Studies in Emotion and Social Interaction

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General Editors

Body Movement and Speech in Medical Interaction
Studies in Emotion and Social Interaction

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Body movement and speech in medical interaction

Christian Heath

Illustrated by Katherine Nicholls
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Preface

The following book is concerned with some small but not insignificant details of the interaction between human beings. It focuses on the organization of human behaviour in a particular setting, the medical consultation, and explores the coordination between body movement and speech, the visual and vocal aspects of the interaction between the doctor and patient. It is based upon many hours of video recordings of ordinary, everyday general-practice or primary-health-care consultations and involves the detailed analysis of actual examples accompanied by numerous illustrations.

The opportunity to conduct the research which forms the basis of this book derived from my appointment in 1974, on graduating, to the post of Research Fellow in the Department of General Practice, University of Manchester. The head of department at that time, Professor Patrick Byrne, gave his full support and encouragement to the research, and in 1977 we received from the Social Science Research Council research grant HR/5148 to conduct a project concerned with visual and vocal aspects of the general-practice consultation. Following the retirement of Patrick Byrne, Professor David Metcalfe received the chair, and he too provided enthusiasm and support for the research. Without Patrick Byrne, David Metcalfe, and colleagues in the Department of General Practice, especially Alec Brown, Eileen Ineson, Bernard Marks, and Mike Thomas, this research would not have been possible. More recently, I also owe a debt to my colleagues and students at the Department of Sociology, University of Surrey, for providing such a pleasant and stimulating environment for conducting research and teaching related courses. In 1981 the SSRC provided additional support for the research on medical interaction (HR/8143), which provided the opportunity to gather more data and develop and extend the analysis. I should also like to thank Dr. Marshall Marinka and Alan Clarke of the MSD Foundation, London, for making available vii
Preface

a large quantity of excellent-quality video recordings of medical interviews.

Over many years I have been extremely fortunate in receiving detailed comments and criticism on numerous papers and on presentations at seminars and conferences; I would like to thank all those who so kindly showed an interest and helped the research in this way. Max Atkinson, Charles Goodwin, John Heritage, Gail Jefferson, and Rod Watson deserve very special mention for their inspiration and support, and for the trouble they have taken with the analytic concerns and research reported in this book. I should also like to thank Katherine Nicholls for her artwork and her patience in producing the many illustrations, and Jackie Little for her care and perseverance in preparing the manuscript. I am also very grateful to Sue Allen-Mills of Cambridge University Press for her advice and general support during the various stages leading to publication and to Jane Van Tassel for her vigorous copyediting of the final manuscript. Without the delightful companionship of Gillian Nicholls and the imaginative support of Joan Heath neither the research nor the book would have been accomplished. It goes without saying that the responsibility for what follows is mine alone.

To all those who so kindly allowed their medical consultations or some other private exchange to be video recorded in the name of social science, thank you.

I am very grateful to Routledge and Kegan Paul plc for permission to use part of an article previously published in *The Sociology of Health and Illness* (1983.5, 3: 331–4) as the basis to the second part of Chapter 7, and to reproduce a number of drawings from a different article in the same journal (1984.6, 3: 311–38) for Fragments 2:6, 2:7, and 2:8. I am also grateful to Richard Allway of International Distillers and Vintners for granting permission to use the advertisement for Smirnoff.

C.H.

