Analysing spoken language
The structure of conversation

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Schema articolazione corsi

◆ NUOVO ORDINAMENTO

LEFE =	LEA	LEA
cfu 5	cfu 6	cfu 9
35 ore	35 ore	63 ore

◆ VECCHIO ORDINAMENTO

LEFE =	LEA	LEA
cfu 5	cfu 6	cfu 8
30 ore	36 ore	48 ore

MODULI A1 + A2: The structure of conversation, Corpus linguistics as a methodology

PROGRAMMA MODULO A1

Dispense prof.sa Bruti e materiale distribuito durante il corso.

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P. Quaglio, D. Biber, 2006, "The grammar of conversation", in B. Aarts, A. McMahon (eds), *The Handbook of English linguistics*, Oxford, Blackwell, pp. 67692-723.

F. Pridham, *The language of Conversation*, London, Routledge.

Conversation

A **conversation** is communication by two or more people, often on a particular topic. Conversations are the ideal form of communication in some respects, since they allow people with different views of a topic to learn from each other. A speech, on the other hand, is an oral presentation by one person directed at a group.
Conversers naturally relate the other speaker's statements to themselves, and insert themselves (or some degree of relation to themselves, ranging from the replier's opinions or points to actual stories about themselves) into their replies. For a successful conversation, the partners must achieve a workable balance of contributions. A successful conversation includes mutually interesting connections between the speakers or things that the speakers know. For this to happen, conversers must find a topic on which they both can relate to in some sense.

Conversation

◆ Communicative goals + social function
◆ it varies from situation to situation
◆ it is pervasive
◆ PRIMARY FUNCTION = it aims to establish and maintain social cohesion through the sharing of experience;
◆ SECONDARY F. = entertain, give information, direct other people's behaviour

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Conversation

◆ SPOKEN MEDIUM
  - Auditory channel
  - Tone units
  - Pause (length, type)
  - Paralinguistic features (tempo, pitch, loudness)
  - Voice qualities (e.g. whisper, rasp, breathy voice)
  - Gestures

Situational meaning

- CONTEXT
1. SITUATIONAL, what speakers know about what they can see about them;
2. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE, what they know about each other and the world;
3. CO-TEXTUAL, what they know about what they have been saying

Situational meaning

- Example

AF	(2) So **you** went to Arran. A bit of a come-down isn't it? ((laughing))
DM	It was nice actually. Have you been to Arran?
AF	No, I've not. (1) like to go.
DM	Did a lot of climbing.
AF	// (heh)
DM	// I went with Francesca (0.5) and David.
AF	Uhuh?
DM	Francesca's room-mate. (2) And Alice's – a friend of Alice's from London (1). There were six of us. Yeah we did a lot of hill walking. (0.5) **We** got back (1) er (2) Michelle and **I** got home and **she** looked at her knees. (0.5) **They** were like this. Swollen up like this. Cos we did this enormous eight hour stretch.
AF	Uhm.

Situational meaning

- Situational c.

(cf. the use of deictic expressions)
- Background knowledge c.

-cultural general knowledge people carry with them in their minds, about areas of life;

-interpersonal knowledge, specific and possible private knowledge about the history of the speakers themselves

Situational meaning

- Co-textual c.
  - grammatical cohesion
    - endophoric reference (anaphora & cataphora)
    - substitution and ellipsis
  - lexical cohesion (repetition, synonyms, superordinates, general words)

Conversation

- CONTEXT
- **Face-to-face**; cf the frequency of personal pronouns, deictic terms, ellipsis, substitution elements that rely on contextual clues for their interpretation;
- **Non-clausal components**, **inserts** or **chunks** of language, material that cannot be included in grammatical structures such as clauses or phrases; **stand-alone words** also rely on context for their interpretation

Conversation

- Some questions
1. Is there a distinctive grammar of the spoken language?
2. Can we identify different laws from those that regulate the written language?

To define a grammar of conversation means to identify the **most typical** and **most frequent features** of this register.
Frequency is a key notion, as even features that are commonly felt to belong to speech – like false starts and hesitations – are also found in written registers, especially in fiction, where speech is being simulated.

Conversation

- Biber *et al*. The grammar of conversation
- M. McCarthy, Carter & McCarthy Sentence grammar vs discourse grammar; spoken vs written grammar
  key areas:
  - ellipsis (esp. of subject pronouns, auxiliaries, articles, initial elements of fixed expressions);
  - different types of speech reporting;
  - occurrence of pre- and post-posed items (topics and tails in McCarthy's terminology)

Conversation

- TOPIC/THEME/ LEFT DISLOCATION/HEAD
  that woman who's a verger at church, her husband, his parents own the butcher's shop

  Paul in this job that he's got now when he goes into the office **he**'s never quite sure were he's going to be sent

  The speaker orientates the listener, it is an act of consideration for the listener: from an anchor to a new entity

  That woman...> his parents

Conversation

- TAIL/RIGHT DISLOCATION
A **I**'m going to have Mississipi Mud Pie **I am**.
B I'm going to have profiteroles. **I can't** resist them I can't ... just too moreish

A You got a cold too?
B Can't seem to shake it off ... everyone's going down like flies
A Trouble is **can** leave you feeling weak for so long **it can flu**

It corresponds to contexts that are evaluative

Conversation

McCarthy (1998:78) rightly points out how grammar is biased towards the written language: structures such as topics and tails are defined as 'dislocation', i.e. with reference to the natural order of the written language (the left and right is of course that of a written page).

