Communicative activity types as organisations in discourses and discourses in organisations

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This paper outlines a 'dialogical' perspective on discourse, more precisely on spoken, interactional discourse. Its focus is on interaction and contexts. Central notions in a dialogical account of talk-in-interaction are those of 'communicative project' and 'communicative activity type'. This implies a dynamic interpretation of what 'organisation(s) in discourse' are about.

1. Introduction: A dialogical turn

In recent years, some scholars (e.g. Soler-Gallart 2004: 159) have argued that a so-called 'dialogical turn' seems to be gaining ground in the human sciences, and perhaps even more generally in society. This could be regarded as analogous to the 'linguistic turn' that many proposed as a characteristic movement in the social sciences of the 1970s. That slogan referred to the idea that language was (at last) becoming acknowledged as having a constitutive role for knowledge formation and social realities, and for the explanation of mind, culture and society. If so, language does not just deal with the expression of thoughts and the regulation of interaction.

However, in retrospect we find that the claims about the linguistic turn did not quite capture the gist of what might be involved. Dialogue and dialogicality (notions to be further explained below) are more fundamental than language, and language is simply only one of the semiotic means by which humans are in dialogue with their environments. My perspective on dialogue and dialogicality implies that we attend to the pervasive impact of interactions and contexts on human sense-making, and to the omnipresence (at various levels) of the other (i.e. other individuals or collectives, culture, etc.). Language and discourse (discourse defined as situated language use in talk or text) are embedded in dialogue, rather than the other way around. Dialogue is not just something secondary, something made possible merely by language (as many

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schools of theoretical linguistics would claim). Language and language-borne thought cannot function by themselves, interdependent as they are with the world, with the body, with other aspects of cognition and affect, and of course with human action and interaction in the world 'out there' (A. Clark 1997). Moreover, sense-making in dialogue occurs before the infant has developed any ability to use language.

2. Dialogical theory

What else is dialogism or dialogical theory? In order to answer this question, we must first define and understand 'dialogism' in contrast to an alternative, as a counter-theory, to something else, namely 'monologism'. What is monologism then? The brief answer is this: the constituent theories of monologism are the information processing model of cognition, the transfer model of communication, the code model of language, and the theory of contexts as external to discourse and thinking (Linell 1998, 2009). Monologism is based on individualism (assumptions about the autonomous subject, who – among many other things – initiates speech acts entirely on his or her own initiative), but also on objectivism (the social world consisting of social structures, norms and rules, with a causal impact on individuals).

By contrast, dialogical theory is based on quite different axiomatic assumptions. Rather than thinking solely in terms of subjectivity and objectivity, it is based on assumptions of intersubjectivity, and human interactions and (inter-)relations in and to the world. Some of its points are the following:

a. The dynamics and action- or activity-basis of language use (linguaging), thinking and communication; these involve active situated meaning-making,4 aided by sociocultural resources and skills (including language, knowledge of the world, knowledge of communicative activity types, etc.) that have been appropriated over time;

b. The interdependence of acts or utterances and their overarching communicative projects or activities (i.e. in part-whole relationships);

c. Initiative-response-structure and reciprocity of contributions to discourse; the sequiency of meaning-making;

d. Co-authoring in external dialogue (the interaction with the other), and the presence of other voices in one's own discourse – in and through responsibility and addressivity – and in internal dialogue. This is sometimes called 'multivoicedness', i.e. others' discourses and ideas are reflected in a single speaker's or thinker's discourse.

3. Organisations in discourses?

I have used the plurals here – organisations in discourses, discourses in organisations – in order to emphasise multi-dimensionality and multi-voicedness. In addition, we have to deal with at least two sets of different questions:

a. How is discourse organised as a reflection of social interaction and sociocultural embeddedness?

3. One may note that Mikhail Bakhtin himself sometimes uses 'dialogism' in the sense here proposed for 'dialogicality'.

b. How is society constituted and organised through discourse?

In dealing with these questions, we are concerned with the micro-macro problem in social science (cf. Fetzer, this volume). In this paper, I shall start from the micro-end of situated interaction, focusing on the communicative activity type as a bridging meso-concept. (On organisations and corporate cultures as discourse, see the work of discourse analysts such as Boden, 1994, and organisation theorists such as Czarniawska, 1997.)

But for a moment I will first be engaged with communicative projects in general. This is an important part of a dialogical analysis of spoken interaction.

4. Communicative projects in discourse

Discourse is organised in terms of communicative projects. Let us, as an example, look at an excerpt from a phone call between two persons, here called C and D. D, who works with public transportation, has talked about some problems he has got in his job. At this point, C comes in with a contribution in which he expresses sympathy (lines 1–3):

(1): Swedish original: DE E INTE ALLS ROLIT (LICTI: TTC 13)5

1. C: asså ja tycker synd om er ibland för de ä (.)
2. fan gammal skit ni får köra ni vet inte om ni
3. kommer hem en gång ibland
4. D: de hår ja
5. C: aa
6. D: javisst
7. C: de ä ju
8. D: de hår e ju vårdelöst vettu
9. (1.0)
10. D: man sitter ju för fan å på nålar varenda da
11. man ska gå till jobbet
12. C: aa
13. D: de e inte alls rolit (. ) man blir ju (. )
14. men dom gör ju inget åt då Heller va (. )
15. de e ju de
16. C: när de ä ju de som e lessamt mä

5. The excerpts cited in this paper are drawn from Swedish data. LiCTI stands for Linköping Corpus in Talk-in-Interaction. All names of persons, places, companies, etc. given in the excerpts are fictive.

