

## Book review

*The Handbook of Conversation Analysis*. Jack Sidnell, & Tanya Stivers (Eds.). Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, xvi + 844 pages, £120.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-4443-3208-7.

*Emotion in Interaction*. Anssi Peräkylä, & Marja-Leena Sorjonen (Eds.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012, 326 pages, £45.00 (hardcover), ISBN13: 978-0-19-973073-5.

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Reviewing Conversation Analysis (CA) “at the Century’s Turn”, Emanuel A. Schegloff predicted the “further development of our understanding of the organization of talk and other conduct in interaction itself” and to “register the particularities of its realization” (Schegloff 1999, p. 142). John Heritage (1999), additionally, foresaw a future where qualitative and quantitative approaches will “shift from basic CA to ‘applied’ analysis and back again” (p. 73). Both predictions can be viewed as fulfilled when one opens the two books under discussion here. These enormously rich volumes cannot be reviewed in their entirety, I have to select certain contributions of relevance for researchers in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. But I will try to give an impression of the books as a whole.

“*The Handbook of Conversation Analysis*”, edited by well-known researchers in the field, is divided into 5 parts. The first part studies “social interaction from a CA Perspective”, its contributors lay the groundwork by presenting the historical and academic origins of CA, debate the special kind of “naturalistic”, not researcher-driven, data collection that is so characteristic of the field, discuss the methodology of transcription and present basic CA methods of analyzing data. Any reader will feel knowledgeably instructed, even if one knows the field. There is much to learn by these excellent summaries.

The second part on “Fundamental Structures of Conversation” is on another kind of basics, those of the theoretical type, such as turn construction (units), transition relevant places, sequence organization and preference, repair and overall structural organization. Just from reading the table of contents one can learn what a huge field of knowledge, theory and data, has been collected here and what a consistent body of terminology, secured in naturalistic data, has been able to be established in recent years.

The third part, “Key Topics in CA” demonstrates the networking of CA research activity. Many people in cognitive science work on such topics as embodiment, on gaze and emotion or affiliation – but nowadays most people connect these topics with

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neurobiology or brain science. With the help of naturalistic data, things here sometimes look different than in the lab. McCabe et al. (2006) looked at the theory of “theory-of-mind” using CA in naturalistic settings with schizophrenic patients and found these patients to indeed have a theory-of-mind, but to use it differently. This is an important correction to what is commonly assumed in similar work in brain and cognitive science. Many corrections of that kind can be found in the articles of Part III in the “*Handbook*”. Cognitive researchers see emotions as something produced in a person’s brain. Ruusuvaori, however, shows “how people observably orient to an underlying affective structure in conversation” (p. 336). By observing and co-constructing emotion as an interactional resource and by attributing meaning to what is observed participants might be considered the most sensitive scanners for each other’s emotion. This is an important fact when psychotherapists of every kind begin to explore what they mean and do by using the word “empathy”. Ruusuvaori has much to tell about this that might interest readers of counseling professions, too.

Person reference, prosody, grammar and storytelling are names for research areas where modern technologies of analyzing talk come to be applied. Gareth Walker finds audiographic measurement to play an important role in analyzing turn-constructive units. His conclusions on transcription conventions need to be debated seriously. Participants react to these subtleties (which is something that can definitely be shown) and this must have, the author concludes, consequences for the transcription system introduced by Gail Jefferson following the mandate to put down in the transcription “what you hear”. Obviously, there is much more to be heard – if it is made viewable by audiographic technology. This overview of what happens in detail while we are talking is instructive for the question of what “clinical facts” are (Tuckett 1993, Tuckett 2012). There is much more in the psychoanalytic consulting room than what we can discuss when we have case presentations based on memory protocols only.

Jenny Mandelbaum makes a contribution on “story telling” and includes “embodiment” by summarizing CA research on recipient responses – through the body movement of listeners. She is led to the conclusion “that the particular practices used to tell stories in institutional settings contribute to the constitution of the setting as an institutional one” (p. 506) – obviously, there is something like a circularity between the institution and the kind of practices observed in telling stories: who might dare say that this is not important for psychoanalytic settings?