Linguistic features of spoken language

- a. **fragmented syntax, unfinished sentences** (e.g. *That's such a neat, it's so nice to know the history behind it; We did, we did try to pu·, well, as I say, with the trouble we had upstairs, we just thought it just wasn't worth our while to sort of mess around and try to do any more*);
- b. **nominal style**;
- c. **dislocation** (left d. or preface: *Poor old Doctor Jones, he said that you'll never wear your heart out*; right d. or noun phrase tags: *It makes you wonder, you know, all this unemployment*); topicalisation (or fronting of some constituent: *Right you are! Bloody amazing it was!*); cleft/pseudo-cleft (cleft: *It's a doctor I want!*; pseudo-cleft: *What I want is something to eat!*);

Linguistic features of spoken language

- d. **ellipsis** (e.g. *Here, I'll come and serve it honey if you want me to Ø; Ø more sauce?; Ø up the stairs, now!*);
- e. **prevalence of parataxis over hypotaxis**;
- f. **changes in planning** (false starts, dysfluencies); **syntactic blends** or **anacoluthon** (syntactic inconsistency, e.g. *In fact that's one of the things that there is a shortage of in this play, is people who actually care er, erm - about what happens to erm each, each other*)
- g. **low text cohesion**;

Linguistic features of spoken language

- h. **hesitations** (BrE *er/erm*; AmE *uh/um*) and **pauses** (a filled pause is occupied by a vowel sound, with or without accompanying nasalisation);
- i. **multifunctional connectives** (e.g. *and, then*);
- j. **generic lexicon** (e.g. *thing, fact, man*);
- k. **repetitions** (of single words or of prefabricated structures, or lexical bundles, e.g. *do you know what?*);
- l. **discourse markers** (e.g. *well, right*)

Non elaboration

- Lower lexical density
- Lower syntactic elaboration

  - fewer elaborated phrases (complex NPs);

  - fewer and simpler attributive adjs, rel. clauses;

  -fewer genitives and possessives

Non elaboration

Exx

There are **forces of friction** whenever solid surfaces slide over each other. **The friction forces** always act in the opposite direction in which an object or surface is moving.

The explosion produced **a chain of molecules** which were diffused throughout the atom. **Such molecule chains** are now recognised by physicists to be instrumental to atomic diffusion.

Pre-mod ➡ descriptive

Post-mod ➡ defining

Non elaboration

Complex pre-mod structures are common in
- Advertising
- Poetry
- Journalism

Complex post-mod structures are common in both
- Scientific/academic writing
- Informal conversational styles (add on; right branching)

Newspaper prose

- Pop star Kylie Minogue has made her long-awaited comeback. The star, famous for the song *I Should Be So Lucky,* took to the stage wearing feathers and sequins for her first concert since being treated for breast cancer. The singer launched the Australian leg of a world tour in Sydney on Saturday night. The tour was postponed after her

  diagnosis shocked the pop world in May 2005. The 38-year-old will put on 20 concerts in her native Australia to kick off her Showgirl tour. Fears are that the singing dynamo has not fully recovered from her near fatal illness. She has made several changes to the show to be able to cope with the exhausting demands of performing, singing and dancing live. She made an emotional address to her fans, saying: "I'm thrilled to be back...I'm as prepared as I can be but I'm not sure that I'll be able to do everything that I did before."

Newspaper prose

Kylie said she was uncertain about how she would feel once she took to the stage. "I think about it often. I simply can't come up with the answer," she told Sydney's Daily Telegraph newspaper. The petite singer had surgery just days after she was diagnosed with breast cancer, and completed a course of chemotherapy in December. She received thousands of good luck messages from well-wishers across the globe. She instantly became a symbol of bravery and a role model for many women in similar positions who must battle against breast cancer. Kylie's iconic status is now greatly elevated in Australia, where many people believe she is the nation's greatest cultural export. Needless to say, she will sing at her Australian concerts in front of sell-out audiences.

Conversation

◆ [Lyn & Zoe T3, 1]
1 Lyn   ((at table with papers))
2   ((door?)) ((faintly, off camera))
3   (pause)
4 Lyn   [[looks up and over her shoulder
5   towards door; holds gaze while
6   scratching cheek; looks down again]]
7 Zoe   ((off camera)) Mum?
8 Lyn   hello [[gaze stays down]]
9   (3 sec)
10   [[at end of which she orientates
10   upper body towards door]]
11 Lyn   I'm here
12   (brief pause)
13 Zoe   okay

Conversation

14 Lyn   ((coughs/clears throat))
15   [[off camera: three ?crockery bangs]]
16   (pause)
17   ((door handle opening))
18   hello ((door handle snaps back))
19   [[Zoe's head appears round the wall
20   orienting towards Lyn]]
21   [[Zoe comes into room and looks
22   towards interior, away from Lyn]]
23 Lyn   hi (brief pause)
24   [[looking down throughout]]
25 Zoe   where's the cigarettes
26   [[Zoe looks towards Lyn]]

Conversation

27   ((door shuts))
28   (pause)
29 Lyn   °in the° -kitchen:
30   (long pause)[[in which Zoe comes
31   towards the table, to stand
32   facing Lyn and off camera, at which
33   point Lyn looks up with 'frozen'
34   expression then fixed grin]]
35 Zoe   the camera's on
36 Lyn   yes (brief pause)

