Sequence Organization

Pre-sequences are part of what is now called “sequence organization” (Schegloff 2007), which generates the order of sequences of turns-at-talk. Two dimensions of sequence organization have been investigated most systematically: (1) action-sequencing, by which the temporal relationship between utterance *types* (or action types implemented by utterances) is organized and (2) preference organization, by which the selection from alternative utterance *types* is organized. In addition, we consider a third dimension: (3) the congruence of stances displayed through the design of consecutive actions.

Action-Sequencing

Research on sequence organization began with the observation of the existence of sequence types (or “types of sequences”), in addition to utterance types (Schegloff

1968; Schegloff et al. 1974). “Questions,” “answers,” “requests,” “invitations,” and “complaints” are all utterance types; they are types in the sense that they have such generality as to encompass instances comprising different contents and forms. Some sets of these utterances form sequence types, such as “question–answer,” with utterance types being ordered in them. A basic sequence type consisting of two ordered utterance types is called an “adjacency pair” (Schegloff 2007, 9). Adjacency pairs have the following nature: If one speaker produces an utterance that is intelligible as the first pair part of an adjacency pair (e.g., a question), the next speaker is *generally* expected to produce the second pair part of the same adjacency pair (e.g., an answer), regardless of who the first and second speakers are, what they talk about, in which form, and so on. Adjacency pairs include “question–answer” “invitation–acceptance/rejection,” “request–acceptance/rejection,” among others.

Adjacency pairs are a normative framework to which conversationalists orient for producing and understanding their conversational conduct (Heritage 1984, 249-251). What if, after you invite your recipient to the movies, your recipient responds “I have homework to do this evening”? Although it does not directly address the matter mentioned in the invitation, the response is intelligible as the reason for rejecting the invitation in reference to a due second pair part of the “invitation–acceptance/rejection” pair. Alternatively, your question about direction (e.g., “How do I get to your place?”), for instance, may be met with another question (e.g., “Where are you coming from?”) instead of an answer. Such a question following the first is understood by reference to the answer to the first question that is due at this moment—as a preliminary to it. The first dimension of sequence organization is the organization of the *temporal* relationships between utterance *types*.

Preference

With some exceptions (such as greeting–greeting), adjacency pairs have alternative second pair parts, most of which can be classified into two types: agreement and disagreement. However, these alternatives are not equally valued. Previous studies have found that the agreement type is generally preferred over the disagreement type (Pomerantz 1984; Sacks 1987; see also Nishizaka and Hayano 2015b for a more detailed exposition). This preference is a structural phenomenon; for instance, if you accept (agree with) an invitation, you may respond immediately and simply ("Yes, I will."). However, if you reject (disagree with) it, you may make an excuse, as suggested earlier. Thus, the preference is the principle operating on *alternative* utterance *types* that can occupy one sequential (temporal) position rather than on utterance types distributed across sequential positions (see Figure 1).

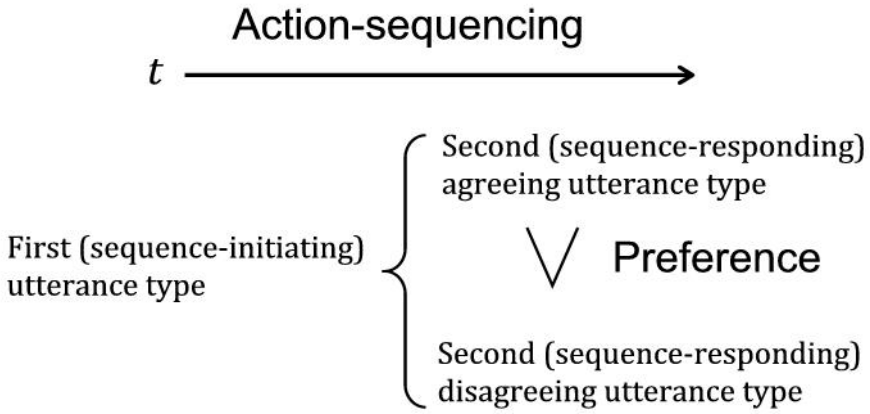

Figure 1 Action-sequencing and preference

Congruence of Stances

Recent studies document the various stances embodied by utterances. Stances are

displayed via different implementations of a particular utterance type: An utterance may be designed to display a particular affective stance (Stivers 2008), epistemic stance (Heritage and Raymond 2005), a deontic stance (Stevanovic and Peräkylä 2012), or a beneficiary or benefactor stance (Clayman and Heritage 2014). Whether the stance displayed in a turn-at-talk is congruent with the stance displayed in the preceding turn is another dimension of sequence organization that has consequences for the development of interaction (Hayano 2011).

