

## PREFERENCE REVISITED

by  
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This paper reviews the concept of *preference organisation* described in conversation analytic research. Features of preference (markedness) are identified ultimately as stable indicators of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes. The problem of attributing classes of actions with fixed preference status is illustrated through the example of adversative discourse (disagreement preferred). Furthermore, the issue of disentangling linguistic preference from psychological paradigms is considered, promoting a recommendation to focus on the markedness inherent in preference organisation.

### *Preference Revisited*

The concept of preference employed in conversation analysis is one which accounts for the fact that not all second pair parts are heard as having equal status: a ranking of alternatives operates in conversation, where the ranking is determined by the local context. The composition of adjacency pairs (e.g. question/answer) is such that a first pair part sets up an expectation of a relevant second pair part. This relevance, however, extends beyond the *type* of action (e.g. answer) to the selection within an action category (e.g. acceptance). In other words, 'the first part of an adjacency pair not only makes one of a set of type-fitted second parts relevant in next turn, but typically displays a preference for one of them' (Schegloff 1979:36).

Essentially, preference organisation exists in the taxonomy of possible actions and operates at varying levels in conversation, from referential identification options for recipient design (Sacks 1979) through to topic organization. At all levels, inferences may be drawn when a first preference is not selected.<sup>1</sup> To illustrate this point, Sacks (1995b:368) uses the example of an invitation to dinner; serving food is only a part of the evening's activities but preferred in the invitation itself, given that 'Would you like to come over for a drink?' suggests that dinner will not be provided (as it should be mentioned in preference to other partial features of the evening).<sup>2</sup> The idea of scaling alternative components operates not only within utterances to regulate

content, but governs the sequential organisation of conversation. This organisation, the manifestation of preference in turn-by-turn interaction, is explored in this paper.

First, the defining aspects of preference will be considered, specifically the features of linguistic markedness and the premise that the term denotes a technical rather than psychological concept. That is, preference is typically presented as an abstract notion that is not to be interpreted as indicative of the psychological state of the speaker (or hearer). Confusion between these interpretations is the cause of the multifarious application of the term 'preference' both within and beyond conversation analytic (CA) research. Consequently, the problem of defining and subsequently employing the contemporary concept of preference will be discussed. Assigning classes of actions with fixed preference status will also be considered as an elemental problem in applying preference theory.

### *Features of preference*

There are two significant features of preference organisation at the turn-by-turn level of conversation: linguistic markedness and the functional identity of the concept. Of these, the most prominent feature of preference lies in the marked or unmarked organisation of a turn at talk. Typically, (as summarized by Levinson (1983:333-4)) *preferred* responses are produced without delay or hesitation and the action is stated directly. *Dispreferred* seconds, on the other hand, are recognisable by the following features: (1) they are delayed by pauses, and/or (2) they are introduced with prefaces (markers such as 'well' 'uh'<sup>3</sup>, partial agreement/ appreciations/ apologies, or qualifications); (3) they include accounts (explanations for not providing preferred response) and (4) a declination component which addresses the first pair part. Levinson further claims that 'the two essential features of dispreferred actions are thus (a) they tend to occur in marked format, and (b) they tend to be avoided' (1983:333). Consequently, (un)markedness is indicative of the preference status of the turn. Although these features are not universally accepted as defining criteria of preference (see Bilmes 1988; Boyle 2000) they are overwhelmingly

recognised as characteristic of preference in CA literature (e.g. Heritage 1984; Atkinson and Heritage 1984; Goodwin and Heritage 1990; Hutchby and Wooffit 1998).

An ubiquitous example of preference organisation is found in the following pairs of invitation and acceptance/rejection sequences, published in Atkinson and Drew (1979:58), where extract (i) provides a preferred second pair part and (ii) a dispreferred response:

- (i) B: Why don't you come up and *see* me some[times]  
 A: [ I would like to
- (ii) B: Uh if you'd care to come over and visit a little while this morning I'll give you a cup of *coffee*.  
 A: hehh Well that's awfully sweet of you, I don't think I can make it this morning .hh uhm I'm running an ad in the paper and – and uh I have to stay near the phone.  
 B: Well all right  
 A: [And- uh  
 B: [Well sometime when you are free to give me a call because I'm not always home.