After the respective excerpts, (close) English translations are given. All analyses were of course based on the originals, not the translations. In this paper, however, I shall use the translations in my comments. Note that line numbers do not always match completely between the Swedish
One can treat this episode as one comprehensive but local ‘communicative project’ (henceforth: CP), in which the two parties express their consensus on the evaluation of the troubles D has told C about (which has occurred before the spate of talk cited here). This is simultaneously an opportunity for C to express his sympathy, which is a typical feature of ‘troubles-telling’ in conversation (Jefferson & Lee 1992). Barring some details, the episode can be divided into three subsequences, which are constituent CPs within the whole CP (which, of course, is embedded in its turn within an overarching CP, which – again – is not cited here). The three constituent CPs are roughly lines 1–8, lines 10–16, and lines 18–28, respectively.

The three constituent projects make up a three-part sequence of CPs in which the parties take turns at introducing new subtopics. The first CP (lines 1–8), with C as the main speaker, is about communicating sympathy with D’s misgivings about his circumstances at work, and D’s response to this is to confirm the evaluation (“it’s worth- less”; line 8). The message that the second CP (lines 10–16), with D as the main speaker, is aimed at getting across is D’s daily anxiety at work (“sitting on pins and needles every day”; lines 10–11) and his claim that the employer doesn’t seem to care about it (“they don’t do anything about it either you know”; line 14). C provides an appropriate and sympathising response to this in line 16: ‘that’s what’s so sad’. This remark also serves as a link to the third CP, with C as the instigator and perhaps main speaker; C reports about a work-mate who has had similar experiences as D. This inspires D to conclude the account with a couple of rather ‘extreme formulations’ (Pomerantz 1986) (“there’s not a thing, it’s (i.e. it goes on) all the time”; lines 27–28). In and through this, D formulates a conclusion, which, as it turns out, also becomes the closing of the whole three-part episode, since C initiates a different topic directly afterwards (not shown in the excerpt).

There are other parts of the sequence in (1) that could be analysed as separate, still smaller CPs. For example, C’s reference to his work-mate (lines 18–19) receives a rather uncommitting response from D (line 20), which seems to make C insert a somewhat more specific reference (mentioning the mate’s nick-name “the Can”); line 21). Now, D indicates that he understands who is meant (“exactly”; line 22). Thus, lines 21–22 comes out as an extra CP, which revolves around repair.

5. Communicative projects: Some general principles

I will now proceed to a few more general remarks on communicative projects (CPs). The concept of communicative project originates in the work of Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann (Schütz & Luckmann 1962; Luckmann 1995) (compare also ‘joint project’ in H. Clark 1996: ch. 7). CPs can be characterised in terms of:

a. Dynamic progression: CPs emerge in the flow of participants’ interaction and migrating attention in communication, where they originate, develop, and are brought to completion (at least temporary completion). While in progress, CPs are usually open-ended and multiply determinable. Accordingly, CPs must be characterised in terms of dynamic movements and situated problem-solving. Moreover, while there may be conscious plans or intentions involved in CPs, many are only marginally planned; thus, we can sometimes unexpectedly find ourselves involved in doing or saying something that we had not planned, or we can retrospectively discover that we have just done or said something which can be justifiably interpreted in ways we have not wanted to encourage. CPs vary in participants’ awareness of them.

b. Asymmetrical participation and collective accomplishment: A CP is dialogical: responsive, addressed, involving an implicit or overt co-action between two or more parties. The notion is opposed to monological ideas (Searle 1969) that speech acts are performed by autonomous individuals. CPs are (partially) shared between the speaker and others; it takes two to communicate. As Bakhtin (1981: 293) said, ‘the word in language is half someone else’s’. But partial sharedness is usually combined with an asymmetric distribution of communicative labour: parties do different things, and they contribute more or less, but usually they make mutually complementary contributions (H. Clark 1996).

c. Nestedness: CPs are embedded within other, successively larger projects. The utterance act, the ‘project’ of getting something said and understood linguistically, is always done in the service of an overarching communicative project: “Do you have a match?” is said when the speaker wants a match to light a cigarette or a candle. A communicative project is regular, although sometimes only indirectly, embedded within a larger non-communicative project. Hence, CPs are context-interdependent. Large CPs may cover whole encounters, such as a doctor consultation or a job interview (at the level of ‘communicative activity (type)’; see below) and series of encounters.

d. Variation in size: A corollary of the prior point is that CPs vary in extension, from a speaker’s attempt at finding the right word in the appropriate moment or repairing an occasional mishearing, to carrying out extensive and complex tasks that may require a whole encounter or series of encounters with other people.

e. Multi-functionality: Typically, CPs are multiply purposeful and multi-functional. This complexity applies to CPs at all levels, but perhaps most conspicuously to those at more global levels.

Let us for a moment focus on local CPs, in which participants accomplish a communicative task over a limited sequence. As an example of such a local project, we can take the project of establishing the defendant’s stance on the issue of guilt (admission or denial), which is a core project within a criminal court trial (Linell et al. 1993). It can

6. Nestedness is akin to the notion of ‘multiple framing’ of Bateson (1972) and Goffman (1974). However, these authors often applied the notion to whole situations or communicative activity types (as those will be discussed below).
be expressed in different ways, as in the following examples (translations from Swedish courtroom interactions):

(2) DE ERKÄNNER JA (LiCTI: Tema K: A5; J = judge, D = defendant)
1. J: jaha. erkänner eller förnekar John Sigurdsson
2. alla dessa gärningar?
3. D: ja de erkänner ja.
4. J: erkänner?
5. D: ja.