Conversation

37   [[one nod while maintaining gaze &
38   fixed grin, lips open]]
39 Zoe   are you talking to it while you WORK?
40 Lyn   no (brief pause) heh heh
41 Zoe   what you DOING then
42 Lyn   hahh hahh hahh [[looks down]]
43   (pause)
44   [[Zoe starts to move off]]
45 Zoe   what's the point
46   [[moves out off camera into kitchen,
47   Lyn looks towards her as she passes ,
48   by, combs hand through hair]]
49   (pause)
50 Zoe   [[off camera]]
51   oh god look what I'm wearing

Conversation Analysis

Conversation analysis (abbreviated as **CA**) is the study of talk in interaction. CA generally attempts to describe the orderliness, structure and sequential patterns of interaction, whether this is institutional (in the school, doctor's surgery, court or elsewhere) or casual conversation. Thus, use of the term "conversation" to label this disciplinary movement is misleading if read in a colloquial sense, as many have. In light of this, one of CA's principle practitioners, Emanuel Schegloff, has more recently identified "talk-in-interaction" as CA's topic. Perhaps for this same reason, others who use CA methods identify themselves as discourse analysts (DA), though that term was first used to identify researchers using methods different from CA (e.g., Levinson 1983), and still identifies a group of scholars larger than those who use only CA methods.

Conversation Analysis

Inspired by ethnomethodology, it was developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s principally by the sociologist Harvey Sacks and, among others, his close associates E.A. Schegloff and Gail Jefferson. Sacks died early in his career, but his work was championed by others in his field, and CA has now become an established force in sociology, anthropology, linguistics, speech-communication and psychology. It is particularly influential in interactional sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and discursive psychology, as well as being a coherent discipline in its own right. Recently CA techniques of sequential analysis have been employed by phoneticians to explore the fine phonetic detail of speech.

Conversation Analysis

BASIC STRUCTURES

◆ **Turn-taking Organization**

The nature by which a conversation is done in and through turns. Turn-taking is one of the fundamental organizations of conversation. According to CA, the turn-taking system consists of **two components**: the **turn constructional component** and the **turn allocational component**. The turn-taking organization is described in Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A., & Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language, 50*, 696-735.

Conversation Analysis

While CA does not explicitly claim that turn-taking is universal, as research is conducted on more languages, it is possible that if there were any basis for a claim to universality in language, turn-taking is a good candidate. The turn-taking model for conversation was arrived at inductively through empirical investigation of field recordings of conversation and fitted to such observationally arrived at fact as overwhelmingly, participants in conversation talk one at a time. This can be illustrated by the game ping-pong, where the people conversing are players and their turns are represented as they hit the ball.

Conversation Analysis

◆ **Turn Constructional Component**

The turn constructional component describes basic units out of which turns are fashioned. These basic units are known as *turn constructional units* or TCUs. Unit types include: lexical, clausal, phrasal, and sentential. These are grammatically and pragmatically complete units, meaning that in a particular context they accomplish recognizable social actions.

Note that not all unit types may exist in all languages. Further, it is possible that there are units in other languages, such as particles in Asian languages, that may not exist in English.

Conversation Analysis

◆ **Turn Allocational Component**

The turn allocational component describes how turns are allocated among participants in a conversation. The three ordered options are: Current Speaker selects Next Speaker; Next Speaker Self-selects as Next; or Current Speaker Continues.

◆ **Sequence Organisation**

This concerns how actions are ordered in conversation.

◆ **Adjacency pairs**

Talk tends to occur in responsive pairs; however, the pairs may be split over a sequence of turns.

Conversation Analysis

◆ **Pre-sequences**

Use of sequences of talk prior to purposeful talk.

◆ **Preference organisation**

There are structural (i.e. practice-underwritten) preferences for some types of actions (within sequences of action) in conversation over other actions.

◆ **Repair**

Repair organization addresses problems in speaking, hearing, or understanding in conversation. Repair has two broad classes: self-repair and other repair. Code-switching is a way to communicate to prevent the need for repair by using words fitted for a specific audience.

Conversation Analysis

◆ **Action Formation**

This concerns the description of the practices by which turns at talk are composed and positioned so as to realize one or another actions. Generally, women find it easier to read others' non-verbal communication than men do.

◆ **Contrasts to Other Theories**

In contrast to the research inspired by N. Chomsky, Conversation Analysis only examines natural talk. In contrast to the theory developed by John Gumperz, CA maintains it is possible to decode a conversation based on its transcript alone. In CA there is no belief that the researcher needs to consult with the talk participants or members of their speech community.

Conversation Analysis

◆ Adjacency pairs
-question/answer
-greetings/greetings
-offer/acceptance
-apology/minimisation

◆ Features
- they are in most cases adjacent
- they are produced by two different speakers
- they are ordered as a 1st pair-part and 2nd pair-part
- they are routinised sequences. A first pair-part triggers a second pair-part (possibly with two options, e.g. offer > acceptance/rejection)

Conversation Analysis

A: Can you give me a bottle of whisky? Q1
B: Are you 21? Q2
A: No. R2
B: No. R1
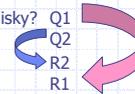
Doctor: Are you sleeping well?
Patient: No, not at all.
Doctor: Hmm. That could be the problem.

Teacher: What is the capital of France?
Pupil: Paris, Miss.
Teacher: Good.

Parent: You've been playing in the mud again.
Child: I haven't.
Parent: Don't answer back. And don't tell lies.

Features of Conversation

◆ INTERACTIVE

Co-construction of two or more **interlocutors** who dynamically adapt their talk to the ongoing exchange. The alternation of **speakers** is quite evident in the utterance-response sequence, studied extensively in CA.

