Conversations and Sensemaking: Methods for Analyzing Video and Audio Data

Part 2: How to Analyze Audio and Video Recordings of Strategic Conversations and Sensemaking

The Contribution of Conversation Analysis (CA) for the study of Strategy as Practice

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The Contribution of Conversation Analysis (CA) – a field which focuses on meaning and understanding as joint interactional achievements

CA starting point and the questions it addresses:

What makes this institutional talk? What makes this strategy talk?

CA paves a way to unpick the nature of skill and effectiveness.

• How managers do decision-making and accomplish effectiveness
• How they do agreement and what does it take to achieve it
• Which methods and inferential practices (for influencing, for sensemaking) and which kinds of knowledges, do they use?
To demonstrate what this method leads us to see and its assumptions regarding human interaction and how it should be studied, we pick out two core elements

• Member’s Interpretation

• Agreement: Affiliation and Alignment

Member’s Interpretation

Interaction is sequentially organized.

• Every utterance projects a specific range of next utterances.

• By producing a specific next utterance, the current speaker displays his understanding of the prior utterance.

• Consequences for analysis: next turn proof procedure (e.g. Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998).
Data Observation (1): Member’s Interpretation

22 Dirk: "Hrm.-pt [and I’m not saying that’s right or
23 Jay: [Yeah.

24 Dirk: [wrong.<it’s just (). sort of [interesting to
25 Jay: [yeah. ([nods))

26 Dirk: [me.
27 Jay: [I know.
28 Wyn?: [Yeah.
29 Jay: [but I, but I think with the NetGuard

30 acquisition [it’s:uh really driven a lot of our
31 Debi: [([nods))

32 Jay: consumer revenues.-remember we’re still seventy-
33 five percent,
34 (.)
36 Jay: [consumer revenues.

Agreement: affiliation and alignment

• Basic assumption: Interlocutors in talk-in-interaction are
heading for agreement (Pomerantz 1984)

• The display of agreement consists of different elements:
alignment and affiliation (Stivers 2008)

• Alignment: on a structural level, pure display of
acknowledgement (nods, yes, etc.)

• Affiliation: on a social level, deeper display of
understanding
Data Observation (2):
Affiliation and Alignment

91 Brad: Well, I’m just (.) I’m thinking (0.3) if I’m on
92 the other side of the table listening as a
93 venture capital person .h[h
94 Debi: [Mm hm.
95 Aaron: Yeah.
96 Brad: You know, (.) what have you proven=what have
97 you go t,
98 Aaron?: [Yeah].
99 Debi: [Mm hm.
100 Wyn: [Yeah].
101 Brad: that’s going to be scalable.
102 Debi: [Yeah].
103 Wyn: 
104 Stan: 
105 Dirk: [Yeah]

Data Observation (2):
Affiliation and Alignment

106 Brad: [An:]d (0.3) and our message has been: we need
107 money (for marketing and) sales and .hh[h and
108 Stan: [mpt .hh
109 Brad: those things=an[d
110 Stan: [hrr[n:
111 Brad: (and if that’s not true= we
112 if we don’t have our arms around it, we can’t
113 certainly sell that to somebody if it’s not even
114 [acc-
115 ?: [yeah.=
116 Brad: =accurate.
117 (0.2)
Data Observation (2):
Affiliation and Alignment

(7 lines omitted)
124 Brad: And if we re[position the company,
125 Wyn?: }
126 (1.0)
127 Brad: .hh which is (.) >I’m not saying it’s right or<
128 wrong,
129 (.)
130 Aaron: Yeah.
131 Brad: But we have nothing that=uh .h w:e can (0.4)
132 sh:ow th- which (then) is going to work.
133 (0.5)
134 Brad: .hh

135 (0.2)

Data Observation (2):
Affiliation and Alignment

136 Brad: so we ask for money for something new and not
137 (for- not for)
138 Dirk: pt .hh well uhm=uh (0.2) sometimes a new story’s
139 better than (0.2) an old tired one.
Minor move after the next minor move and the next, and the next, and so on laminate into...

... shared understanding, agreements and decisions and so ground the glossed notions of sensemaking/giving.

CA contributes to SasP/MOS interests and deals with important questions:
Such as the ways agreements are accomplished and hence decisions taken. How reasoning is done and how institutional identities are sequentially accomplished.

CA does unpick the intricate and interactionally derived forms of skill and knowing-through-doing, and ultimately how social order is done.

Endorses Weick’s (1979: 5) ‘how can I know what I think until I see what I say?’