(2) I ADMIT IT
1. J: okay, does John Sigurdsson admit or deny
2. all these deeds? (JS = the defendant)
3. D: yes, I admit it.
4. J: admit?
5. D: yes.

(3) JA HAR JU ERKÄNT DE (LiCTI: Tema K: A36)
1. J: ja, e de rättit de här, John Eriksson?
2. D: ja, ja har ju erkänt de så–
3. J: du erkänner

(3) I HAVE ADMITTED IT
1. J: okay, is it correct, this, John Eriksson?
2. D: yes, I have admitted it, haven’t I, so–

(4) DE STÄMMER (LiCTI: Tema K: A21)
1. J: ja, då ska ja fråga dej, John Gregersson, va din
   inställning e till den här första gärningen?
2. D: de stämmer.
3. J: du erkänner?

(4) IT IS TRUE
1. J: okay, then I am going to ask you, John
2. Gregersson, what is your stance with regard to this
   first act?
3. D: it is true.
4. J: you admit it?
5. D: yes.

A salient feature of the communicative project (CP) of admission/denial is that it requires the participation of two parties, the defendant and the judge, who is chairing the trial. In other words, the defendant can not accomplish the CP all by himself. Both parties enact their contributions in different ways (of which I have shown only a small sample here). The judge may phrase his question in a way which is both relatively formal and transparent with regard to the purpose of the CP, as in (2: lines 1–2). Alternatively, his query may exhibit features of formal legal language but be less transparent, as in (4: lines 1–3). A third option is to use more everyday language in a question that is parasitic on the prosecutor’s prior reading of the charge (not shown here), as in (3: line 1). Defendants’ replies also vary in various respects. It is characteristic that the judge always uses a third turn to either confirm the admission (or denial) or ask for a confirmation.

The CP of establishing the defendant’s stance in the court trial has several features that appear to be generalisable to other kinds of local CPs. These features include the following. First, a local CP is a joint accomplishment consisting of complementary actions, two parties making different contributions over a sequence of (mainly) initiatory and (mainly) responsive actions. Secondly, a local CP occurs in a dialogically established (and in this case: normatively specified) position, here: directly after the prosecutor’s reading the charge (which explains the initial okay’s and the anaphoric references in the judges’ first turns in (2–4)). Thirdly, the participatory actions by parties are typically asymmetrical; they are different in content, quantity and interactional meaning (in our examples, J is the instigator, and he is more explicit than D). And finally, the local project is embedded, nested, within a much larger project, in this case: the whole court trial, and ultimately within even larger projects, the judicial process in the individual case and in general.

All the Examples (1–4) given so far have been focused on quite local communicative projects. But there are much larger CPs, covering whole social encounters, or series of encounters. Such comprehensive contacts may be conceptualised in terms of their dominant purposes and projects, too. For example, Bredmar & Linell (1999), in a basically conversation-analytic study, analysed series of encounters between midwives and pregnant women within maternal health care. We argue in that article that there are some recurrent themes running through all these encounters, for example, the idea that pregnancy is a natural process and that various problems and symptoms be conceptualised in terms of ‘normality’. A superordinate goal of this overall CP, at least on the part of the midwife, is therefore reassurance: inducing self-confidence on the part of the expectant mother in her capacity to carry through pregnancy and child-birth.

7. Here, however, the English translation (okay) corresponds to several different Swedish response particles (jaha, ja).
6. Communicative activity types

A central notion in the analysis of talk-in-interaction is that of 'communicative activity type'. It is convenient to introduce it with some relevant quotations:

I assume that when individuals attend to any current situation, they face the question: "What is it that's going on here?" Whether asked explicitly, as in times of confusion and doubt, or tacitly, during occasions of usual certitude, the question is put and the answer to it is presumed by the way the individuals then proceed to get on with the affairs at hand. (Goffman 1974: 8)

In particular, I take the notion of an activity type to refer to a fuzzy category whose focal members are goal-defined, socially constituted, bounded, events with constraints on participants, setting, and so on, but above all on the kinds of allowable contributions. Paradigm examples would be teaching, a job interview, a jural interrogation, a football game, a task in a workshop, a dinner party, and so on. (Levinson 1992: 69; italics in original)

Knowledge of the conversational activity entails expectations about possible goals or outcomes for the interaction, about what information is salient and how it is likely to be signalled, about relevant aspects of interpersonal relations, and about what will count as normal behavior. (Gumperz 1982: 101)

Goffman, Levinson and Gumperz are all hinting at the same notion, what I will call 'communicative activity type' (CAT). Examples of CATs are criminal court trials, psychotherapy sessions, calls for emergency assistance, classroom lessons, job interviews, focus group discussions etc, but also various kinds of so-called 'ordinary conversations' (see also quotation from Levinson above). CATs are kinds of large overarching communicative projects (CPs). At the same time, CATs - like other CPs - may themselves be embedded within projects and activities that are not primarily communicative in nature. Also, CPs vary widely in size, e.g. that of lighting a candle (as in one example above) to that of giving reassurance to a pregnant woman over a series of maternal health care encounters (in another example above).