The minimal pair, i.e. adjacency pair, may be symmetric (greeting-greeting) or asymmetric (question-answer). Obviously, question and imperatives, i.e. the sentence types that elicit a response are much more frequent in conversation than in other registers.

Responses can be minimal, i.e. monosyllables like *yeah, no, mm* since they rely on the context provided by the preceding turn. These inserts are often stereotypical, e.g. greetings such as *hi*, farewells such as *bye*, backchannels such as *uh huh*, response elicitors such as *ok*.

Questions are in many cases incomplete clauses: *Really?, What for?, What about X?*

Features of Conversation

◆ INTERACTIVE

Cf the key role of

discourse markers, elements that are used to signal the relation of an utterance to its immediate context with the primary function of bringing to the listener's attention a particular kind of linkage of the upcoming utterance;

Stance/linking adverbials, which mark the speaker's attitude and the connection bt various chunks of the discourse;

interjections and vocatives (e.g. *Ouch!, Wow; you fool, darling, stupid bitch*), which are only loosely attached to the clause and connected with the ongoing interaction;

Features of Conversation

◆ POLITENESS, EMOTION & ATTITUDE

Polite and respectful language > in requests, greetings, apologies

Conversational routines are usually reduced expressions derived by ellipsis from more elaborated clausal expressions

Questions are less confrontational than imperatives (twice as common as imp) > Would you/ Could you?

Vocatives are used not only to identify someone as the intended interlocutor, but to convey various speaker-hearer attitudes. Other expressions that contain this kind of information are **evaluative adjectives** and **interjections**.

Features of Conversation

◆ REAL TIME

People execute their utterances 'on-line'. Pauses, hesitations, repetitions are normal where the need to keep talking clashes with the mental planning that needs to catch up.

The reverse also happens: planning runs ahead of production, so speakers reduce the length of what they have to say: elision, assimilation (on the level of pronunciation), contraction and ellipsis (morphology and syntax; e.g. *it's, he'll, isn't , can't*); situational ellipsis (e.g. *Got a pen?, Doesn't matter*)

Features of Conversation

◆ **RESTRICTED REPERTOIRE**

Conversation is more repetitive than written genres. People may repeat partially or totally what has just been said (local repetition), but also rely on the usage of stereotyped , prefabricated sequences, i.e. LEXICAL BUNDLES : e.g. Can I have a…, Do you know what?.

This is explained by the pressure of online processing, as these expressions are readily available from memory.

◆ **VERNACULAR EXPRESSIONS**

Conversational style is by and large informal. This is evident from the lexical choices, the contractions but also from the occurrence of regional, dialect forms (e.g. you all in the south of the US). In conversation people also use non standard forms at all levels (e.g. lack of agreement bt subject and verb)

Features of Conversation

◆ THE ROLE OF INTERACTANTS

RATIFIED PARTICIPANTS

◆ **Addressees**, who play a vary active role in the exchange
◆ **Side participants**, who contribute little to the exchange

UNRATIFIED PARTICPANTS

◆ **Bystanders**, people who are present but do not take part in the ongoing interaction
◆ **Eavesdroppers**, people who happen to hear but without the speaker being aware of it
   (Goffman 1981, Clark 1987)

Shifting from one class to another often occurs.

Features of Conversation

◆ THE ROLE OF INTERACTANTS

Pause. The door opens and MR. KIDD comes in.

MR. KIDD: I knocked.
ROSE: I heard you.
MR. KIDD: Eh?
ROSE: We heard you.
MR. KIDD: Hallo, Mr. Hudd, how are you, all right? I've been looking at the   pipes.
ROSE: Are they all right?
MR. KIDD: Eh?
ROSE: Sit down, Mr. Kidd.
MR. KIDD: No, that's all right. I just popped in, like, to see how things were going. Well, it's cosy in here, isn't it?
ROSE: Oh, thank you, Mr. Kidd.
[…]
BERT *yawns and stretches, and continues looking at his magazine.*

The Role of Interactants

MR. KIDD: […] No, I won't sit down, with Mr. Hudd just having a bit of a rest after his tea. I've got to go and get mine going in a minute. You're going out then, Mr. Hudd? I was just looking at your van. She's a very nice little van, that. I notice you wrap her up well for the cold. I don't blame you. Yes, I was hearing you go off, when was it, the other morning , yes. Very smooth. I can tell a good gear-change.

MR. KIDD: Me? I can take my pick. Rising. You'll be going out soon then, Mr. Hudd? Well, be careful how you go. Those roads'll be no joke. Still, you know how to manipulate your van all right, don't you? Where you going? Far? Be long?

ROSE: He won't be long.

MR. KIDD: No, of course not. Shouldn't take him long.

ROSE: No.

MR. KIDD: Well then, I'll pop off. Have a good run, Mr. Hudd. Mind how you go. It'll be dark soon too. But not for a good while yet. Arivederci.

He exits.