As illustrated in the examples above, the preferred response is produced immediately and clearly, whereas in the dispreferred response the refusal is deferred until later in the turn and accompanied by an account (reason) for the rejection. The difference of position or ordering of items in preferred and dispreferred turns was originally noted by Sacks:

insofar as disagreements are pushed into the back, then there is a variety of things that go in front of them, that then can get treated as 'going in front of disagreements', and that may have an import in signalling the future forthcomingness of a disagreement. Components like 'well' and/or 'I don't know', for instance, as the beginning of an answer turn, characteristically precede something less than agreement. (Sacks 1984:59)

That is, a pause or hesitation frequently precedes the production of a dispreferred second action, and in itself may be interpretable as indicative of a forthcoming dispreferred response by the hearer. Delays not only allow the original speaker to pre-empt a dispreferred response, but also provide an opportunity to 'modify or revise the first utterance to a more "attractive" or "acceptable" form, rather than simply using it to formulate an anticipation of rejection' (Heritage 1984:274). The delay or pause may even be heard as the beginning of a failure to provide a second pair part, a zero response, which is also heard as dispreferred, given that silence is to be accounted for. Similarly, such is the sensitivity of the immediacy of a preferred response that

when an acceptance is not done at this point, that is, immediately after a possible sentence completion point and in overlap with any components occurring after this point, that an inviter or offerer may take this absence of acceptance at this point as being possibly rejection-implicative. (Davidson 1984:116)

The final components of a first pair part, then, may be designed to preview the preferred or dispreferred nature of the response.

Given the significance of delay and/or prefatory markers in turn initial position, preference status is exhibited early in the utterance. As with delays or hesitations, preface markers are also heard consistently as indicative of dispreference in conversation. In her study of speaker interruptions, Ahrens (1997:83) found that most interruptions occurred after turn prefaces such as 'well', 'well then', 'okay but', 'yes but', 'but', 'yeah no' and so forth, and labelled these as 'interruption[s] of a potential rejection'. Markers serve as an indication of preference status and the hearer may begin a subsequent version as soon as they hear these items. Consequently, interlocutors orient the subsequent turn to the dispreferred shape of the previous utterance (as demonstrated elsewhere, e.g. Pomerantz 1975; Davidson 1984). Fundamentally, pauses, hesitations, and prefatory markers serve to hold the illocution of the turn until the end of the utterance. Contiguity, therefore, is incorporated into the identity of preferred turns. For example,

there is an apparent interaction between the preference for contiguity and the preference for agreement, such that, if an agreeing answer occurs, it pretty damn well occurs contiguously, whereas if a disagreeing answer occurs, it may well be pushed rather deep in to the turn that it occupies. (Sacks 1987:58)

Another feature of dispreferred turns is that accounts or justifications are often provided. Although accounts are usually identified as characteristic of dispreferred turns, description and discussion of this feature is scarce by comparison with prefatory markers. Accounts have been seen as evidence for the dispreferred status of certain second pair parts, such as rejections to invitations (Atkinson and Drew 1979:139). Atkinson and Drew (1979) use the term 'defence' to identify reasons which are given in response to allegations, distinct from 'accounts' in other contexts, as each form of accounting serves different purposes (the former to avoid blame, the latter to reduce offence to the other speaker). Elsewhere (Toolan 1989:262), parallels have been drawn between accountability as a defining feature of preference organisation and Grice's (1975, 1978) maxims of conversation – discussed below.

In sum, the dispreferred status of turns at talk are reflected in the arrangement of each turn. Levinson (1983:333) notes that preferred turns have little in common other than being shorter than dispreferred turns; by contrast, dispreferred turns share many characteristics. Pomerantz (1984:64) states that the preference status of actions can be located in turn shape: preferred actions are typified by turns which are produced with minimum gap and overtly stated function; dispreferred actions, on the other hand, are produced in turns characterized by delay and 'nonexplicitly stated action components'.