Some of the properties of the prototypical CAT are the following:

i. it is related to a social situation and encounter, whose nature is recognised by participants and often has a conventional name (i.e. there is a folk concept tied to it, e.g. “job interview”);  

ii. it is framed by specific expectations and purposes;  

iii. although there are often different and sequentially ordered subactivities (= phases), each instantiation is temporally contiguous within the situation, and involves (at least partly) the same primary participants;  

iv. some are linked to, and administered by, institutions, specific profession(al)s and societal organisations.

CATs can be analysed in many conceptual and empirical dimensions. It is not feasible to provide a comprehensive account here. Very roughly, however, one could group dimensions under three headings, in three families of concepts (only some of which are given here):

- **Framing dimensions** demarcating the specific CAT: *situation definitions* in terms of (prototypical) purposes and tasks, activity roles, scenes, times and medium, specific activity language (Allwood, 2000) and in general, the role of language (central vs. subsidiary) within the overall activity.

- **Internal interactional organisations and accomplishments** (within the specific CAT): phase structure, core communicative projects, agenda, topics, turn organisation and feedback patterns, topical progression methods (e.g. question designs), dominance patterns, participant positionings, degree of (in)formality, and the role of artefacts.

- **Sociocultural ecology** (of the specific CAT to other CATs or activity systems): sociocultural history, relations to societal organisations and societal sectors, to larger activity systems and neighbouring activity types, positions in chains of communication situations, as well as hybridities, and discrepancies in participants' understandings.

It is of course difficult, if not impossible, to sort these aspects into two or three families, since they are so clearly overlapping and interdependent. But very roughly, framing dimensions are basically pre-given, either as physical resources or as culturally determined premises, which are "brought along" into new situations. However, they become relevant only if participants invoke them in the actual interaction, that is, orient to them (to varying extents) and make them relevant (again). Some of them can occasionally be actively bracketed or even ignored in the single instance, and they may of course change with time, within longer sociocultural traditions. (What is seen as a proper court trial, for example, may vary across cultures and times.) Yet, on the whole, they cannot be easily changed in the single instance.

The second family of aspects, the 'interactional accomplishments', are things that are necessarily "brought about" in situ; they differ between concrete instances, although there are of course emergent patterns that become characteristic of the communicative activities considered as types. The third category, the 'sociocultural ecology', concerns larger surroundings, which (I argue) are necessary for the full understanding of CATs, although these larger contexts have often been neglected, particularly in CA studies (cf. Arminen 2000, 2005).
By way of summary, CAT is a meso-concept, providing a link between situated micro-processes and societal macro-structures. It links the 'interactional order' (Goffman, 1983) with the 'institutional order' (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999), thus giving substance to considerations of "organisations in discourses" and "discourses in organisations".

7. An example: Phone calls in train traffic control

As an example of a CAT, I shall use phone calls between train drivers and train dispatchers. The official name for these phone calls, as applied to the Swedish national rail net, is 'safety calls' (Sw. säkerhetssamtal), but I shall adopt the term 'train traffic control calls' (TTC calls) (Andrén, Sanne & Linell 2010). According to written regulations, such calls must be made in order to regulate certain tasks, such as confirming train meetings on stations of non-automated single-track lines, entries into automated sections, changes of train identification numbers, time-table modifications, temporary speed limitations, changes of routes and even destinations, etc. TTC calls are also used for drivers' reporting problems and emergencies or dispatchers' passing on information on movements of other trains on the same routes.

The above-mentioned are the official purposes and some of the factual functions of the TTC calls. One significant feature of this kind of communicative activity is that it requires formality in at least some of its constituent tasks. In general, a certain type of communicative project can be considered to be "formal" if

a. it must obligatorily be carried out on every occasion when a specified type of situation is at hand, and
b. it must be carried out in a particular manner:
   i. in a specific position within a pre-defined sequence, and
   ii. in a certain linguistic form ("formal") (although of course allowing for minor variations in performance), irrespective of what the specific circumstances in the individual cases are (i.e. even if some aspects would be completely predictable in the specific individual case, they have to be included).

As we will see, however, TTC calls are not free from formalisations in various aspects. I shall point to some of these in the following examples (for a more systematic account of the issue of formalisations, see Andrén et al., op. cit.).

The first example is a fairly straightforward case of a driver's arrival notification (here, and below, the speaker initial C stands for train dispatcher or line Controller, and D for Driver).

(5) ÄNTLIGEN ANKOMMIT TILL ÅKERSBY (ICTI: TTC 45)
1. ((telefonton/ringsignal))
2. C: fjärren i Järnberga
3. D: ja tjena föran på nittifem noll åtta

4. C: hejsan hejsan
5. D: äntligen ankommit till Åkersby
6. C: äntligen ankommit till Åkersby ja
7. D: ja
8. C: eh tu- eh tu- eh tackar Svensson så mycke här då ja
9. D: Strand här ja
10. C: Strand ja
11. (0.5)
12. D: ja
13. C: tack hej
14. * (0.5)
15. D: tack hej
16. C: hej
((klick))

(5) AT LAST ARRIVED OAKDALE
1. ((telephone rings))
2. C: the remote in Newbury
3. D: yeah hi (tjena), the driver on ninety-five zero eight
4. C: hi there hi (hejsan hejsan)
5. D: at last arrived Oakdale
6. C: at last arrived in Oakdale yes
7. D: yes
8. C: uh thou- uh thou- uh Svensson's thanking so much here yeah (ja)
9.  
10. D: Strand here yeah (ja)
11. C: Strand yeah (ja)
12. (0.5)
13. D: yeah
14. C: thanks bye
15. (0.5)
16. D: thanks bye
17. C: bye
((click))