*Market Drayton, Shropshire*

*1 March 1985*
The transcription system

The transcription system for talk was devised by Gail Jefferson and can be found in Atkinson and Heritage 1984; Psathas 1979; and Schenkein 1978; and in more detail in Jefferson 1983a, b, c. The following is an abbreviated version adapted from Jefferson 1983a.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Instance</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[</td>
<td>Dr: erei:: H: [no:] I haven't W: well it...</td>
<td>A single left bracket indicates the point at which a current speaker’s talk is overlapped by another’s talk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>)</td>
<td>Dr: (oh::) [yes] P: [on ] my fingers:</td>
<td>A single right bracket indicates the point at which an utterance terminates in overlap with another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ [</td>
<td>SW: ...getcher::(.first name J: Jennifer M: Jennifer SW: hhhuh hah do: you..</td>
<td>Combined left brackets indicate the simultaneous onset of bracketed utterances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>Dr: cheerio= P: =by bye Dr: cheerio Pii: bye</td>
<td>Equal signs, one at the end of a line and one at the beginning, indicate no gap between the two lines.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The transcription system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Instance</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>{0.0} Dr: Rob (.7)</td>
<td>Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in silence in tenths of a second. In this instance the gap is seven-tenths of a second.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(. ) F: he got(.)two children..</td>
<td>A dot in parentheses indicates a tiny gap, probably no more than one-tenth of a second.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ Dr: What’s up?</td>
<td>Underscoring indicates some form of stress, via pitch and/or amplitude. A shorter underscore indicates a lighter stress than a long underscore.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:: Dr: Ok?: (.5) P: so:::</td>
<td>Colons indicate prolongation of the immediately prior sound. The length of the row of colons indicates the length of the prolongation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.. , ? SW: .. feel thats a fair comment? about you</td>
<td>Punctuation marks are used to indicate intonations, not as grammatical symbols. For example, a question may not necessarily have a rising intonation and so would not receive a question mark.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORD Dr: let me know if there: are any more DIFFICULTIES</td>
<td>Capitals, except at the beginnings of lines, indicate especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; &gt; P: ..long time actually&lt; I’ve been about them before</td>
<td>A greater-than sign indicates a hurried start. A less-than sign indicates a slowing down.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The transcription system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Instance</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>hhh</em></td>
<td>(.6)</td>
<td>Dr: hhh-hhh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A row of *h*’s prefixed by a circle indicates an in-breath; without a circle, an out-breath. The length of the row of *h*’s indicates the length of the in- or out-breath.

| 0      | P:      | the:are():se :se :se |

A circle in front of a word or sound indicates that it is uttered at low volume in contrast to the preceding talk. Two circles indicate lower volume still.

| (      | Dr:     | its Mister Ho[ugh] |
|       | P:      | ( { )     |

Empty parentheses indicate the transcribers’ inability to hear what was said. The length of the parenthesized space indicates the length of the untranscribed talk. Parenthesized speaker designation indicates inability to identify a speaker.

| (word) | H:      | just: the difference |
|        | P:      | ( yep )               |

Parenthesized words are possible hearings or speaker identifications.

| ( ( ) )| Dr:     | <so what is it? (12.00) ( (P. passes bottle) ) |
|        | Dr:     | I’m not sure I’ve seen these: before |

Double parentheses contain transcribers’ descriptions rather than, or in addition to, transcriptions.

Vocal and visual elements

The following describes the way in which transcripts including both vocal and visual elements are presented in the book. The transcription system used for gaze, details of which can be found below and in C. Goodwin 1981a and Psathas 1978, was devised by Charles Goodwin. It is presented here with a few small modifications.
The transcription system

Transcripts of both vocal and visual elements are normally a small, detailed section of a fragment of talk presented earlier. Unlike transcripts of talk, which are transcribed down the page, one utterance above the other, transcripts including visual elements are transcribed across the page. For example:

Dr: What bringesth you this morning
 (.6)  
P: erː siː I've got theseː . . awful spots:

is presented in part as

P: ------erː siː-I've got theseː
Dr: morning

So as to capture a spatial representation of the length of silences, gaps are broken down into dashes, each dash equivalent to one-tenth of a second. In this example the “(.6)” gap between the two utterances is transcribed as six dashes.

