

Adjacency pairs in conversational exchanges

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- Speech acts are clearly related to what conversation analysts have called **adjacency pairs** or pairs of utterances that usually occur together. The production of a speech act such as an offer will normally be accompanied by a response. And this response may be a preferred one, that is, acceptance, or a dispreferred one or refusal (Cook, 1989: 53). The most frequently used adjacency pair is question-answer. Other examples of expected pairings are greeting and greeting, information and acknowledgement, etc.
- **Adjacency pairs** are pairs of utterances that usually occur together. The most often used adjacency pair is question-answer but there are others such as: **a. greeting-greeting; b. congratulations-thanks; c. apology-acceptance; d. inform-acknowledge; e. leave taking-leave taking**

TASK A

Read through the following adjacency pairs taken from a corpus of film scripts and decide what type they are following McCarthy's list. In some cases you will find a dispreferred answer (for example a refusal to accept an apology, etc).

- TESSA: Hello William. WILLIAM: Hi.
- LUCY: Bye. MOTHER: See you later.
- GEORGE: Well, it's a terrific résumé, Polly. And, uh... Congratulations on the baby. POLLY: What baby?
- ANNA: Good night everyone. ALL: Bye.
- MRS. DRAYTON: Hello, darling. How are you? MONSIGNOR RYAN: Forgive me. I'm a little bit early.

- POLLY: Well, hello. GEORGE: Hi.
- ELLIE: I'm Ellie. MARCUS: Hi, Ellie. Nice to meet you.
- CLAIRE: OK, I'm sorry. You're right. It was a stupid thing to... NINA: You should never have asked. It's so horrible.
- BERNIE: Hello, Anna. Delighted to meet you. ANNA: And you.
- TERRY: George, congratulations. GEORGE: Hey, Terry, how are you?
- LINUS: Hello, Sabrina. SABRINA: Hello, Linus.
- CAROLYN: Night. Bye. NINA: Are you off, Carolyn? Bye. CAROLYN: See you tomorrow. NINA: Night.
- BRIDGET: Hello, Dad. MR JONES: Hello, darling.
- KATHERINE: Oh, my God! I just have a credit card. I'm sorry. Is that okay? CASHIER: No, it's not okay. There's a sign.

- JUNE: And I'm sorry about last night. That was awkward. LUCY: Oh, not at all. Brian was unbelievable.
- ANNA: I'm really sorry about last time. He just flew in. I had no idea. WILLIAM: All right.
- SUZIE: I'll take that. WILL: All right. So I'll call. See you soon.
- JONAH: Hi. Dad. This is Jessica. SAM: Nice to meet you.
- LUCY: Good bye. JACK: Bye.
- KATHERINE: I'm so sorry. I apologize from the bottom of my heart. CASHIER: So sign already! I'd like to get home. You have my pen.
- SAUL: Bye bye, Lucy. LUCY: Bye bye. Good night.
- CAROLYN: Night, Sandy. SANDY: Oh, bye, Carolyn.

- LUCY: Bye-bye. GEORGE: Bye
- DANIEL: Just hold it right there, Miss Jones. I'm sorry to inform you, but I think you'll find that, by contract you are expected to give at least six weeks' notice. BRIDGET: Ah, yes.
- TOM: Bye. MERYL: Bye. Thank you.
- FRIEND: Oh, we'll see each other. LUCY: You better. FRIEND: Of course. All right? LUCY: Nn-nn. FRIEND: Good-bye. See you.
- WILLIAM: Max, Bella. We'll see you in a couple of days. Thank you everybody. ALL: Bye guys. Bye Anna.
- JOEY: I'm delighted you're coming! MONSIGNOR RYAN: Thank you. I'm very delighted to have met you. See you this evening. You know, you two make me feel... quite extraordinarily happy!

- MARK: See you soon. NINA: Bye.
- GEORGE: All right. See you later. JUNE: Okay.
- MARY: Train. Okay, uh, I'll see you later. Okay.
FRIEND: Thank you for coming.
- WILLIAM: I'm very sorry about the... 'surreal but nice'
comment. Disaster... ANNA: That's fine

TASK B

Now read through the following extracts and decide if you can find in them any other type of adjacency pair which is not included in McCarthy's list (for example: offer-acceptance; request-answer; question-answer, etc.)

- CHRISTINE: ...how would you like to be Imogene's godfather? WILL: Seriously?
- DARCY: So how are you? BRIDGET: Well, apart from being very disappointed not to see my favourite reindeer jumper again, I'm well.
- JOE: Matthew, how are you? MATTHEW: Good.
- LUCY: What do you want from me, Jack? JACK: I want you not to be unhappy.
- WILL: So, Fiona, how are you? I mean, how are you feeling? FIONA: My stomach's fine, yeah.

- ANNA: 'Cartwright, Wainwright, whatever your name is, I promised little Jimmy I'd be home for his birthday, could you get a message through that I may be a little late.' WILLIAM: 'Certainly.'
- GEORGE: Hey, Terry, how are you? Still slicing people up?
TERRY: Indeed.
- BRIDGET: How's it going? MR JONES: Torture.
- JONAH: Dad. Could you shut the door? SAM: Sure.
- WILL: Yeah, I heard you. I heard you. What do you want me to do about it? MARCUS: I don't know. You could talk to her.
- ANTHONY : How are you? MARK: I'm fine

- JEFF: If you don't mind I would like something too. Could you bring me up some really, really cold water? WILLIAM: I'll see what I can do.
- JERRY: Hi! Hi, how are you? CELESTE: How are you?
- WOMAN: How are you? KATHERINE: Fine.