This excerpt starts with the train dispatcher (or line controller = C) answering the phone and identifying himself in line 2. ("The remote" is a literal translation of the colloquial Swedish expression fjärren, an abbreviation of fjärrblockeringscentralen, 'the remote blocking centre', i.e. the dispatch centre.) The driver D acknowledges this by a greeting and his own self-identification (giving his train service identification number; line 3). The dispatcher then reciprocates the greeting in line 4, whereupon the driver introduces his reason for calling in line 5. Lines 1–4 can be said to constitute the opening of this particular call.
In general, the opening sequence of a normal TTC call, considered as a CAT, consists of a summons-answer pair, followed by two other mutual actions (identifications, greetings), each often consisting of paired components. In terms of turn design and sequential organisation (the distribution of turns), we often find the following sequence:

1. recipient's identification (cf. 5: line 2)
2. caller's greeting + identification (5: line 3)
3. recipient's greeting (5: line 4)

According to this pattern, we have a mixture of serial organisation (one action (by one party) per turn) and moderately compressed, interlocking organisation (two actions per turn). However, as we shall see, the sequence can often be considerably more compressed than this: the parties can rush into the main activity, and there may be more than two actions performed in the same turn.

The main activity of a TTC call is governed by one or several of a limited number of reasons for calling (we will soon see a few examples). The chief categories of train dispatchers' reasons for calling are either (a) mainly proactive: informing about decisions on cancelled train meetings, changes of train identification numbers or destinations, etc., (which requires recipient actions from the driver, such as filling in a form with reading back (repetition) according to a prescribed routine), or (b) mainly reactive to something that has happened: reporting problems, incidents and emergency situations, providing useful information on the development of problematic situations, e.g. informing the driver about features of the overall traffic situation in the area, location of ongoing maintenance work on the rails etc. The chief reasons for drivers to call, on the other hand, are also either (c) mainly proactive: issuing a formal request of certain actions (measures) and/or obtaining permission (clearance), for example, to pass a red light signal under certain circumstances, or (d) mainly reactive: reporting the arrival at predefined locations (stations) or the preplanned meeting with another train, or reporting problems, incidents or emergency situations relating to one's own train vehicle or the traffic situation affecting the train service, i.e. aspects that can be presumed to be unknown to the dispatcher.

The sequential layout of the main activity usually covers more turns than the opening sequence above:

4. stating the reason for calling, consisting of the caller's message initiation, plus (if the message is short, e.g. arrival notification as in Example (5)) its delivery;
5. (in cases of more complex tasks) carrying out the main task, e.g. the dispatcher's dictation of a message to be entered by the driver on a pre-printed form and the latter's repetition of this (accompanied by writing) (as we will see, this often involves several subphases); note that this necessarily involves a turn exchange sequence (both parties are active);
6. recipient's acknowledgement of receipt of message, plus signing of it (by giving one's family name, usually accompanied by writing);
7. caller's signing.

These four turns, or turn exchanges, usually receive at least short acknowledgements by the recipient underway.

Finally, the closing sequence is usually short and comprises two, or sometimes three, exchanges of paired components:

8. mutual thanking
9. (optional) (unilateral or mutual, often routinised) assessments (e.g. A: that's fine, B: okay)
10. mutual leave-taking (bye, bye)

Even if Example (5) is a short call, it is relatively exemplary, with all the obligatory phases present. However, in many of our TTC calls, there is quite often a compression of actions, so that several prescribed actions are "batched" within the same turn, as in Example (6), which is also an arrival notification:

(6) JOHANSSON DÄR OCH ENGLUND HÅR DÖ (LiCTI: TTC 97)
1. ((teletfon/ringsignal))
2. C: fjärren Järnberga
3. D: ja hejsan de här va förarna på ått- attisju arton då va de
4. ankomstnamn i Åsta å mitt namn va Johansson
5. C: Johansson där och Englund här dö
6. (0.5)
7. D: Englund?
8. C: ja
9. (0.8)
10. D: ja tack
11. C: då tackar vi för dä
12. D: mm [hej]
13. C: [okej] ((lklck))

(6) JOHANSSON THERE AND ENGLUND HERE
1. ((telephone rings))
2. C: the remote Newbury
3. D: yeah hi this was the driver on eighty-eighty-seven
4. eighteen then it was arrival report in Oldtown an'
5. my name was Johansson
6. C: Johansson there and Englund here du
7. (0.5)
8. D: Englund?
9. C: yeah
10. (0.8)
11. D: yeah thanks
12. C: then we say thanks for that
Here, the driver manages to accomplish a greeting, his own self-identification, the communication of the main message, and the signing in one single turn (lines 3–5). The next example is a slightly more complicated call, in which the dispatcher gives an order by dictating material which the driver is obliged to copy into a printed form, called "S 16":