Let us take affective stance as an example. If a response to a telling is designed to display an affective stance that is congruent with the one that has been adopted in the telling, then affiliation is accomplished (see Stivers 2008). In the example below, taken from a Japanese conversation between three participants, Eiko reports what recently happened to her husband when driving in California: A police officer stopped him but let him go without giving him a speeding ticket upon discovering that he had an international driving license, presumably to avoid extra paperwork. The responses to Eiko's story by her recipients align in terms of action-sequencing; they are not affiliative, however, in that they do not take an affective stance that is congruent with Eiko's.

```
(4) PTR
01  Eiko:   soshitara- (.) patokaa ni tomerarete:,
             Then he was stopped by a patrol car, and
02  Nami:   nn [n:
             Mm-hm
03  Eiko:      [sorede: >ima< kokusaimenkyo shika mo↓tte nai
                 then, because he only has an international
04           kara:, (0.2) kokusaimenkyo misetara:,=mukoo mo
             license now, (0.2) he showed his international license,
             and then,=for them
05           iroiro $↑mendokusai ja(h)n kokusaimenkyo(h)
             it is cumbersome right? When it involves an international
06           tte(h)$ [hhh [.hhh dakara-
             license, .hhh so,
07  Nami:            [n : [:?,
```

```
                    MM-hm
08  Eiko:   ah ja kiotsukete itte kudasai ((breathy))=
            ((The police officer said to him,)) “Oh then,
            drive on carefully,”=
09  Kumi:   =he[:::?,
            =I see.
10  Nami:      [soo na n da.=
                Is that right.=
11  Eiko:   =o:e hisashiburini bibitta ↓yo:=toka
            =”I got chickened out after a while,”
12          i(h)tte(h)
            he ((my husband)) said.
13  Nami:   e: nani: goshujin- ima:- (0.2) (shucchoo)
            What, does your husband now, (0.2) recently…
```

Immediately preceding the climax of the story, Nami incorporates laugh tokens into her talk (lines 05-06), conveying her stance that she finds the incident funny. Upon the possible completion of the story (line 08), Kumi and Nami receive the story as informative and, thus, produce aligning responses. However, they are in no way affiliative: They do not laugh or describe the story as funny. In other words, the recipient adheres to the informing aspect of the telling, whereas the teller’s stance makes the entertaining aspect more salient (Figure 2). Faced with the lack of affiliation, Eiko adds another piece to the story to underscore the funny turn-up of the event (lines 11-12). This, however, does not solicit affiliative responses either; instead, Nami initiates a shift away from Nami's story by asking an “ancillary question” (line 13) (Heritage 2011, 164-168).

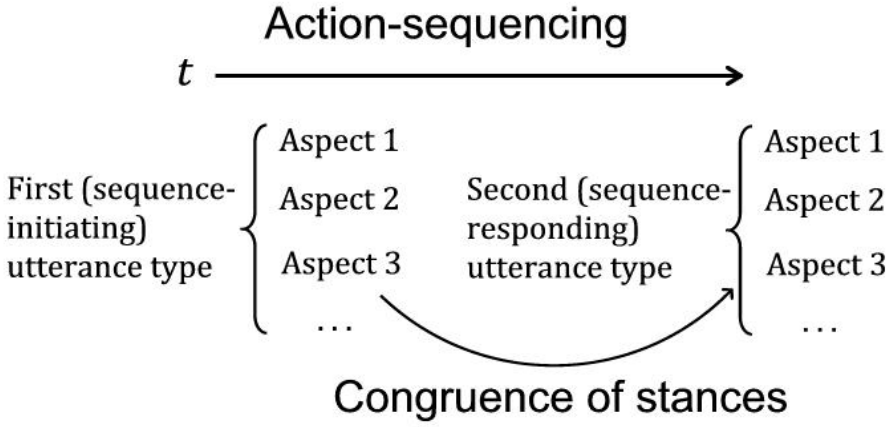

Figure 2 Congruence of stances

This third dimension of sequence organization does not operate so much on the relationships between utterance types as on different manners of their implementations. As Figure 2 suggests, an utterance can be designed to adopt a stance relevant to some aspect(s) of action (such as an epistemic and/or affective aspect), and the next speaker may or may not exhibit the congruent stance(s) in the responding turn. Thus, this dimension is the temporal relationship between such stances exhibited in the design of sequenced turns-at-talk. It is usually when participants adopt and display congruent stances that harmonious, peaceful closure to the sequence is achieved. However, there can be further complications. For instance, in the following excerpt, where A is offering expensive chocolate to her guest K, both participants display the beneficiary stance. Their stances are, thus, incongruent, in that they are disagreeing on who is benefitting whom. Nevertheless, this is precisely what makes the exchange polite and congenial.

```
(5) MT
01 A:  °kore meshi agatte kudasai mase°.
       Please have this ((for me)).
02 K:  <a/e arigatoo gozaimas:
       Oh, thank you very much.
```

Complex *in-situ* social relationships between participants are accomplished via the

management of stances exhibited in the manner of instantiating action types. The full explication of the organization underlying the process remains an issue for future investigations.