The impression of deep relevance for psychoanalysis is furthered in part IV, dedicated to “Key contexts of Study in CA: Populations and Settings”. Medical communication or analyses of conversation in the court- or classroom are “classical” topics in CA research. But there is more. Mardi Kidwell summarizes CA research on “interaction among children”. She presents data from a corpus of more than 500 hours of natural interaction, videotaped and transcribed with children of about two years and a half – about their altruistic helping behavior. How these behaviors are composed and where in a sequence of actions they are positioned is described in detail. Pictures from the videos illustrate what is observed and described. Children move from onlooker to helper. In the day care settings adults are seen by the children as those whose first obligation it is to soothe, console and comfort a crying child, but “as a matter pertaining to the culture at large, it seems that even children this young search for someone to help...” (p. 531).

Another contribution by Anssi Peräkylä leads the analyst even closer to the consulting room. “Talking is indeed the key activity in all psychotherapies” (p. 551), this author begins with, and one wonders why this inescapable insight is so rarely taken as a stimulus for more research on psychoanalytic conversation. Anna O. had termed psychoanalysis a “talking cure”, Freud echoed that not more happens in psychoanalysis than an “exchange of words”. The analysis of conversation in the consulting room(s) should become an object of heightened interest in psychoanalytic process research. Peräkylä studies psychoanalytic talk. This talk is marked by “an endemic orientation in the therapist, and usually in the patient, to examine the patient’s talk beyond its intended meaning” (p. 552). How this “beyond” is handled in conversation might be a topic of interest. It seems to be a common conviction, shared by both participants; and Peräkylä shows how this conviction is “translated” in conversational practice: by formulations, interpretations and responses, using epistemic markers and perspective markers: “Thus, in delivering an interpretation while speaking about the patient’s mind and circumstance, the therapist still uses his or her own ‘voice’ in full strength” (p. 558). Peräkylä’s data are transcriptions of psychoanalytic sessions which cannot be reproduced here. Patients respond to interpretations with elaborations and show their (dis-)agreement. This is a crucial difference to hearing a medical diagnosis; here patients usually remain silent. “Resistance” and “affiliation” are further topics of CA analysis Peräkylä presents. He concludes that psychotherapy might be a practice “far less uniform than the medical consultation is”. This is as important as his next hint that CA should turn to clinically relevant issues. The more general point is the methodologically difficult description and definition of “deviant” conversations. Antaki and Wilkinson contribute to this with a summary of relevant research of conversation of “atypical populations”. At any rate, there is a growing hunch and evidence that there are links between cognition, conversation and culture and that the different strands of research can be brought to fruitful conversations.

Part V sees “CA across the Disciplines”. CA has roots in sociology and in linguistics, its rich influences touch psychology and anthropology and “standard” communication research. All these lines, seen from CA as the core methodological endeavor, are covered with important contributions by authors specialized in these areas. If psychoanalysis and CA could find a balanced way of cooperation, the one could enrich the other with deep insights that might form a balanced counterweight to the momentary psychoanalytic interest in neurosciences only. Psychoanalysts might remember how social our discipline, how culturally determined psychoanalysis, how linguistic and conversational our everyday tool – talk - is.

The same impression is furthermore strengthened when one turns to the book “*Emotion in Interaction*“, edited by Peräkylä and Sorjonen. Emotion – this is what most psychotherapists of whichever orientation think to be “their” genuine field. But, in academia there is no sole proprietor of anything. “Emotions” belong to the opera and its enthusiasts, to the scholars of literature, to family members, to the spin doctors of political communication and, of course, to scientists of different proveniences. And to psychoanalysts, of course. If one wants to know in what special way emotion is treated in psychoanalysis, one has to study how emotion is treated in other fields of knowledge. Otherwise, you cannot compare. Within CA approaches there are a lot of perspectives.

Marjorie Goodwin, Asta Cekaite and Charles Goodwin cover “emotional stance” using as an example how emotions are conveyed in refusals as a special kind of social action.