(7) DE BLIR INSTÄLLT IDAG (LICTI; TTC 68)
1. ((telefonton/ringsignal))
2. C: Fjärren i Järnberga
3. D: mmja nittifem förtifem
4. C: ja hejsan hejsan (. ) [hej]
5. D: [hej]
6. C: då [ska vi se]
7. D: [S sexton sa du]
8. C: S sexton ja precis=
9. D: . hja
10. C: baksidan där då
11. D: baksidan
12. C: ja (. ) . hh till tåg nittifem förtifem då ja
13. D: ja
14. C: dagens datum noll fyra noll tre sjutton=
15. D: <noll fyra noll tre sjutton>
16. C: så hoppar vi ner till eh avdelning tjugoett där
17. D: tjugoett ja=
18. C: ja och Bertil då K-mötet med tåg nittifem åttitvå nitt-
19. nittifem sjuttiosex
20. D: <nittifem sjuttiosex>
21. C: i Söderås bortfaller
22. D: <ja>
23. C: då blir inställt idag där då så
24. D: a just då
25. (0.5)
26. D: då ä de till tåg nittifem förtifem:: noll fyra noll
27. tre sjutton och sen tjugeett B (. ) nittifem sjuttiosex
28. i Söderås bortfaller
29. C: de ä korrekt ja klockan är tretton noll fyra då o ja
30. heter Quist
31. D: <Quist> (0.5) ja heter Eriksson
32. C: Eriksson ja
33. D: mm
34. C: tackar så mycke där ja
35. D: tack ska du ha
36. C: a okej=
37. D: hej
38. C: hej
((click))

(7) THAT WILL BE CANCELLED TODAY
1. ((telephone rings))
2. C: the remote in Newbury
3. D: mm yeah ninety-five forty-five
4. C: yeah hi there (. ) [hi]
5. D: [hi]
6. C: then let's see
7. D: [S sixteen you said
8. C: S sixteen yeah exactly=
9. D: = , yeah (. hja)
10. C: the back side there then ((referring to the sheet))
11. D: the back side
12. C: yeh (0.5) for train ninety-five forty-five then
13. yes
14. D: yes
15. C: date of the day zero four zero three seventeen=
16. D: <zero four zero three seventeen> ((writing))
17. C: then we hop down to uh section twenty-one there
18. D: twenty-one yes
19. C: yes and Bert ((i.e. "B") then K-meeting
20. with train ninety-five eighty-two ninety-
21. ninety-five seventy-six
22. D: <nineteen-five seventy-six>
23. C: in Danby drops off
24. D: <yes>
25. C: that will be cancelled today there so
26. D: yes exactly
27. (0.5)
28. D: then it's for train ninety-five forty-five:: zero
29. four zero three seventeen and then twenty-one B
30. (. ) ninety-five seventy-six in Danby drops off
31. C: that's correct yeah. the time is thirteen zero
32. four then an' my name is Quist
33. D: <Quist> (0.5) my name is Erikson
34. C: Erikson yeah
35. D: mm
36. C: thank you so much there okay
37. D: thank you too
38. C: yeah okay=
39. D: bye
40. C: bye
  (**click**)

Example (7) begins with an abbreviated opening (the driver is calling back after an
interruption) and a mutual naming of the task (lines 7–8). The train dispatcher C then
guides the driver D to the appropriate slots of the form (lines 10 "back side", 12 "train,
15 "date", 17 "Section 21", 19 "Bert") and dictates pieces of information to be entered,
and D repeats certain parts of this in a confirmatory manner (lines 11, 16, 18, 22).
After that, the driver makes a comprehensive repetition in one turn (lines 28–30),
which is acknowledged by C (lines 31–32), and then follow notification of the exact
time, signings, and the usual closing sequence.

8. TTC calls as a communicative activity type

If we set ourselves the task to account for TTC calls in terms of a CAT, there are of
course many more points to bring up than can be done here and now. I will select a few
of the points that were enumerated in Section 6.

Phase structure: A CAT analysis is concerned with the overall organisation of an
encounter and its embedded discourse. For example, doctor consultations in primary
care (Heritage & Maynard 2006) could be analysed into a number of phases that form
fairly comprehensive projects of their own. The authors argue that such consultations
exhibit the following phase structure ("overall structural organisation"): Opening,
Presenting complaint (reason for seeing the doctor), Examination (verbal, physical),
Diagnosis, Treatment (discussion), Closing, with some phases being susceptible to fur-
ther subdivision.

In the case of our TTC calls, the actual performance consists of a limited set of sub-
activities that are sequentially realised, basically as follows (see also Section 7 above):

Identifications
Greetings
Message (reason for calling), e.g.
  Order-giving + repetition (by installments)
Comprehensive repetition
Signings
Thankings
Leave-takings

What I have called "message" here is obviously the main activity, that is, the core with-
out which there would not have been any TTC call. The openings and closings, and to
some extent the signings, are subsidiary to this main activity.

Sequence structure (turn sequences): Below the phase level, there are basically
paired actions, sometimes expanded into longer sequences. Some of these sequences
are often compressed into what we have called "batchings". One can interpret these
sequences as realisations of local communicative projects.

Activity roles: The two parties have clearly different activity roles. Depending on
the reasons for calling, they complement each other in an asymmetrical division of
communicative labour: the train dispatcher decides, gives orders, the driver requests
permissions, repeats dictated orders, etc.

Agenda: There is a clear action agenda (rather than a fixed topic agenda), which
can be either driver-initiated or dispatcher-initiated, and in each of these two catego-
ries, the reason for calling can be either reactive (reporting something) or proactive
(instructing or requesting actions). Of course, the latter division must not conceal that
reporting actions have projective functions, too (providing necessary information for
the recipient's future actions), and that instructing or requesting actions have respon-
sive aspects, too (some kind of problem must be solved).

Hybridity: The TTC calls have specific transactional functions, which are often
prescribed by rules and define the reasons for calling. But this is not all there is; these
talks do not only have transactional functions. TTC calls are also a special activity
embedded within a wider organisation or community with social relations between
members, and this leads to certain informalisations. The parties often know each other
personally, they have frequent contacts over the phone, and the phone calls are the
main channel for social contact between them.

