

Conversational patterns for resuming suspended tellings

It is not uncommon in everyday casual conversation that when a speaker produces an extended, multiunit turn at talk (such as a storytelling sequence or some other type of extended description or explication), various types of topical digressions or disruptions may occur which seem to momentarily steer the talk away from its present course. In sequential terms, such a digression constitutes a *side sequence* (Jefferson, 1972) embedded within the main sequence, causing the main telling sequence to become temporarily suspended before it has reached its projected completion. This creates an interactional problem for the conversational participants, who face the task(s) of closing the intervening side sequence and returning to the main sequence as soon as possible so that the suspended telling can continue. Thus, the return to the main sequence does not happen automatically but requires interactional work and cooperation between participants.

This paper discusses one type of return practice, namely *resumption*, in English face-to-face conversation. The resumption is typically done after an expanded digression sequence which consists of multiple TCUs and often more than one turn. The data consists of 27 hours of video-recorded everyday conversations in English and Finnish. Some relevant research already exists on side sequences and resumptions in interaction: see e.g. Jefferson (1972) for side sequences, Mazeland & Huiskes (2001) for resumption in Dutch interaction, Auer (2005) for broken-off units and their delayed repair in German interaction, and Wong (2000) for repetitions in English conversation. However, these have mostly concentrated on shorter interactional sequences, where the digressions and resumptions occur within the space of only a few TCUs. There still exists very little research on resumptive practices in English interaction where these would be examined in more complicated interactional sequences consisting of extended, multiunit turns or even multiple turns at talk.

In the presentation I will examine how interlocutors systematically orient to and accomplish the action of resumption, and how they display their orientation to this interactional work not only through their talk but also through their bodies. In other words, resumptions yield recognizable conversational patterns. Typically, the resumption is prefaced with a discourse marker (such as *but*, *anyway*, or *so*), which is then followed by a recycle of the last suitable telling component from the talk prior to the digression. I will also explore what kinds of prosodic and bodily practices might be involved in the accomplishment of resumption. Such practices have not been examined in much of previous research on resumptions (but see e.g. Local 1992 for prosodic characteristics of doing 'continuation' in interaction).

References

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