

The negotiation of coherence within conversation

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1. Introduction

A prototypical place where sentences emerge in the natural world is within utterances in conversation.¹ This paper will focus on how the accomplishment of coherence in discourse is embedded in processes of human interaction that encompass multiple participants. On the one hand the participation frameworks that organize conversation have very strong consequences for the **local organization of utterances**: speakers change the emerging structure of sentences even as they are speaking them in order to maintain the appropriateness of their talk for the dynamic situation which the sentence both emerges from, and helps to further constitute. On the other hand participants build for each other frameworks for the accomplishment of coherence that **operate at a distance**: structures such as **prospective indexicals** organize the ongoing monitoring of long stretches of talk, and provide the crucial interpretative templates that hearers use to make appropriate sense of a utterance separated from the original prospective indexical by many intervening utterances.

Coherence is a multi-party activity, embedded within the pervasive task of negotiating understanding within human interaction, and accomplished through the deployment of systematic discursive procedures. To investigate these processes the following phenomena will be examined in this paper: (1) how a speaker changes the structure of an emerging utterance as she moves from one type of recipient to another in order to maintain the appropriateness of her talk for its recipient of the moment; (2) how talk that displays a marked shift in topic is given coherence, not by its content, but instead by its **sequential organization**, e.g. a sequence of actions

being pursued and countered; (3) how prospective indexicals in **story pre-faces** structure the interpretation of events in the extended narrative that follows. A recurring theme in all of this analysis is the adaptive flexibility (see also Givón, 1989) of participants who are able to renegotiate the coherence and intelligibility of the events they are engaged in as relevant circumstances change. The arguments in the present paper draw upon data and analysis reported more extensively in a number of earlier papers (see in particular Goodwin, 1981, 1986a, in press a, and Goodwin and Goodwin, 1990).

2. Flexible coherence through recipient design²

Coherence encompasses not only relationships between linguistic elements within the stream of speech, but also the fit between the action and content of an utterance, and the social situation within which it is embedded. Moreover these two types of coherence are intimately tied to each other. Speakers, faced with the pervasive, ongoing task of fitting their talk to the social configuration of the moment, deploy a set of regular procedures which lead to systematic changes in the linguistic structure of emerging utterances. One facet of this process will be briefly examined here. Talk is designed in fine detail for the particularities of its addressee. Quite frequently actual social situations include incompatible addressees. If a speaker switches from one kind of addressee to another, she must modify her utterance so that it remains coherent in the sense that it constitutes a type of action appropriate to her current recipient. Speaking in such circumstances requires flexible adaptation that leads to changes in the structure and meaning of an emerging sentence so that its appropriateness for its recipient of the moment can be maintained and demonstrated.

Such a line of analysis presumes that possible recipients to the utterance differ from each other in some relevant fashion. An element utilized extensively in the construction of action in natural conversation projects the type of knowledge possessed by speaker and hearer about the event located by the action.³ Through this element recipients with different characteristics can be located. Consider the following:

(1) G.4:12

Frank: Yih ever take 'er out again?

Joe: No I never called 'er back.

In Frank's turn a request for information is performed. Such an action proposes that the recipient has knowledge about the subject of the request that the speaker lacks. In Joe's turn an answer to the request is made, and the proposed states of knowledge of speaker and hearer reverse. Using K+ to indicate knowledge of the event located by the action and K- to indicate ignorance of that event, the differences in the distributions of knowledge about that event proposed by these two actions can be specified as follows:

	Speaker	Addressee
Request for information:	K-	K+
Answer to that request	K+	K-

The two types of recipient located by this feature are not merely different but alternative to each other. The selection of one implies the exclusion of the other. For simplicity, a recipient who is presumed to know about the event located by the action will be called a *knowing recipient*, while a recipient presumed not to know about that event will be called an *unknowing recipient*.

In the actions being considered the states of knowledge of speaker and hearer are ordered relative to each other. If hearer has knowledge of the event at issue, speaker is ignorant of it; while if hearer is ignorant of the event, speaker has knowledge of it. Thus, despite changes in action, the states of knowledge of speaker and hearer remain complementary to each other.