Accordingly, there are various features of informalisation in the TTC calls. The use
of colloquial language and professional jargon belongs here, as well as the pheno-
menon of batching. But in addition, there is often a mixture of transactional and social-
relational talk. When the CAT is actually implemented, and there is time available,
participants engage in various kinds of relational talk, which is only indirectly related
to professional tasks and work. Indeed, Example (1) above comes from one conversa-
tion in our corpus (TTC 13); C and D in (1) are in fact a train dispatcher and a train
driver, making a joint digression from the TTC main activity.

Sociocultural history: There are many things that could be brought up under
this heading (Sanne 2001; Andrén 2005). Let me just mention in passing that TTC
calls are historically modelled on military communication, and they still exhibit
some traces of this (as can perhaps be gleaned already from the few examples I have
given above).
9. Communicative activities: Types and hybridities

Let us now return to the concept of communicative activity type as such, on a more general level. As already indicated, the notion is akin to that of 'communicative genre' (Luckmann 1989, 2002; Markova 2001, 2003). However, 'genre' appears to be a concept originating in studies of texts, literature and the arts, whereas communicative activities are directly linked to actions, social situations and social encounters.

The framing of a CAT is a situation definition, a set of assumptions guiding parties’ expectations and interpretations of what may happen in the situated encounter. We may also think of it as an interactional contract, usually implicit and sometimes renegotiable, which governs participants’ rights and obligations in the communicative activity of the situated encounter. While participants are guided and constrained by CATs, they also actively recreate, negotiate, stretch and play with them. In other words, they can bend the rules. So if CATs involve typification and structuring, agents are not forced to act in accordance with prescribed rules, not even when formality (as defined above) is the norm. It remains important to keep in mind that it is the actual interactional patterns that ultimately make up the real CATs.

There is a ‘double dialogicality’ (Linell 1998) in communicative practices: we can talk about dialogue in situations (à la CA), and dialogue between traditions (in a Bakhtinian fashion). First, there are the situated interactions themselves: the interactions there-and-then between participants, and between their orientations to framings, the concrete situational environments and participants’ actual accomplishments. At the same time, it is in and through these interactions that participants deploy and play with CATs, i.e. with the situation-transcending (trans-situational) practices that constitute sociocultural traditions. CATs bridge between events and recurrent practices.

As I noted earlier, ‘CAT’ should be regarded as a bridging meso-concept between the ‘interactional order’ and the ‘institutional order’ of talk in particular situation types. On the one hand, you can not situate a concrete analysis of most phenomena in talk-in-interaction, such as the use of certain sequence types, turn designs, phase organisations or action types (say different kinds of formulations; Drew 1998), without determining the hosting CATs in which they appear. On the other hand, you can hardly account for what goes on in a societal sector, such as society’s judicial apparatus, the educational system (comprehensive schools, universities, etc), commercial companies or even governments (cf. Boden 1994), without specifying what CATs they comprise.

A theory of CATs may seem to suggest that the world of talk consists of clearly distinct social situation types. But this is just the point of departure. In real social life, there are lots of mixed activities. Some activities have only been vaguely solidified into types, and many are hybridities of types (Sarangi 2000). Although the topic of hybridities cannot be covered in this paper, the point is so important that it must be mentioned. Briefly, there are at least three kinds of hybridity:

a. **sequential type**: In many kinds of social gathering, we have first CAT1, then CAT2, then CAT3, etc. That is, the interactional encounter is different in different phases. Phases are (by definition) their own (subordinate) CATs. Sometimes, phases are independent activities. For example, a dinner party may consist of, say, mingling with drinks, seated dinner, and dancing, but these “phases” are ordered, and have a loose linking, e.g. they involve, for instance, the same participants. A more extreme example is the circus variété performance; yet, this too is temporally contiguous, and has the same audience throughout.

b. **frames within frames**: Here we have two or several framings, one embedded within the other. This applies, for example, to H. Clark’s (1996) role plays, i.e. the phenomenon he calls ‘layering’. Empirically, such situations can be studied in cases such as theatre performance rehearsals and education in drama. In such activities, only one single framing tends to be oriented to in each single moment; for example, when participants find themselves in preparations for the lesson, in episodes of instruction or discussion of how to enact the play and the actual playing out of selected scenes from the drama script, the respective activities belong to divergent frames and different moments. Yet, these frames are all embedded within the theatre education lesson (Rönn 2009).

c. **merged types**: Here, parties are orienting to several frames simultaneously, sometimes trying to reach a kind of compromise. These activities encompass many training and practising situations which simultaneously involve teaching and instruction; examples are practising a language and being taught that language at the same time (Gustavsson 1988), simulated job interviews within unemployment programs for young people (Linell & Persson Thunqvist 2003), and simulated primary care consultations with medical students in training (Thomassen 2005).

Well-established activity types too, such as police interrogations and the TTC calls we have seen here, involve hybridities. In police interrogations, the police officer is not only the interviewer working on the case, but sometimes also therapist, counsellor and moral educator (Gunnered 2005). Focus groups (Marková et al. 2007) oscillate between free discussions and decision-making activities, etc.