The Role of Interactants

ROSE: I don't believe he had a sister, ever.
She takes the plate and cup to the sink. BERT *pushes his chair back and rises.*
All right. Wait a minute. Where's your jersey?
She brings the jersey from the bed.
Here you are. Take your coat off. Get into it.
She helps him into his jersey.
Right. Where's your muffler?
She brings a muffler from the bed.
Here you are. Wrap it round. That's it. Don't go too fast, Bert, will you? I'll have some cocoa on when you get back. You won't be long. Wait a minute. Where's your overcoat? You'd better put on your overcoat

(Harold Pinter, *The Room*, pag. 89-94)

The Role of Interactants

DYSART: […] Tell me something else. Who introduced you to the stable to begin with? *Pause.*
ALAN: Someone I met.
DYSART: Where?
ALAN: Bryson's.
DYSART: The shop where you worked?
ALAN: Yes.
DYSART: That's a funny place for you to be. Whose idea was that?
ALAN: Dad. […]

NURSE, DALTON *and the actors playing horses call out to him as* CUSTOMERS, *seated where they are. Their voices are aggressive and demanding. There is a constant background mumbling, made up of trade names, out of which can clearly be distinguished the italicized words, which are shouted out.*
CUSTOMERS: *Philcd*

The Role of Interactants

ALAN *to* DYSART: Of course it might just drive you off your chump.
CUSTOMER: I want to buy a hot-plate. I'm told the *Philco* is a good make!
ALAN: I think it is, madam. [...]
JILL *comes into the square; a girl in her early twenties, pretty and middle class. She wears a sweater and jeans. The mumbling stops.*
JILL: Hallo.
ALAN: Hallo.
JILL: Have you any blades for a clipping machine?
ALAN: Clipping?
JILL: To clip horses. *Pause. He stares at her, open-mouthed.* What's the matter?
ALAN: You work at Dalton's stables. I've seen you.
 (*During the following he mimes putting away a pile of boxes on a shelf in the shop.*)
JILL: I've seen you too, haven't I? You're the boy who's always staring into the yard around lunch-time.

The Role of Interactants

ALAN: Me?
JILL: You're there most days.
ALAN: Not me.
JILL *amused*: Of course it's you. Mr Dalton was only saying the other day: "Who's that boy keeps staring in at the door?" Are you looking for a job or something?
ALAN *eagerly*: Is there one?
JILL: I don't know.
ALAN: I can only do week-ends.
JILL: That's when most people ride. We can always use extra hands. It'd mainly be mucking out.
ALAN: I don't mind.
JILL: Can you ride?
ALAN: No... No... I don't want to. *She looks at him curiously.* Please.
JILL: Come up on Saturday. I'll introduce you to Mr. Dalton. *She leaves the square.*
DYSART: When was this? About a year ago?
ALAN: I suppose.
DYSART: And she did?
ALAN: Yes.
(Peter Shaffer, *Equus*, Act One, Scene Fifteen, pag. 245-247)

Performance phenomena

◆ **Dysfluency** - pressure on the online planning > minor performance problems that do not interfere with understanding; - cognitive problems;
◆ **Hesitations** a) silence; filled pause occupied by a vowel sound with or without nasalisation (Br er/erm; AmE uh/uhm). A filled pause signals that a speaker has not finished his turn and discourages another speaker from taking the floor. An empty pause tends to occur at major transition points.
◆ **Repeats** the same bit of language is used until the speaker is bale to move on. If the repeated element id smaller than one word and is repeated several times it produces a stutter effect; repeats may be voluntary (for emphasis) or involuntary. Initial items (e.g. personal pronouns) tend to be repeated more.

Performance phenomena

◆ **Retrace-and-repair** = reformulations
Unplanned repeats are also called false starts. There are other sequences that co-occur when the speaker retraces ("erases") what has just been said and starts again this time with a different word/sequence of words.
◆ **Grammatically incomplete**
A speaker starts to utter a grammatical unit but fails to complete it: a) a piece of discourse is abandoned and the speaker starts anew = **self repair**; b) the incompletion is cause by something extraneous to the speaker's own speech process = an **interruption**; c) the interlocutor drops in to correct, or better, to co-construct an utterance = a **repair by another interlocutor**; d) the speaker loses the thread or decides to stop because no-one is listening or wants to avoid embarrassing someone = **abandonment**.

Performance phenomena

◆ **Syntactic blends** = **anacoluthon**

It is applied to a clause or a sentence that finishes up in a way that is not consistent with the way it began. This is a type of performance error cause by syntactic memory loss in the course of production of fairly long clauses. Syntactic complexity is a major source of this kind of blends. Anacolutha often show mismatches bt utterance chunks that entails changes in perspective:

You're talking about a week and a half or something aren't we

Principles ruling conversation

◆ Written genres = complex architectural design
◆ Spoken genres = limited capacity of working memory, linear construction, non retractability, reformulation means adding;
  ▪ online production (keep talking, limited planning ahead > 7 word span, end-weight, qualification of what is said, for instance through tags),
  ▪ limited planning: parenthetical structures, digressions; add-on strategy; clausal or non–clausal units

Prefaces, bodies and tags

The one or more clausal units that form the BODY of the speaker's message are however followed by TAGS and prefaced by PREFACES:

North and South of London   preface
they're two different worlds   body
aren't they in a way   tag

Prefaces = typically consisting of 1 ore more non clausal units
Bodies = typically consisting of 1 or more clausal units
Tags = typically consisting of one or more non clausal units

Prefaces and other utterance-launchers

These forms propel the conversation and provide the speaker with some planning time during which the rest of the utterance can be prepared.
- **fronting or topicalisation**: SPOCA vs OPASC
Car numbers I remember better than phone numbers
the aim of this strategy is to give prominence to one element in particular
- **noun ph prefaces** coreferential with pronouns. The clause is thus divided into 2 chunks, that are easier to manage
this little shop, it's lovely
those M&S bags, can you see them all?