The proposed distributions of knowledge found in the request for information and its answer are not specific to these particular actions, but are found in a range of actions. For example, the pattern in which a speaker has knowledge of an event that his recipient lacks is also found in stories, reports and announcements. The pattern in which the recipient has knowledge that the speaker lacks is found not only in a request for information but also in actions such as the request for confirmation and requests for stories. Thus particular distributions of knowledge locate not particular actions but classes of actions.

A situation will now be examined in which both an unknowing recipient and a knowing recipient to the speaker's turn are simultaneously co-present. Insofar as the construction of an action locating one type of recipient excludes the other, a speaker wishing to provide for the participation of both in her turn is placed in a dilemma.

One way in which she might provide for the inclusion of both types of recipients within a single turn by transforming an action begun to one recipient so that it becomes appropriate to a different type of recipient. In the following, three parties, Pat, Jere, and Chil, are teaching a fourth, Ann, how to play bridge. Pat is explaining the bidding system to Ann. Talk is transcribed using the Jefferson transcription system (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson: 731-733).

- (2) G.23:490
- Pat: Now if ya have thirteen points:, (1.0) counting voi:ds? singletons en doubletons right?

Ann is the original addressee of the utterance. By its intonation the portion of the utterance constructed to her (“Now if you have thirteen points”) is located as a declarative statement, an action appropriate to one presumed to be ignorant of the rules of bridge.

Ann, however, does not direct her gaze to the speaker. During the pause Pat looks at her addressee and discovers that she does not have her attention. A search for another recipient is begun, and Pat shifts her gaze from Ann to Chil. A line above a section of an utterance indicates that the speaker is gazing toward the party whose name appears above the line.

- Pat: . (Ann) ,, (Chil)
- Now if ya have thirteen points:, (1.0) counting

Unlike Ann, Chil is presumed to know how to play bridge. Pat is thus faced with the task of reconstructing her utterance from one that proposes the ignorance of its recipient about the event located by the utterance to one that proposes that its recipient has knowledge of that event. Explaining to a novice, such as Ann, the details of the bidding system is both necessary and helpful. Telling an experienced bridge player these same facts is either insulting or absurd.

Note that Pat is faced with the task not simply of changing the state of knowledge proposed for her recipient, but also of displaying a change in her own knowledge of the event. Specifically, a feature of the actions being examined is that the states of knowledge of speaker and hearer remain complementary to each other. Thus if Pat locates her new recipient as informed about the event under discussion, she must display ignorance about it:

- Pat κ_+ Ann κ_-
- Pat κ_- Chil κ_+

Pat's emerging sentence thus consists of distinguishable subsections within which alternative attributes for speaker and recipient are proposed to be relevant. The sentence therefore provides not only phonological, syntactic and semantic information, but also relevant features of the social organization of the participants, specifically a particular configuration within which they are ordered relative to one another. Further, relevant attributes of this configuration can be changed within the emerging sentence itself, with the effect that the proposed ordering of participants remains appropriate to the local contingencies of the interaction.

Alternative participant configurations are ordered relative to one another by the structure of the sentence. Via its placement as a subordinate clause within the sentence, the action addressing a knowing recipient is embedded within, and subordinate to, the action to the unknowing recipient. By virtue of such syntactic organization the action to Ann remains alive across the action to Chil, not only as a point of reference and departure, but also as a point to be returned to should the contingencies of the interaction permit. The syntactic structure of the sentence thus produces not only a meaningful string of sounds, but also a proposed social order whose properties are capable of being modified in detail by changes in the emerging sentence, changes which may themselves be responsive to processes of interaction between speaker and hearer implicated in the ongoing construction of both the sentence and the turn within which it is articulated. The coherence of the moment seamlessly encompasses the linguistic structure of the speaker's emerging utterance, the reciprocal cognitive orientation of speaker to hearer, and the way in which they are aligned toward each other as social entities with specific characteristics. From such a perspective the emerging structure of the sentence constitutes one of the principal methods available to the participants for achieving and displaying to each other not only linguistic, but also social order, as an unfolding feature of ongoing processes of action.