10. A note on the role of texts in CAT analysis

The main bulk of the contributions to this volume deal with written language or texts (as well as electronic discourse). Mine is an exception, dealing only with talk-in-interaction. This is also the home base of CAT analysis. However, the use of texts is often an integrated aspect of CATs, and this fact must be taken into account. In fact, as we have seen, TTC calls involve some reading and writing, particularly in the instance of the filling in and use of the “516 form” in (7).
The dialogical perspective would emphasize the situated and interactive use in the dynamic production and interpretation of texts and images (cf. also Kress & van Leeuwen 1996): if you want: the study of text events and text practices, rather than texts per se. Texts are written, read and used by participants in interaction, in different ways within particular CATs and for various specific purposes. We often read and use texts in ways that can only be understood as part of quite particular activities. Not all texts are read in their entirety, nor can all reading activities be seen as autonomous, the latter being a situation approximated when, for example, we read a book without any instrumental intentions to use it in particular ways.

11. CAT analysis: A two-step analysis?

Is there a specific analytic method that could be called “Communicative Activity Type Analysis”? Would it be different from Conversation Analysis (CA)?

I do not think that such questions can receive a clear “yes” or “no” answer. CAT analyses can study many specific details, although of course no single study can go into all dimensions at the same time. CATs can be researched with the help of both qualitative and quantitative methods (see, for example, as regards presidential news conferences, Clayman et al. 2007). What one can definitely say is that a “CAT analysis” must theorize the overall structures and functions of communicative situations in at least some respects.

One must acknowledge that CA is the most worked-out methodology for analysing talk-in-interaction in detail, and as such it lacks real competitors, and its descriptive conceptual apparatus can hardly be ignored. Moreover, CA is dialogical too in several respects. The analysis of CATs should be seen as a natural extension of CA. Most CA studies do acknowledge the importance of CATs (Drew & Heritage 1992: 22), but they hardly ascribe the same kind of central importance to the notion, as when we appropriate it as (or even the) bridging meso-concept in discourse theory.

Many scholars have discussed the role of contexts in discourse analysis. It would be wrong to propose that CA ignores contexts; rather, it insists on the requirement that analysts invoke contextual resources in their analyses only if they show that participants make them relevant in and for their discourse. Yet, the understanding of many CATs requires ethnographic or sociolinguisit knowledge on the part of analysts (Cicourel 1981; Sarangi 2000: Arminen 2000, etc.). For example, we can hardly analyse or understand TTC phone calls, in the absence of any knowledge of the CAT as part of a wider context.

Orthodox Conversation Analysis, on the other hand, marginalizes ethnographic knowledge. At one level, this is in accordance with the strict demands for methodological rigour (Schegloff 1998: "discipline"). At the same time, this rather acontextual approach may have to do with the fact that many CA practitioners have studied a rather special family of CATs, namely, so-called ordinary conversations from the researchers’ own native culture. But TTC talks are not native for most discourse analysts. This also applies to court trials, primary-care doctor consultations etc.; in order to analyse them, one must learn about their organisational surroundings.

Actual accomplishments remain the basic thing in CAT analysis, as it has been in CA. But we must realize that the analyst’s task is different from the participants’, and the analyst’s understanding will be enriched if the studies encompass organisational and socio-historical contexts. Accordingly, CAT analysis may be thought of as a two-step analysis, first a thorough close analysis of the data (which should be performed by scrutinising the data many times), then the interpretation of the data in a wider context, dictated by the theoretical interest and purpose of the study (e.g. Linell & Luckmann 1991: 18). I would venture to contend that something like this is being may seem to claim done in applications of CA too, even if the methodological meta-talk often the opposite.


At last, a few words more about the dialogical bedrock of discourse analysis. One might ask oneself: How basic is actually dialogue? The answer will depend on whether we take ‘dialogue’ in a concrete or an abstract sense. For sure, dialogue in a concrete sense, defined roughly as interaction through language and other semiotic means between two (or more) mutually co-present participants, as for example in a conversation, is important empirically, and it can serve as a model and metaphor more generally. But what is important and explanatory in an epistemology, or even ontology, for the human sciences, is dialogicality on a more abstract level.

The essential (and mutually interdependent) properties of dialogicality at this abstract level are roughly these:

**Dynamics.** Human life involves active problem-solving on different time scales, at least on the meso- and micro-levels. The study of the microgenesis of interaction focuses on the development of communicative projects on a moment-to-moment basis. This is to some extent the opposite of structural determinism; people are not structural dopes, simply enacting static and prescribed roles, but agents who orient to expectations that they have accumulated but also changed over time (Heritage 1984). In doing so, they actively (though often routinely; Schegloff 1986) solve (major or minor) communicative problems (tasks).

**Interactionality.** Sense-making in thinking and communication always occurs in interaction with (actual or virtual) others and with the world. As I said in the beginning, this implies a focus on intersubjectivity.

**Contextuality.** Dialogism includes a more radical theory of contexts and interaction than most variants of linguistic pragmatics; it claims that contexts are always crucially relevant, and co-develop with discourse.

Dialogical theory covers not only the externalised situated interaction (as in CA), but also the internal dialogue in thinking, and the interaction within situation-transcending
practices (through different kinds of orientations to them). Thinking is assumed to be partly analogous to external interaction (internalisation of dialogue; cf. e.g. Billig 1987), and it is interdependent with (internal and) external artefact use; thinking becomes different when the thinker uses notation: notes/marks on paper, computer software and interfaces, for numerical calculation or for the formulation of linguistic texts. (Again, these are things that I have left out in this chapter.)

Dialogical theory is therefore an attempt at an integrated theoretical framework for the understanding of mind, interaction and society, and of language, discourse, communication and thinking, as well as interventions into the world. In lieu of a segregated, autonomous linguistics, we must aim for interdisciplinarity.

References