It is the form of the utterance, not the wishes of the interactants that typically defines the linguistic (abstract) concept of preference. That is,

the term 'preference' refers to the structural disposition, to the fact that conversational organization conspires to make it easier to use the preferred type of turn, not to the participants' wishes. (Brown and Levinson 1987:38)

Of course, the fact that speakers may attend to the preferred character of some actions over others in the design of turns containing those actions should not be taken as exhibiting, or as proof of, participants' 'actual feelings' or intentions at the time. ... Thus the term 'preference' in this context does not refer to a speaker's psychological predisposition: instead it describes the systematic features of the design of turns in which certain alternative but non-equivalent actions are taken, as well as sequential organisation of such actions. (Atkinson and Drew 1979:59)

This interpretation of the term 'preference' distinguishes it from the normal lay interpretation. The concept was originally used by Sacks to identify an abstract principle operating in conversation:

If there *is* what we are talking about, namely, an abstract or formal preference for agreement, then we have to see that the questioner is designing the question not just to get a personal preference, but is designing the question with an orientation to getting agreement. ... So the linkage of contiguity and agreement is oriented to by *both* questioners and answerers, can operate to avoid a disagreement, and is an aspect of a formal and anonymous apparatus for agreement/disagreement, rather than being a matter of individual preferences. (Sacks 1987:63, 65; emphasis in original)

'Preferred' actions are sought out; dispreferred actions are not. Sacks (1987:64) notes 'that there is one sort of way that a questioner can be seen to be orienting to getting agreement, i.e. they try to end up with a form that can be agreed with'. This orientation to elicit preferred responses is not only found within adjacency pairs, but is also manifested in surrounding talk. Pre-sequences, for example, 'constitute a further procedure through which speakers can collaborate in forwarding preferred sequences or actions and avoiding (or aborting) dispreferred ones' (Heritage 1984:278). It has been shown that pre-sequences are intended to avert the possible production of a dispreferred response to requests and invitations (Atkinson and Drew 1979). Conversational devices for avoiding dispreferred responses are

not limited to pre-sequences. As Drew (1984:146) demonstrates in his study of speaker reportings in invitation sequences,

through just reporting, recipients not only manage to avoid outrightly or directly doing a rejection; particularly, they also have speakers (co-participants) collaborate in seeing that, objectively or reasonably, an acceptance is not possible.

It is the organisation of the turn itself, therefore, that creates the expectation of a particular second action. Questions in the courtroom, for example (Atkinson and Drew 1979:195), are typically structured so that agreement is the preferred response in the following turn.

While a general tenet of 'preference' is identifiable (outlined above), this does not equate to a uniform understanding of the theory, and as a result there is a muddiness in inference and application. Given that the concept of preference originates from Harvey Sacks' lectures, and that, due to his untimely death, the concept was not expanded or developed as originally conceived, it has 'been construed in a variety of mutually incompatible, and sometimes methodologically questionable, ways' (Bilmes 1988:161). This confusion of interpretation represents a fundamental problem in applying preference theory.

### *Problems with preference*

Problems in applying preference theory refer predominantly to the disparity of interpretation, specifically in relation to the blurred distinction between linguistic and psychological paradigms. The fact that the linguistic form and the wishes of the participants overlap more often than not, causes considerable problems in sustaining a conservative definition of preference that refutes psychological inferences.

The features of preference described above have been challenged recently, specifically by Bilmes (1988) and Boyle (2000) for overextending the criteria of preference and for overlooking the inherent property of accountability (see Boyle 2000). This constitutes a significant oversight, given that the notion of accountability is a

principal concept underlying conversation analytic theory (Heritage 1984:291). In this case, the speaker is accountable for failing to provide a preferred response (accountability is tied to dispreferred responses, or silence).

In Bilmes' review (1988:176), Levinson's model is criticised for confusing reluctance with dispreference and for classifying actions based on the proportion in which they occur.<sup>4</sup> Although supporting Levinson on certain points, Bilmes (1988) advocates returning to the original concept of preference proposed by Harvey Sacks and subsequently focuses on two aspects: the principle of ordering and that of relevant absence (i.e. where a preferred action is not performed). Bilmes (1998) reiterates that the concept of preference must be isolated from the motivation or expectations of the speakers to avoid the assumption of psychological conditions.

Although Boyle (2000:586) acknowledges that Levinson's account of preference is well regarded, he also claims that Levinson's 'description of preference is not fully coherent'. He recognises that 'markedness and frequency of occurrence are aspects of preference organisation', but argues that 'the concept can only be adequately understood in terms of normative accountability and its role in achieving intersubjective understanding' (Boyle 2000:601). In response to the confusion of defining preference, rather than castigating varying interpretations of preference as 'misconstruals' (see Bilmes 1988), Boyle describes them as 'aspects' of Sacks' original concept of preference.