Prefaces and other utterance-launchers

- **DM and other prefatory expressions**, i.e. items that orient the listener to the following utterance, especially in relation to what comes before (like, well, right = DM; yeah, okay = responses; anyway = stance adverbial; so, then = linking adverbial);
- **Overtures**, i.e. ready-made expressions that may be useful to open an utterance
The trouble is … a lot of engineering is now making into that
I'll tell you what … I've just ha a thought
These multi-word expressions are an explicit way of signalling a new direction in the conversation:
like I say (repeating a point made earlier), *the question is* (presenting an issue in a forceful way), *you mean to say* (asking for confirmation of a point), *going back to* (returning to an earlier topic), *I would have thought* (politely pointing out a point of disagreement)

Prefaces and other utterance-launchers

Overtures: *No wonder, the (only) thing is, as a matter of fact*

Not to worry, not to worry, erm- *what we can do is* er- use something here
I have a room, I could do that, I could go upstairs but *there again*, you're shut off from everything aren't you?

Interjections or Discourse markers can occur with these units. Prosody is a key factor in establishing if they are peripheral or if they are integrated.

Tags 1

The body can be extended either with coordination (and, but) or with juxtaposition

I couldn't find them. So I went to the manager's. he said what's wrong now? So I told him that I liked those so well.

Tags express the tendency to add elements as an afterthought

Tags 2

◆ **Retrospective comment clauses**: the speaker adds a comment that modifies the stance of the preceding clause ; it is a kind of hedge
And they're open seven days a week *you say*
◆ **Retrospective vagueness hedges**: the speaker indicates that this message needs to be taken with a pinch of salt (stance adverbials of IMPRECISION)
And it was her second car that she'd ever had *sort of thing*

Tags 3

- **Question tags**: they either elicit the hearer's agreement or have a role of retrospective qualification. The qualification is pragmatic. The speaker begins by making an assertion but then turns the force into that of a question

  Well, that little girl's cute, isn't she?

  You had a nice trip though yeah?

Tags 4

- **Noun phrase tags**: repeating a n.p. with further elaboration presumably to clarify reference retrospectively, because pronoun reference, though quick, may turn out to be unclear. As the opposite of n.p. prefaces, n.p. tags may take the form of appended n.p. coreferentially linked to a pronoun in the body of the clause.

  I just give it all away didn't I Rudy my knitting

  Oh I reckon they're lovely. I really do whippets

Tags 5

- **Other non–clausal units**: retrospectively added; the tag achieves reinforcement or emotive strengthening of a negative in the preceding unit.

  I mean she never liked that car. Ever

- **Self-supplied answers**: Speakers may suggest answers to their own questions

  What time are they supposed to be due back- early?

  What are they going to get – some wine?

- **Vocatives** added at the end as retrospective qualification (e.g. Hey thanks for the note, Tom)

Non clausal units: inserts

Syntactic non clausal units (e.g. *my turn?*) can also enter into syntactic relations with other units

Inserts – stand alone expressions – are peripheral both in the grammar and in the lexicon of the language. Their word status is often questioned (interjections, hesitators).

Non clausal units: inserts

Some criteria to define them: they may appear on their own or attached to a larger structure; they rarely occur medially; they are morphologically simple; they have no homonyms in other word classes; they have no denotative meaning, but their use is defined by their pragmatic function.

Biber *et al*. 1999 include in the class: **interjections**, **hesitators**, **exclamatory words** (God and its euphemistic variants), **expletives**, **routine formulae.**

Interjections

Inserts with an exclamatory function, they express the speaker's emotions

OH the most common – to introduce utterances or to respond to utterances: SURPRISE, UNEXPECTEDNESS, EMOTIVE AROUSAL

Your birthday is in May – Oh that reminds me, remind, Aunty Margaret, it's her anniversary

AH/WOW less routine expressions of emotional involvement, greater intensity of feeling (SURPRISE, DELIGHT)

A: In Hudson Bay they have a whole floor, huge floor, the size of a city block, on men's' clothing

B: Wow

Interjections 2

OOH – both for pleasant and unpleasant feelings
COR (Br) - AMAZEMENT
AHA – SUDDEN RECOGNITION
OOPS/WHOOPS – used when a minor mishap occurs (e.g. when the speaker spills something)
UGH - DISGUST
OW/OUCH - PAIN (physical)
AARGH/URGH – generalised for PAIN /DISPLEASURE
Tt (alveolar click) DISAPPROVAL, REGRET
HM LACK OF ENTHUSIASM
YIPPEE DELIGHT

Greetings & farewells

- Greetings are reciprocal, symmetrical exchanges that often consist of a greeting word followed by a vocative

A: Hi Margaret
B: Hi.   (AmE)
A: Hello, Joyce.
B: Good morning, Bob. (BrE)
In general, the briefer the greeting,m the more informal the tone (good morning > hello > hi)
Hiya wotcha (BrE)
Hey Howdy How you doing (AmE)
Good day (AusE)

Greetings & farewells

- Farewells too are typically reciprocated

A: Oh. Goodbye Robin
B: See you later. Thank you for your lift. Love you lots (BrE)
A: See you
B: Bye Bye
C: Bye bye
Short forms are preferred in informal exchanges.
BrE forms: Ta, ta, Cheers, Cheerio

Discourse markers 1

- They signal a transition in the ongoing conversation or an interactive relationship bt speaker and hearer and message. They tend to appear at the beginning of a turn or utterance.