3. Coherence through sequential organization

The phenomena just examined provided some demonstration of how processes of interaction *within the turn at talk* have strong consequences for the flexible organization and maintenance of coherence on a number of different levels. A second, most important, locus for coherence in discourse can be found in the forms of *sequential organization* ordering turns relative

to each other, which have been so extensively studied by conversation analysts. The following (analyzed in much greater detail in Goodwin and Goodwin, 1990) provides a simple example. The data is taken from the talk of African-American boys preparing for a game with sling-shots. They've divided into two teams, one captained by Malcolm, and the other by his brother Tony. The exchange begins with talk lodged within the activity of the sling-shot fight: In line 1 Malcolm asks Tony to pick his team (an action echoed by Chopper), and in lines 3-6 Tony refuses. At that point an abrupt **shift in topic** occurs. Instead of continuing to talk about the sling-shot fight, Malcolm in lines 7-8 tells Tony to do some household chores, ordering him to clean up papers on the couch in their house:

- (3) 1 Malcolm: All right who's on your *side* Tony.
 2 Chopper: Pick-pick four *people*.
 3 Tony: It's quarter after four
 4 and I'm not ready *go* yet.
 5 Bruce: Me neither.
 6 Tony: I'm not going till four thirty.
 7 Malcolm: Well get in there and get them papers
 off that couch [before-
 9 Tony: I did already.
 10 Chopper: Get your four *guys*.
 11 Malcolm: You get *three* guys.
 12 Tony: I only get three guys?
 13 Chopper: I mean three guys.
 14 Malcolm: That's right.

Note how the shift in topic carries with it a change in social organization. By virtue of the new activities invoked by the talk in lines 7-8 Malcolm is no longer speaking to Tony as a *team captain*, but instead as a member of a social group that shares household responsibilities, i.e. as a *brother*. This shift has consequences for the participation status of others as well. The sling-shot game encompasses all of the boys who are present, and indeed two other boys, Chopper (line 2) and Bruce (line 5), piggyback talk into the exchange between Malcolm and Tony. However, the topic shift at line 7 restricts the field of action to members of a single household, e.g. Malcolm and Tony. The shift in topic thus creates a new participation framework, one that excludes most of those present, including parties who contributed to the initial exchange. In lines 10 through 14 talk returns to the sling-shot fight. The talk in lines 7-9 thus appears to sit in the midst of this exchange like an autonomous, self-contained island, differing from the talk before

and after it not only in terms of its topic, but also with reference to the relevant social identities for speaker and addressee, and the participation framework within which those social identities are embedded.

How then is this exchange linked to the talk around it, i.e. what provides for its coherence as an appropriate next event in the exchange that it flows from? Relevant ties are clearly not found in continuity of topic or content. However, at the level of action the situation is quite different. The talk in lines 7-9 provides a next set of continuing actions in an order/refusal sequence begun in line 1. Thus at line 1 Malcolm demands that Tony do something, and in lines 3-6 Tony refuses, stating that he will not perform the requested action for another fifteen minutes. Jockeying for status is quite crucial to what these boys are doing. If the sequence ends at line 6, Malcolm will be in the position of having demonstrated to all present that his demands do not have to be followed, e.g. that Tony can publicly refuse to do what Malcolm tells him to do. Rather than letting this situation stand, Malcolm immediately gives Tony another order. The ability to shift topic allows him to counter Tony's counter by redoing his original action in a new activity domain. Thus, despite shift in content, there is an underlying continuity in the sequence of actions which link one utterance to a next, and it is this sequential organization which provides the exchange with its manifest coherence.

The talk that follows provides a vivid example of how what an individual utterance counts as as a form of action is lodged within a larger sequential organization. Malcolm's talk in line 11 receives two simultaneous, overlapping responses:

- (3) 10 Chopper: Get your four guys.
 11 Malcolm: You get *three* guys.
 12 Tony: [I only get three guys?
 13 Chopper: [I mean three guys.
 14 Malcolm: That's right.