However, even where the concept is most closely related to Sacks' original idea – expectation indicated by the interpretation of an absent response – the interpretation of preference is blurred. Pomerantz (1984:81) for example, does not use the term with any reference to social psychology, yet still facilitates possible misinterpretation by identifying certain preferred actions as 'natural, right and/or desirable'. Although the turn is not identified as preferred *because* of these qualities, such descriptions obscure the line between psychological preference and the more abstract, sequential organisation operating in conversation. The supposed misapplication of the term 'preference' begs the question whether this line needs to be constantly redrawn. Confusion and debate is prompted by lay interpretation of the



technical label. As Mey (2001) comments, 'markedness' would serve as a more suitable term. There is a strong case to be made that that continual effort to drag the concept of preference into the domain of abstractness is misdirected.

Certainly, preferred (or dispreferred) turns do not always mirror the personal preferences of either the speaker or the hearer; but it does not follow that conversational preference is therefore entirely extraneous to psychological preference. Perhaps too much effort has been made to disassociate the concept of linguistic preference from psychological inferences. Undoubtedly, preference organisation is identified by specific linguistic structures and does not necessarily reflect the subjective motivations of the speaker. For example, a speaker may realise their personal preference in a dispreferred turn, such as declining an invitation. Yet, whilst linguistic preference may be identified as distinct from psychological preference, it does not necessarily follow that the concept must wholly reject any organic relationship between linguistic markedness and broader social expectations of preferred actions. Why is it that preferred actions are, in fact, preferred? Evidently this preference is set up by the prior turn, but why is it that this prior turn orients to a particular type of response?

Most CA researchers are at pains to adhere to a definition of preference that does not encompass the speaker's wishes, yet it would appear overly ideological to insist that preference exists entirely *independently* from the participants' expectations. While preference is recognisable as an abstract concept operating in conversation, that is, each turn can be shown to orient to the form of the preceding turn, the idea that this concept is built upon underlying conventions of social expectations (Lewis 1969) should not be dismissed. In sum, while the properties of preference (specific turn shapes) can be identified and distinguished as functions of discourse organisation, it does not automatically follow that these functions have no relationship with broader social expectations.

Extending the observation that personal preference and linguistic preference frequently overlap but are nevertheless distinguishable, Heritage (1984) suggests that preference is closely related to the maintenance of face (Goffman 1955; Brown and Levinson 1978;

similar observations are made by Toolan 1989), where 'the term "face" may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact' (Goffman 1967:5). Furthermore, if we acknowledge that the concept of preference need not necessarily be stringently dissociated from psychological preference, the relevance of facework and politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987) becomes apparent.

The question posed above as to why certain actions take on preferred status could be answered in terms of concessions to face needs and, subsequently, forms of politeness. That is, if an action is perceived as face threatening it is likely to be performed in a mitigated, less direct, dispreferred format. Conversely, as preferred actions are likely to be preferred because they do not threaten face, these actions can be performed directly. It follows, then, that preference norms may be flouted in performing intentionally face-threatening acts.

Indeed, in defence of their politeness model<sup>5</sup>, Brown and Levinson (1987:38) argue that face considerations are implicated in the preference status of actions; that is, dispreferred actions are typically face threatening acts. Elsewhere it has been less cautiously claimed (e.g. Holtgraves 2000:97)<sup>6</sup> that dispreferred turns operate as face-threatening actions. This suggests that markedness not only signifies the expectation of a dispreferred response, but that this response should be interpreted as managing a probable face-threatening move. This point, however, could be challenged on the same platform as announcing particular types of action as preferred or dispreferred; whilst certain face-threatening turns may be marked as dispreferred, dispreferred turns are not always face threatening, as exemplified below.

The discussion now moves to the problem of assigning fixed preference status to classes of actions. Preference organisation is often studied in specific sequential contexts, in invitation sequences, for example, or commenting on prior assessments. As such, there is a tendency to attribute preferred status to a particular class of action, such as a preference for agreement (Sacks 1987). However, 'preference organization is not synonymous with the organization of agreement /disagreement' (Lerner 1996:305). Sweeping generalisations about

classes of action point to a flawed representation of preference organisation.

