

## The Data Session

Looking at and listening to naturally occurring recordings of talk-in-interaction (conversations or talk from institutional settings like classrooms, service encounters, doctor-patient interactions, interviews, etc). One person brings data and a transcript and (possibly) a problem, question, or phenomenon to focus the groups' analysis. Data sessions are a chance for experienced analysts to practice and for novice analysts to learn this analytic methods by practicing it.

## Purpose

The fundamental question in conversation analysis is "Why that now?" We can assume that participants in social interaction are always accountable to this question as they interpret the talk of others and produce their own talk in collaboration with others. One way to understand how participants interpret their social interactions and the language resources they use to enable social interaction is to record interaction, make detailed transcriptions of the talk and to undertake repeated observations.

"that" - Specifically characterize what the object is you are attending to (a pronoun, a pattern of intonation, a question, response). When you give a name to something, ask yourself what you mean by the name, how you know the label fits. Eg., Speaker X is "teasing" - what specific features of X's talk lead to this interpretation?

"now" - Any point in a conversation is a "now" - meaning, it is a spot, a slot, in the sequential development of the interaction. It's place is as much a part of it's meaning/function as is the utterance itself. How would you characterize the place of this utterance in the developing talk? The developing turn?

"why" - A big question regarding how a piece of talk is functioning. For CA, this involves a meeting of a particular "that" at a particular "now". Rather than getting into speculation about the intentions of a speaker, we try to say something about the interactional or organizational work that an utterance might be doing. This can then be supported by looking at how the other participants treat the utterance, how such utterances have been found to function in other studies, or by collecting our own set of similarly patterned exchanges and describing their recurrent structures and alternations.

## Guidelines

These fundamental steps allow the group to focus, work up observations, share ideas orally, and discuss ideas only after everyone had had a chance to share her/his separate observations.

1. Orientation to the data - whatever the supplier(s) of the data wants us to know. Often a particular focus is suggested based on prior observations made by the supplier(s).
2. Repeated listening to a segment of talk.
3. 10 minutes of individual writing, working up of observations regarding the data at hand.
4. Sharing of observations. Each person has a chance to share observations without interruption or response from the others (except in the case of pedagogical guidance). Discussion is to be postponed until everyone has shared their observations.
5. Discussion - **ONLY AFTER ALL PARTICIPANTS HAVE SHARED THEIR OBSERVATIONS!**