Relevant visual elements are then mapped onto this transcript with respect to where they occur in relation to the talk and/or gaps. The visual behaviour of the speaker is normally transcribed above the talk, that of the co-participant(s) below. Where, as in a case such as this, we have two speakers, we place one above the other, typically the “main” speaker above, and correspondingly map out the nonvocal elements next to the particular party’s talk or line denoted for his or her talk. If details concerning gaze are presented, then the first line or space above or below the talk is reserved for transcribing gaze:

P: ------erː siː-I've got theseː
Dr: morning

hand

The continuous line immediately above or below the transcribed talk and/or silence in this instance indicates that the party is gazing at the face of the co-participant. For a discussion concerning the assessment of gaze direction, in particular towards another, see Chapter 1, especially note 10. In this case the patient is looking at the doctor during “morning” and until the first colon in “erːːmː.” The doctor gazes briefly at the patient during the “m” sound of “erːːmː.” If the fragment involves more than two persons, the person being gazed at is indicated on the line.

The longer dashes are used to indicate that the party is looking at a particular object; in the case here the doctor and patient turn and
The transcription system

look at the patient’s hand. Frequently a series of lengthy dashes is accompanied by a description, such as “records,” “fingers,” “camera,” to indicate what object is being looked at.

A series of commas indicates that the party is turning away from a participant. In the example above, the patient turns away from the doctor during “erːːmː” and the doctor turns away from the patient towards the end of and following “erːːmː.”

A series of dots indicates that the party is turning towards a co-participant. In the example above, the doctor moves his gaze towards the patient near the beginning of “erːːmː.” In multiparty interactions, when one party moves his gaze from one person to another, the notation of dots and commas becomes ambiguous because the person is simultaneously moving away from one co-participant and towards another. On occasions dots and commas are also used to capture gaze moving towards and away from particular objects.

Details concerning the direction of gaze are only presented in transcripts if necessary to the description of a particular fragment. Details of other visual elements are mapped onto the transcript in relation to the talk and gaps, where necessary, in conjunction with gaze or alone. As with gaze, a person’s visual behaviour is presented adjacent to his talk or the line reserved for his talk. In the example above it is necessary to present details of a couple of other movements:

```
raises hand
1. 2.
----- ------
P: -----erːːmː-I’ve got these:
Dr: morning
```

Close dashes are used to represent movement. They are accompanied by a description to indicate what type of movement it is. In this instance the patient raises her hand in two moves towards the doctor; the dashes represent the movements. The movement begins initially at the end of “erːːmː” and ceases near the end of “I’ve.” It restarts at “got” and finishes with “these:.” In the area below, we find the doctor moving posturally towards the patient. If necessary, additional dashed lines above and below the transcribed talk are used to represent other movements in relation to where they begin and end in the talk and/or gaps.

“To avoid awkward wording, the masculine pronoun “he” will sometimes be used in the generic sense to mean “he or she.”
xiv  The transcription system

Some fragments are accompanied by drawings which are based on photographs taken at particular moments. The moments within a fragment from which these pictures are drawn are marked by a "D," typically accompanied by a number to show whether the drawing is the first, second, or nth of the action in a particular fragment.

Taking the earlier example we find:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{patient (P)} \quad \text{doctor (Dr)} \\
\text{Dr: morning} \\
\text{P: I've got these!} \\
\text{D1: hand posture} \\
1. \quad 2. \\
\end{array}
\]

The transcripts that include elements of visual behaviour presented in the book are simplified versions of the more complex maps described in Chapter 1. Coupled with drawings, they are designed to provide the reader with a relatively accessible way of understanding particular aspects of the data. I also provide further details of the particular fragments in the text itself. These ways of presenting a sense of the events are an inadequate substitute for the data itself, the actual videotape recording; they provide the reader with limited access to the precise details with which he might assess the rigour of the arguments and fail to provide the impact and excitement that viewing the phenomena can generate. As discussed in Chapter 1, until we are in a position where actual recordings can accompany text, I hope the method of presentation used here provides an impression of the data without requiring the reader to wade through overcomplicated and turgid detail. One additional difficulty should be mentioned: Even when we are able to accompany text with video recording there may well be some extremely sensitive ethical considerations, and it may be impossible to provide unlimited access to persons' private interactions, especially with the type of data used here. Hence the use of drawings rather than the actual photographs in this book.