Such overlap is not a breakdown in turn-taking, an example of the inability of participants in actual conversation to accomplish some abstract notion of ideal order, but is instead a systematic consequence of the fact Malcolm's utterance in line 11 constructs two quite different kinds of action directed to two different addressees. On the one hand Malcolm's utterance is explicitly addressed to Tony, telling him that he will have "three guys" on his team, not four, and in line 12 Tony responds to this action. However, by virtue of its sequential placement immediately after Chopper's "Get your four guys"

line 11 also constitutes a contradiction, and a challenge to what Chopper has just said (a form of action that is enhanced by the contrastive stress on “*three* guys”). It is thus appropriate for Chopper as well as Tony to respond to it, and Chopper does so in line 13 by retracting the number stated in line 10. By virtue of its placement at a particular point in this sequence Malcolm’s utterance at line 11 is lodged simultaneously within two distinguishable though linked participation frameworks (Malcolm \Leftrightarrow Tony and Malcolm \Leftrightarrow Chopper), and constitutes a quite different kind of action to each of its addressees (e.g. Chopper is not being told how many men he can choose, while Tony is not being contradicted). This complex coherence would be impossible without the resources provided by the sequential organization of the talk in progress.

4. Narrative: coherence across extended stretches of talk

Conversation analysts have provided detailed analysis of both how narrative is organized through processes of human interaction (for example Sacks, 1974, 1978, 1992), and of the multi-party participation frameworks invoked and sustained through narrative (C. Goodwin, 1984; M. H. Goodwin, 1990). One systematic feature of the organization of narrative that is quite relevant to the analysis of coherence is the way in which participants provide each other with frameworks for the interpretation of the talk in progress. Such frameworks provide an arena for the negotiation of how the events being recounted in the story are to be understood. In the present paper we’ll examine a situation in which two competing frameworks are proposed for the understanding of the same narrative. Choice between these alternatives has consequences for not only how the events being recounted are to be understood, but also for where structural features of the narrative, such as its climax and conclusion, are to be located in the unfolding stream of speech. The instructions for coherence contained in the interpretive templates provided near the beginnings of narratives operate on not only the talk that immediately follows them, but are also applied to quite distant utterances. Indeed they provide a key resource that hearers use to locate the conclusion of a long narrative. Such frameworks thus provide an example of structures of coherence that operate across extended stretches of talk.

Sacks (1974) notes that many (though by no means all⁶) stories in conversation have a distinctive shape.

Teller:	Story Preface
Recipient:	Request to Hear Story
Teller:	Story

Recipient:	Response to Story
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1. Teller produces a **story preface**, a brief (typically one sentence) characterization of the story being offered (e.g. “The funniest thing happened to me on the work today”).
2. Recipient either asks to hear the story (“What happened”) or rejects the offered telling (in which case the sequence ends here).
3. Teller then produces an extended, multi-sentence turn in which the story is recounted.
4. At the conclusion of the story recipient (and sometimes speaker) provide a response to it.

Such a shape displays an orientation to some of the basic constraints organizing turn-taking in conversation (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974). Stories constitute extended turns at talk in the sense that a single turn (the story) may consist of multiple sentences, or more generally turn-constructural units. However, possibilities for turn-transition in conversation arise at end of **each** turn-constructural unit. How then can speakers provide for the production of multi-unit turns, e.g. stories? The preface sequence, a single unit turn announcing the availability of a more extended story, followed by a recipient solicit for such a multi-unit turn, provides a systematic solution to this problem.

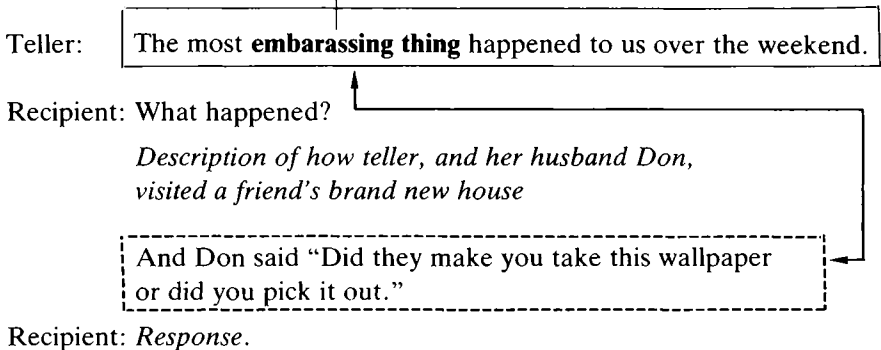
However such a solution raises new problems for participants. Recipient is not expected to stay silent forever, but instead provide a response to the story. However, the basic structure informing her where it is appropriate to begin a next utterance, e.g. the possibilities for turn-transition that occur at the end of each turn-constructural unit, has been suspended for the duration of the story.⁷ How then can she determine **where to respond** to the story by producing subsequent talk? The structure of the story preface provides resources for the solution to this problem which shape recipient’s monitoring and interpretation of the talk that constitutes the story. Typically the story preface contains a brief characterization of the point of the story. Terms such as “funniest,” “saddest,” “most wonderful,” “exciting,”