Other Sequential Organizations

Sequence organization is not the only sequential organization. Other sequential organizations have also been explicated in conversation analysis, with the most basic being the turn-taking organization and the organization of repair for ordinary conversation.

The turn-taking organization is the machinery that generates the conversational order “one at a time” (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974). The temporal order of turns-at-talk is not merely a series of utterances produced by different speakers; it is also *organized* as a normative order by conversationalists in methodic ways. The turn-taking organization includes two turn-allocation techniques: a) the current speaker selects the next and b) the next selects themselves. The current-selects-next technique is (normatively) prioritized over the self-selection technique, and the latter is prioritized over the current speaker’s continuing to talk when turn transition is relevant. Thus, the organization systematically avoids these techniques being exercised simultaneously, which would result in more than one speaker talking at a time (see Nishizaka and Hayano (2015a) for details of the turn-taking organization).

The repair organization is the machinery by which conversationalists address problems in the production, hearing, and understanding of talk in interaction, while keeping disruptions to the progressivity of talk to a minimum (Schegloff, Jefferson and

Sacks 1977). Repair is sequentially organized relative to the source of the problem to be resolved. When a problem arises, its source (the "trouble source") is detected in a prior portion of the talk and repaired (via its replacement with another word, the addition of a new item, etc.). Repair is also organized as a process—it is initiated at one point and completed at another. The process may be completed within the turn that contains the trouble source turn or initiated after the trouble source turn. However, the sequential positions of repair initiation are not merely ordered based on the factual closeness to the trouble source but, rather, on conversationalists' orientation toward a preference for self- over other-initiation of repair (the "self" here refers to the speaker of the trouble source turn). This oriented-to preference is evidenced by, for example, the fact that when a noticeable error occurred during a speaker's current turn, the recipient ("other"), who eventually initiated its correction, waited until a current turn was possibly complete, thereby providing an opportunity for the current speaker ("self") to initiate a repair by himself. Thus, the ordered repair-initiation positions together constitute a "repair-initiation *opportunity* space" (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977, 375; emphasis added) with respect to each potential trouble source. Conversationalists orient to these normatively ordered opportunities that they may or may not use to initiate repair.

Although our space is limited to discussing two of the sequential organizations for conversation, others have been documented. Among them are the organization of story-telling or multi-unit turns (i.e., turns composed of multiple units) (Sacks 1978, 1992; Schegloff 1982) and turn organization (i.e., how talk at each single turn is organized with respect to being a turn within a sequence of turns) (Schegloff 1996b).

Let us also note that the three sequential organizations addressed here (i.e., the turn-taking, repair, and sequence organizations) are relatively independent. Certainly,

when the current speaker selects the next speaker, the current speaker uses the first pair part of an adjacency pair and addresses it to a specific recipient. However, the turn-taking organization that regulates turn-transitions without substantial overlap between turns (i.e., to prevent other recipients than the thus-selected one from taking a next turn at the same time) also involves components other than the adjacency pair organization. Furthermore, these organizations may come in conflict with one another. While the turn-taking organization operates to minimize gaps between turns, the repair organization may operate to create a gap before the next speaker ("other") initiates repair to provide an opportunity for the current speaker ("self") to initiate repair for themselves. Each case of sequential development of interaction is the product of simultaneous operations of these sequential organizations.

Concluding Remarks

We have explained the general aim and method of sequential analysis as well as some sequential structures of conversation that have been explicated by sequential analysis. Let us conclude by addressing three issues that could not be fully addressed in this chapter.

First, in this chapter on sequential analysis, we have focused on the importance of attention to sequential positions of conversational objects (from particles to turns-at-talk). However, sequential positions are not all about the production and understanding of talk-in-interaction; the composition of an utterance, namely, how it is designed, also plays as important a role.

Second, we have focused on sequential organizations, that is, the machineries

that generate the observable sequential development of talk-in-interaction. However, the explication of machineries is not the only task for studies of talk-in-interaction. Some studies have also used the explicated machineries as analytic tools to investigate what participants do in interaction. These studies have re-specified classical sociological or linguistic topics (such as action, culture, identity, and grammar) as issues faced by participants in interaction and have demonstrated the significance of sequential analysis.

Finally, many studies have been published on the sequentiality of embodied behavior in interaction (of which Goodwin, 2019, is the most important). Although we could not address this topic in this chapter, human interaction is essentially embodied, and the sequentiality of embodied behavior is crucial to the full understanding of human interaction (see, however, chapters in this volume by Goodwin and Cekaite and Mondada).

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