Some examples:

- **WELL**: versatile role. Common turn initiator with a variety of functions, but typically indicating the speaker's need to give thought to the point at issue. It can signal self-correction in the middle of an utterance. If uttered by the addressee it indicates some contrast and disagreement.

A: You're always hungry
B: Well I'm not now.

Discourse markers 2

- **RIGHT**: most often used at the beginning of a turn, conveying DECISIVENESS. It also highlights that the speaker is initiating a new phase.

A: No, but it all adds up – I was sitting there the other day adding up your things
B: Right now you can discuss with Wayne about the sheds
It resembles OKAY and ALLRIGHT as response forms indicating understanding and compliance.

Discourse markers 3

A: It's just an excuse! Get on the phone and phone them up!
B: Right Claire, I will.
Especially in AmE right indicates agreement (as a back channel)

- **NOW**: is an utterance launcher functioning as an instrument that clears a bit of conversational space. It can mark a return to a related subject, and at the same time a new departure.

A: Alan doesn't want anybody doing a sort of flaky job so you know they haven't gotten the students who would do it
B: Now who is he I don't know

Attention signals/response elicitors

- A. s. attract the attention of the addressee. They are often familiar and impolite in their effect, especially when followed by a directive or in combination with the vocative *you*
  Hey you, I buttered that bread for you and you didn't eat it.
- R. e. can be characterised as generalised question tags (*eh?, alright? okay?*). These one-word response elicitors often have a speaker-centred role . Right is perhaps an exception:
  A: You know who Stan is, right?
  B: I've heard his name.

Response forms 1

They are routine expressions used to reply to a previous remark by a different speaker. They are typically inserts. They can be responses to questions (*yes, no*), to directives (*okay*), to assertions (backchannel cues like *uhhuh, mhm*).

YEAH (*yes, yep*), **NO** (*nope*) are also used in responding to directives, where politeness would suggest the use of a stronger positive responses (e.g. *sure, certainly*) and of weakened or mitigated negative responses (e.g. *er… no*).

OKAY is used not only to respond to directives but to a range of speech acts such as suggestions, offers, permission-giving.

Response forms 2

- Other common affirmative markers are
  Mm, uh huh, mhm
  Expressions such as *really, I see,* as well as the DM *you know, you see* can function as backchannels (=monitoring devices)
  A more negative type of feedback is provided by forms such as *huh? eh?* (or the question word *what?*)

Polite speech act formulae

Inserts and formulae used in conventional speech acts (e.g. *thanking, apologising, requesting, congratulating*). These formulae behave as inserts (i.e. invariable items) but can also combine with grammatical constructions such as prep. phrases or complement clauses.

Thank you both for having us
Sorry to keep bothering you

REQUESTS (please):
A:Would you like another drink Susie?
B:Yes please.

Polite speech act formulae

THANK (thank you):
A: Thanks Carl, I appreciate it.
B: You're welcome (ACKNOWLEDING THANKS) and good luck (GOOD WISHES)

APOLOGIES (sorry, beg your pardon)/**APOLOGY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**
A: Sorry, I didn't mean to scare you.
B: That's okay.
Pardon/ Sorry/ I beg your pardon/Pardon me are all more polite equivalents of *what?* seeking repetition of a previous speaker's message.

Expletives 1

- Taboo expressions (swearwords) used as exclamation in reaction to some negative experience. They are relatively detached elements, although they can be prosodically linked to other larger syntactic units.
- Either they are stand-alone elements or occur towards the beginning of a clause, utterance, turn. Occasionally they occur in final position and very rarely in medial position, esp. when introducing direct speech quotation:
  You're supposed to [say], golly, thanks Baloo;
  She just [thought] my God I only have six months.

Expletives 2

◆ Taboo expressions refer to one of the common taboo domains: religion, sex, bodily excretion

*Oh **Jesus**, I didn't know it was that cold!*

*A I know what I forgot to get in town. **Damn**!*
B What?
A A comb.

***Bloody hell**! He's gone mad.*

***Fuck**, I feel fucking sweaty, I can feel it already.*

OTHERS: shit, goddammit

Expletives 3

◆ Moderated (or Euphemistic expressions) camouflage their taboo origin with some phonetic modifications (*gosh* for *God*), or by substituting words (*goodness* for *God*).

*My **gosh**, what a great idea!*

A Nineteen dollars.
*B **Geez**, that is expensive.*

*Oh **heck** well you'll have to go on the bus*

OTHERS: heavens, good grief, good Lord

Expletives 4

◆ There is of course a variation in both the FORCE of the expression and in its APPLICABILITY. Some expressions can be applied to both positive and negative occurrences. Adjs and advs (*bloody, fucking*) in themselves are not expletives, unless they are used in fixed expressions like *bloody hell*.

Syntactic non-clausal units

◆ These structures can be described in terms of sentence grammar, e.g., noun phrases, adj. P, etc.

Poor kids, no sweat	NP
Perfect, good for you	ADJ P
Not really, absolutely	ADV P
For goodness' sake	PREP P

Sometimes they are augmetned by inserts or other peripheral elements such as vocatives:
Oh shame!
Good play there, dude!

Their fragmentary nature reflects a dependence of the message on context, explicable in general terms either by anaphoric or situational ellipsis.

Vernacular or non-standard grammar 1

◆ Range of phenomena in popular speech which are perceived as inappropriate for public and written communication: signs of 'ill-educated' usage, avoided in teaching. Yet they have a role in establishing SOCIAL SOLIDARITY among speakers and in making conversation lively and colourful.