etc. provide simple examples. Such terms are **indexical expressions** in that they point to other talk where the particular event that constitutes the funny, sad or exciting thing being recounted in the current telling is to be found. Moreover the talk that will fill in the occasion-specific sense of the indexical occurs in a particular sequential position, e.g. after the indexical expression in the preface. In that the initial indexical expression focuses attention upon the talk that will follow it, it will be called a **prospective indexical** (Goodwin, in press b). In order to find when the story has reached its projected point, and response is once again relevant, recipients can monitor the talk that constitutes the body of the story, looking for something that will count as an instance of the event projected by the prospective indexical in the preface:

Story preface (Sacks, 1974)

1. A framework for interpretation.
2. A place to apply that interpretation (subsequent talk)
3. Motivation for such analysis (recipient's subsequent actions are built upon it)

Prospective indexical



The characterization provided by the prospective indexical thus furnishes recipients with a template that they use both to interpret and make a specific kind of sense out of what is being reported (different prospective indexicals can lead to quite different analyses of the same strip of talk), and as a guide for dissecting the structure of the story, e.g. determining when it has come to completion. Prospective indexicals are one of the systematic structures providing for the interactive organization of coherence in narrative.

To investigate in more detail how participants to a telling negotiate the coherence of a story in progress through use of prospective indexicals we will examine a story where the audience was provided with two, competing characterizations of how to understand the events about to be told.⁸ The talk occurred during a backyard picnic in the midwestern United States attended by several couples.

Phyllis provides the preface for a story that will be told by her husband, Mike, by announcing to everyone that he'd told her about a "big fight" at the dirt track races the night before (lines 1-2). Mike then begins to tell the story. It concerns a dispute between two drivers that began after one bumped the other on the track. Throughout the story Mike formulates their confrontation as an almost epic encounter, with strong potential for serious danger.

- Prospective
indexical**
- (4) G.84:215
- 1 Phyllis: Mike siz there wz a **big fight** down there
2 last night, **Preface**
- 3 Curt Oh rilly?
- ...
- 14 Mike: *Evidently Keegan* musta bumped im in the, (0.6)
- 15 Gary: W'wz it la:st week sumpn like th't
16 ha [ppn'n too?
- 17 Mike: [Oh no:, th is:
18 Gary: [Somebody *bumped* somebody
19 else 'n [they- spun aroun=
20 Mike: [I don't *kno:w*.
21 Gary: =th'tra: [ck
22 Mike: [Oh *that* wz::uh a'week
23 be [*fore* last in the *late* models
24 Phyllis: [Yeh they'd be doin'it en den they go down
25 'n they *throw* their *hh*helmets off
26 'n then th(h)ey [j's l:look at each [other:
27 Mike: [But, [this **Alternative
interpretive
templates**
- 28 Curt: Ye::h hh [*heh* heh
29 Phyl: [ehhehhh
30 Mike: [This:: uh:::
31 Gary: [They *kno:w* they ain't gonna get hurt,
32 Phyllis: [ehh heh!
33 Curt: [Little *high* school kids.
- ...
- 37 Mike: De *Wa::ld* spun ou:t, 'n he *waited*.