Although all authors refer to “basic emotions” and their expressions, still at the same time all authors also find that emotion per se is a kind of abstraction that cannot be found in the empirical world; emotions belong to particular social actions such as refusals, requests (as Wootton shows in a transcription of interaction with a very young child), directives, story-telling (contributions by Maynard and Freese) and complaints (Couper-Kuhlen). Emotions are constitutive parts of how actions are performed and perceived. Modern societies have implanted a lot of institutional mechanisms of emotion regulation and emotion control, of which psychotherapy (Voutilainen) is a part as well as health visiting (Heritage and Lindström). As in the “*Handbook*”, the question of how to transcribe emotion utterances becomes an entire subject of study. Markku Haakana uses a re-transcription by Gail Jefferson to show how it has become possible to transcribe the entire features of “fake” laughter. Alexa Hepburn and Jonathan Potter approach the same methodological issue in their contribution on “Crying and Crying Responses”.

So, emotions are not only “basic”, produced with evolutionary progress. They are not only perceived and interpreted and attributed by listeners, participants, viewers and bystanders. They also have action tendencies and cognitive aspects without which we would not be able to appraise many actions and human “objects”. Wootton analyzed the expectations of a child between two and three years who produced strong emotions when the parents did not fulfill the child’s expectations – which had been met just a second before. Appraisals and their breaks are prone to producing emotions - this conclusion must be drawn. Emotions do not only come bottom-up from the depths (of the brain), sometimes they come top-down. CA methodology will have to have a debate on how to include cognition. This includes unconscious cognitions, too. “To a large extent processes related to emotions are automated and nonconscious” (p. 282), psychoanalyst and conversation analyst Peräkylä summarizes in his very knowledgeable epilogue.

Emotions are a multifaceted object of interest. They should not be considered as producers of interaction. It might be more correct to reverse the order of causation: social interaction is the medium with the power to evoke and regulate human emotions. This, of course, is the topic where so much of psychoanalytic research can come in – on borderline patients, on the early developments of patients with psychotraumatic stress disorders, on neglected children, on the cognitive abilities of autistic children. And the net can be cast even further to include mirror neuron research, to the body as an important actor in conversational scenarios, research on the difference between inner experience and outer, social expression.

One thing remains to be mentioned. In a contribution to the “*Handbook*” John Heritage writes about epistemics that drive sequences. Meant here is not only the wish to know, it is the wish to balance knowledge so that participants in a local interaction share a common level of situated relevance. Those who ask who Peter is in a story told, are informed by the teller of the story: “he’s my brother-in-law” and the balance of knowledge is repaired. One can assume that there lies a lot of potential to analyze how emotions are produced in this conception: if this need for sharing knowledge, for the balance of influence and participation is hurt, emotion is produced. This happens in child rearing, in political discourse, in social practices in every second in the world. The link between emotion, cognition and conversational practices, thus, can be seen as a common orientation of research for the future in cooperation between psychoanalysis and CA. Our societies as a whole will profit from this.

Both books present in an excellent manner the state of the art, in CA in general and in CA-emotion research. They harbour the power for a mutual fruitful exchange with psychoanalytic knowledge and clinical experience. Psychoanalysis will have to adapt to the standards of data generation and presentation as usually practiced in CA. Transcripts, not protocols, are state of the art in data presentation and this should be acceptable by a profession that is urged to present its empirical approach. Empirical research is more than statistics and questionnaires, it is conversation that psychoanalysts engage in every day. Here we have a method that is taken seriously worldwide to analyze this talk in interaction in a precise and insightful way. And in many details this method comes close to clinical experience.

On the other hand, psychoanalysts might seriously contribute to the meanings of some kinds of exchanges presented in the details of such data. A very tricky matter in the future will be whether the general CA-premise of “order in every point” (Garfinkel 1967) is valid at every point? How can borderline-talk be made orderly? If it can, there must be meaning in it, detectable according to clinical convictions only if conversation analysts come to include an (auto-)biographical dimension as a useable methodological tool. The category of meaning-making through conversation can be expanded with psychoanalytic expertise. These books should enrich a stimulating debate between those two so important fields.

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