Morphonemic features
That's what me mum always said me instead of my
'em instead of them
Ya instead of you

Vernacular or non-standard grammar 2

Morphological features
Yous as a plural
Throwed instead of thrown
Ain't instead of isn't, aren't, hasn't, haven't, 'm not (Ain't you lot ever heard of teabags?)
Innit as a generalised tag (teachers are unfair in this school, innit?)
Y'all /youse (North. Ireland) (Well, thank y'all, y'all have a nice day)

Morphosyntactic features
Apply especially to irregular verbs. Morphological spelling and pronunciation variants rarely occur in adult speech. Forms which occur in standard English are used with different syntactic and semantic functions.

Vernacular or non-standard grammar 3

-s with plural: I says no, they gets
Was for were: My legs was hurting
Don't for doesn't: He don't have manners
Present for past: They've forze his bank account
Past participle generalised to the past tense function: You done it last year
Generalisation of base form of verbs: Well she give me that one the other night
Zero plural: The most you're spendign for that is ten pound
Accusative pronoun in place of nominative: Well us lot must walk about half a mile a day
Them instead of those: Did I post all them letters on Monday?
What as rel pron: Gotta make sure she's got the book waht I had last week

Vernacular or non-standard grammar 4

Intrusive WHAt introducing a comparative clause: It's harder than what you think it is
Adjectival form in an adverbial role: I wanted to go back so bad; > REAL in Am = Real good

Syntactic features
Multiple negative construction: Don't say I never gave you nothing
Double comparative: Sometimes, that is so, so much more easier to follow

A case study: vocatives

◆ **Forms of address** in English include the pronoun used in the 2nd person and vocatives. The former offer very little variation in English, being largely restricted to you; the latter carry the burden of social differentiation. Pronouns can be either bound (syntactic function, subject or object) or unbound > vocatives.

◆ **Vocatives** are not integrated in the structure of the clause, which explains their variable order (they may precede, follow or interrupt the clause).

Vocatives

◆ **Bound forms**: 2nd pers pronoun *you* + *you all* (Am South), *youse* (dialect), *you guys, you fellows, you people* (colloquial), + *your honour, your excellency, your grace* + in the military ranks the 3rd person: May I have *the General's* indulgence for a few seconds?

◆ **Vocatives**:   -**pronoun**
                    -**names**
                    -**kinship terms**
                    -**titles**
                    -**descriptors**

Vocatives: types

◆ NAMES: first names (Stephen, Elizabeth), familiar forms (Steve, Liz), diminutive forms (Stevie, Lizzie), nicknames (tiger, bunny), last names (used among males, esp. in the military and in British public schools):

   NICKNAMES: cf Aus E. –y, -o, -a, -s, -ers, -poo, -pops, (Mikeypoodles, Liziekins); -y is usually restricted   to children's names and from mother/girlfriend to an adult male, or for teasing;
   MULTIPLE NAMING: moving freely form one form to another > indicates a great deal of intimacy.
   GENERIC NAMES: *buddy, mack, jack* > express either belligerent feelings or show solidarity (camaraderie).

Vocatives: types

◆ KINSHIP TERMS: may function as a name or as a title; generally used upwardly from a younger to an older relative: *Grandmother* (*Granny*), *Uncle*;

◆ DESCRIPTORS: terms for males only (*buddy, chum, fellow, mate, pal*); some for females only (*babe, sister, toots*) and some for both (*guys, folks, people*); thing designation for people (*taxi, room service*); vocational designation (*waiter, nurse, operator*) +
   -**terms of endearment** (*dear, honey, darling*)
   -**terms of insult** (*jackass, stupid*)
   -**taboo words**

◆ TITLES: title + last name;
   ▪ VOCATIONAL TITLES: Dr, Prof., Senator
   ▪ MILITARY: Lt., Capt., Gen.,
   ▪ RELIGIOUS: Father, Brother, Sister
   ▪ M-FORMS: Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Master (accompanied by last name, otherwise rude > Sir, Ma'am);

Vocatives: criteria of use

Since vocatives are a thermometer of relationships between individuals the following aspects are crucial in their choice:

- **Reciprocity**, i.e. whether the terms are used reciprocally or not (non reciprocal: parent:child > KT:FN), this dimension is called **power semantics**; reciprocal dyads are common within a status group (FN:FN, but also TLN:TLN); reciprocal relations are an example of **solidarity semantics**;
- **Status, education, vocation**: someone's achieved professional position often seems to override the other factors (business professionals receive TLN and give FN);
- **Age**: KT:FN Aunt Lizzie:Paul, but also FN:FN when they are the same age;
- **Sex**: in service encounters women are often addressed with forms of endearment (*sweetheart, honey, love*); men can receive from total strangers camaraderie forms (*buddy, mate*, etc).

Vocatives

Functions
Zwicky (1974)

Calls	**Addresses**
Catch the addressee's attention	Maintain or reinforce the contact bt speaker and addressee

Vocatives

Biber *et al.* 1999
Positions (within an utterance)

Beginning		End
Getting sb's attention ≫	identifying addressee ≫	maintaining/ reinforcing relation bt collocutors

Vocatives

Huddleston & Pullum 2000

Convey a "considerable amount about a speaker's social relations or emotive attitude towards the addressee and their primary purpose or sole purpose is often to give expression to this kind of meaning as in *Yes, sir!* Or *I agree, my dear, that it's quite a bargain*"