Categorising types of action as preferred or dispreferred overlooks the fact that the ranking of alternatives is determined locally, by the preceding turn, and that preference organisation is not a hierarchical set that exists detached from interaction. Atkinson and Drew (1979), for example, identify certain actions (denials, justifications/excuses, counter-accusations) as preferred. Yet, the overwhelming thrust of preference organization is *not* that categories of actions be taken as preferred or dispreferred, but that each action is interpreted as such, given the expectations arising from the immediately prior turn. Perhaps the majority of denials following accusations can be shown to be preferred, but this frequency does not characterize the action as invariably preferred.

Attributing preferred or dispreferred status to a particular class of action (cf. Pomerantz 1984, Ahrens 1997) disregards the context-sensitivity of preference organisation. Essentially, it is the manner in which an action is performed as expected or otherwise which is indicative of preference rather than the type of action performed in the turn. If emphasis remains on the turn shape (i.e. linguistic markedness) rather than turn action, all-encompassing (and subsequently false) categorisation of preference (e.g. disagreements are dispreferred) may be avoided. For example, agreement is not universally preferred, but rather, more often than not, agreement is performed in a preferred turn shape (i.e. immediate and direct).

To list categories of actions as preferred or dispreferred:

glosses over the fact that all language is indexical (Garfinkel 1967: 4-7) and that preference can only be determined in the circumstances in which action is constituted. Thus, as Coulter (1983:362-363) points out, there might be a generalised preference in society for agreement, but there are clearly situations where disagreement is preferred, as for example, in responses to self-deprecations (Pomerantz 1984:83-95) or in argument sequences (Kotthoff 1993). (Boyle 2000:587)

Indeed, argument sequences serve as the most striking example of types of actions being performed as preferred or dispreferred depending upon the local context (Bilmes 1991:464 concurs). Kotthoff's (1993) study of preference organisation in adult disputes demonstrated that there is no ubiquitous preference for agreement in conversation. Kotthoff noted that in her examples of university students arguing with professors, the pattern of preference changes throughout the interaction, stating that 'a dispute is performed by a change in preference structure' (1993:196). This change, however, is not reflected in an alteration of preference criteria, but simply underscores the fact that the assumption of agreement as preferred second pair part does not operate in this conversational domain. In other words, while disagreement may occur in dispreferred turn format at the beginning of the conversation, each subsequent objection becomes less marked until overt action of disagreement appears in preferred turn format. Once the argument is collaboratively recognised as such, 'it is no longer preferred to agree. On the contrary, it seems to be very important to contradict quickly and in a coherent manner' (Kotthoff 1993:203).<sup>7</sup>

In disputes between children:

rather than being preceded by delays, turns containing opposition are produced immediately. Moreover, such turns frequently contain a preface that announces right at the beginning of the turn, characteristically in the first word said, that opposition is being done. (Goodwin and Goodwin 1987:207)

Indeed, the following examples taken from sequences of naturally occurring arguments between four-year-old children (Church 2004), typify the prevalence of opposition or disagreement performed in preferred turn shape (transcription conventions provided in the Appendix).

Tess: ((*silly voice*)) sorry Sam dee↑dee:huh.  
 → Sam: ↑no: properly.

PREFERENCE REVISITED

- Koyo:    ↑no (.) you're not packing<sub>ζ</sub>=  
 → Adam:    =YES I AM.
- Miranda: (if you don't) then i'll just take it then.  
 %act:    *reaches to grab plastic lid*  
 → Caroline: STO::P!
- Tess:    NO I DIDN'T DO IT did i ↑Nancy (0.5) Koyo did  
           it<sub>ζ</sub>=  
 → Koyo:    =no.
- Gary:    it's just a little one<sub>ζ</sub>  
           (0.2)  
 → Rob:    hey don't!
- Peter:    no ↑i'm not<sub>ζ</sub>  
           (0.2)  
 → Adam:    yes you are<sub>ζ</sub>
- Louise:   0 ((%act: knocks another set of blocks))  
 → Winnie:  DO:N'T!
- Brian:    yours is yuck Gary<sub>ζ</sub>  
 → Gary:    no it isn't<sub>ζ</sub>
- Tom:    you're (.) you're tricking me:.  
           (0.2)  
 → Gary:    i am not!

