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**Sound Patterns in Interaction:  
Cross-Linguistic Studies from  
Conversation (Typological  
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Neither linguists nor psychologists have begun the study of conversation, but it is here we shall find the key to a better understanding of what language really is and how it works [Firth, 1935, p. 71].

It has been 70 years since J.R. Firth made this now famous remark, and it has been several decades since phoneticians have begun to use conversational material as the basis for their speech analyses. Halliday [1967] used recordings of conversation alongside his own intuitions as the basis of his intonational analysis of British English, and begins Part I with the following statement: 'Natural conversation in "British Standard" English may be represented as involving continuous selection from a set of five tones.' Likewise, Hurford's [1968a,b, 1969, 1970] description of Cockney is based on detailed transcriptions of conversational recordings with different members of a single family. While both Halliday and Hurford clearly recognized the importance of drawing their material from the 'most natural, the most frequent, and the most widespread occurrences of spoken language' [Abercrombie 1965, p. 3], neither was interested in the phonetic means which speakers use to organize conversational interaction.

In the 1980s, phoneticians and linguists at the University of York built on the already well-established methodology of conversational analysis [Sacks et al., 1974] complementing it with detailed impressionistic recording and the polysystemic phonological interpretation of Firthian prosodic analysis. Analyses of conversational data from different varieties of English revealed the intricate phonetic details which speakers produce and hearers attend to in handling turn-taking [e.g. Local et al., 1986a,b; Local and Kelly, 1986].

The present collection of papers illustrates well how far the impressionistic and acoustic

phonetic analysis of conversation has come. Besides turn-taking proper, a number of other interactional structures are described. Finnish, Japanese as well as different varieties of German and English represent material from three different language families. And, perhaps most interestingly, two studies go beyond the usual of normal adult conversation looking at the endeavours of a 20-month-old child acquiring interactional skills and the interactional strategies used by an aphasic stroke patient.

The editor's introduction to the collection of papers is in itself a concise yet comprehensive introduction to the short history of the phonetic and phonological analysis of conversation. The twelve papers that follow are grouped into three sections.

The first section, 'Practices and Resources for Turn Transition', contains four papers analysing conversational material from Finnish, Japanese and English. Ogden demonstrates how non-modal voice quality, in particular creak, is used to mark turn-finality in a corpus of Finnish conversations from a radio phone-in. Tanaka, working on Japanese, describes several sets of phonetics used to mark transition-relevance places which are lexically set apart by not having a sequence of one or more utterance-final objects. Reed's paper takes issue with traditional intonational analyses of English which identify two final patterns (fall to low and high rise), describing a number of other tonal contours in turn-final position. Finally in the first section, Wells and Corrin describe phonetics used by a young boy interacting with his mother.

The second section, 'Projecting and Expanding Turns', begins with a paper by Walker which shows how pitch, loudness, articulation rate as well as other articulatory and phonatory parameters are employed to join increments to preceding talk in English conversation. Auer and Rönfeldt demonstrate the phonetic strategies employed by a German stroke patient, arguing that prolixity, rather than being a symptom of impairment in Wernicke's aphasia, is a way of coping with word-finding difficulties. In another paper on German, Selting describes two phonetically and functionally different rises used in the Berlin vernacular. Ford, Fox and Hellermann examine different phonetic shapes of 'no' in response to polar questions in English.

Finally, the third section, 'Connecting Actions across Turns', begins with Curl's description of repetitions in other-initiated repair sequences, showing how repeated lexical material in different types of repair (fitted or disjunct) are realized in English. We return to Finnish in a further paper by Ogden, this time in collaboration with Hakulinen and Tainio, examining the phonetic make-up and function of stylized pitch contours to mark 'no news'. Couper-Kuhlen describes the different pitch and loudness patterns associated with turn beginnings depending on whether a new beginning is being made or whether there is thematic continuation of what went before. In the last paper, Local describes the use of 'and-uh(m)' as a device to get back to prior talk, looking among other things at the very particular phonetic make-up of 'and' in this structure comparing it with 'and' tokens in other contexts.

The continued significance of using detailed and differentiated impressionistic and instrumental analysis developed in York is reflected in half the contributions coming from York. Perhaps the main feature of these papers is the attempt to characterize the phonetic patterns as fully as possible, attaching no primacy to conventional prosodic parameters such as pitch. The papers by Walker, Curl and Local illustrate this best, showing how the articulatory details of the consonants and vowels must also be considered.

Most of the papers (except Wells/Corrin) are at pains to put their impressionistic descriptions on an objective, quantifiable footing with different acoustic analyses. Despite the indirect relationship between  $F_0$  and pitch, it is relatively safe to talk about pitch in term of  $F_0$  traces. Some of the papers (Tanaka, Walker, Auer/Rönfeldt) use short-term energy as an indirect measure of loudness despite problems related to variable distance from the microphone and vowel quality. For Curl, however, it is precisely these problems which led her to abandon a frail acoustic measure and stand by her impressionistic judgements of loudness. However, the application of instrumental techniques to conversation will always be a great deal more difficult than it is to read data

gathered in a laboratory environment. Frequent repetition of the same expression by the same speaker in more or less identical environments is something which conversations rarely offer, and the objectivity of an acoustic analysis of a stretch of conversation can be illusory.

This is a solid collection of papers. Its breadth of coverage from the point of view of the languages taken into account, the phenomena examined and differences in the methodologies employed by analysts originating from different traditions make this an excellent text for an advanced level course. The only thing I missed when working through the many examples in the text was an accompanying CD-ROM with the sound files.

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