It follows that one cannot claim that agreement is a preferred action and disagreement a dispreferred action, as the local context determines the expectation set up by the prior turn.<sup>8</sup> If preference cannot be assigned to categories of actions, how then is the preference status of a second pair part assigned? Preference status refers to an organising principle operating in the local context of contiguous turns at talk

(regardless of the degree to which underlying social expectations are recognised or dismissed). The fundamental consideration becomes: how is this status manifested in talk-in-interaction? Despite persistent dissent as to a concrete definition (and fixed application) of preference, the question remains: how do we find it? This question is obviously open to the challenge that the definition informs the identification; that what we mean by preference determines how we see it unfolding in conversation. But this challenge runs contrary to the methodological strength of conversation analysis, namely an insistence on data-driven commentary rather than imposed theoretical frameworks.

The preferred or dispreferred nature of any action is performed by the speaker and consequently recognisable to the hearer (who performed the first pair part). Preference organisation is not, therefore, something to be guessed at, but rather is conspicuous to all participants. The place to look for preference status is in the organisation of turns, in the construction or shape of each utterance. The turn shape (i.e. linguistic markedness) remains a constant indicator of preference, with direct responses produced without delay indicative of a preferred response, while turns prefaced with delay and/or hesitation (reluctance) markers are characterised as dispreferred. Although Bilmes (1988) and Boyle (2000) argue that pauses, hesitation markers and accounts are not criteria of preference, they do not adequately discount these markers as indicators of preference. Turns are not preferred or dispreferred because of the absence or presence of these markers; rather these markers serve as an index of the preference status of the turn in which they appear.

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## Notes

1. Inferences are also drawn where preferred responses are produced, but derive directly from the response itself rather than its absence.
2. From this example it becomes apparent that the concept of preference is related to Grice's maxims of conversation (1975, 1978), in this case the maxim of quantity (provide adequate information to be understood). The common ground of preference, the Gricean co-operative principle, face-work (Goffman 1967) and politeness theory (Brown & Levinson 1987) will be discussed below.
3. Belonging to the category of discourse markers detailed by Schiffrin (1987). See also Sprott (1992).
4. Commentary on frequency of occurrence as a property of preferred turns can be criticised (Levinson 1983; Heritage & Watson 1979; Atkinson & Drew 1979; Sacks & Schegloff 1979; Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977), as quantity does not serve as a criterion of preference. Whilst preferred turns may be performed more often than dispreferred turns, the frequency itself does not constitute preference status. Quantification ignores the fundamental importance of local context.
5. It has been argued that linguistic interpretation of the concept of face, whilst describing discourse practices does not adequately depict the underlying concepts of identity that prompt politeness (Tracy 1990). However, similar criticism of politeness theory (Baxter 1984; Coupland, Grainger & Coupland 1988; Craig, Tracy & Spisak 1986) does not necessarily erode the validity of the observations made by Brown & Levinson (1978, 1987). The model is flawed in terms of the comprehensiveness of identifying active acknowledgement of positive and negative face, rather than in the descriptions of the practices themselves.
6. Holtgraves does acknowledge that from a conversation analytic viewpoint, 'dispreferred markers are not viewed as serving face-management functions; the non-equivalence of preferred and dispreferred turns is assumed to be independent of the interactants' internal states' (2000:98).
7. The inference drawn from failure to oppose the prior speaker immediately is taken up by Bilmes (1991:466): 'Once in a state of argument, disagreement is preferred in that if one does not explicitly disagree, it may be presumed that one has not found grounds to disagree and that (however reluctantly) one agrees'.
8. This is further exemplified by Pomerantz (1984) in her analysis of self-deprecations.

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**Appendix: Transcription Conventions**

.	Falling terminal contour
,	Continuing contour (incomplete)
?	Strongly rising terminal contour
ˆ	Rising terminal contour
!	Emphatic/animated utterance terminator
-	Abrupt halt
[ ]	Overlapping speech
=	Latching (contiguous stretches of talk)
(0.7)	Pause measured in tenths of a second
(.)	Pause timed less than 0.2 seconds
—	Stress on the word/syllable/sound
:	Lengthening of previous sound
CAPS	Increase in volume
◦ ◦	Decrease in volume
↑ ↓	Significant rise or fall in intonation
> <	Faster than surrounding talk
< >	Slower than surrounding talk
.hhh	Audible inhalation
\$	Laughing while talking (smile talk)
( )	Uncertain words (best guess)
(( ))	Comments e.g. quality of speech or intended hearer
x	Unintelligible speech
%act	Identifies (accompanying) nonverbal action
%com	Observer comment
→	Feature of interest