However, just as Mike is beginning the story, a question from one of his recipients, Gary, suggesting the repetitive ordinariness of such a dispute (lines 15-16), leads to Phyllis (lines 24-26) providing a second characterization of the story that Mike is now committed to tell, one that treats its protagonists not as epic gladiators, but instead as men full of empty bravado, who in fact pose no threat whatsoever to each other (“they just look at each other” line 26). The interpretive framework provided by this second, sports widow’s version of the events that her husband finds so engrossing, leads one of the other men present to characterize Mike’s protagonists as “little high school kids” (line 33):

Though separated from the climax of the story by many intervening utterances (which describe the incidents that sparked the confrontation) these interpretive templates provide recipients with crucial resources that they use to make sense out of what is happening as the story approaches its conclusion. Recipients’ analysis focuses on two separate, though interrelated issues: (1) how to characterize the events being described, e.g. in this case as an epic battle, or as a display of empty bluster; (2) how the structure of the story is to be analyzed, e.g. where it’s climax and conclusion are to be located. Gary is the first recipient to offer an explicit formulation of the events Mike is recounting, describing them as “*All show*” at line 73 in the transcript below. Gary’s pejorative analysis of Mike’s characters occurs immediately after Mike describes a series of events that could be heard as fulfilling the projection of a sham battle provided by Phyllis’ second foreshadowing of the story. Thus in line 24-26 she said that the protagonists throw their helmets off and then just look at each other. In line 63 Mike describes one of the competing parties taking his helmet off, picking up a “god damn iron bar,” (line 66) but then dropping it at the urging of onlookers (e.g. not actually attacking his opponent, lines 68-70), and moving away. It is here that Gary describes what he has heard as “*All show.*” An action such as this, characterizing and assessing the events just recounted, constitutes a prototypical post climax recipient response to a story. Gary thus not only analyzes the fight as empty bravado, but treats the story as having to come to completion at this point. Indeed almost immediately he moves to activities unrelated to the story, asking another of Mike’s recipients for a beer (lines 78-79). Meanwhile another recipient, Carney, elaborates in her own way the action and assessment begun by Gary, saying “It reminds me of those wrestlers on television” (lines 81, 83).

1	Phyl:	Mike siz there wz a big fight down there	Preface
2		last night,	
3		Oh rilly?	
		...	
24	Phyllis	Yeh they'd be doin'it en den they go down	Alternative
25		n they throw their hhelmets off	interpretive
26		n then th(h)ey j's l:look at each other	template
		...	
63	Mike	settin there: en 'e takes iz helmet off :	
64		'n <i>clunk</i> it goes on top a the car	Story
65		he gets <i>out</i> 'n goes up t'the trailer	approaches
66		'n gets that god damn iron <i>ba:r</i> ?	chimax
67		*hhh <i>rraps</i> that trailer en <i>away</i> he starts t'go	
68		en evrybuddy she <i>hey</i> you don't need dat y'know,	
69		seh y'h yer right'n	
70		'e throws. that son'vabitch down=	
71	Curt:	[Mm <i>hm</i>]hm	
72	Mike	=*hhhhh So they all go dow [n	
73	Gary:	A:ll [All show] (0.2)	
74	Carney:	Yeah, <i>th</i> [ey all,=	
75	Mike:	[They <i>all</i> -	
76	Gary:	=hn- [hn!	
77	Mike:	[They <i>all</i> go down th [ere,=	
78	Gary:	[Gimme	
79		a [beer Curt,	
80	Mike:	[=N [o some- <i>somebuddy</i> so:me buddy,	
81	Carney:	[It reminds me of those <i>wrestl(h)ers</i> , *hh]	
82	Mike:	So:me [body ra:pped=	
83	Carney:	[hhh(h) <i>on t(h)elevi</i> [sion.]	
84	Gary:	[Bartender how about	
85		a beer. While yer settin there.	
86	Mike:	So:mebuddy rapped uh: DeWald'nn <i>mouth</i>.	

The stance toward the story adopted by Gary in lines 73, 75-79, and 84-85 both opposes Phyllis' initial characterization of the events as "a big fight" (line 1), and ignores (or actively counters) the way in which Mike formu-

lates what it is happening through the choices he makes in organizing his narrative (for example the vivid adjectives and sound effects used in lines 64-67 to infuse dropping the helmet and picking up the iron bar with a sense of powerful, impending danger). By using the second interpretive template as a point of departure for his analysis of the story, Gary actively collaborates in the process in making of sense out of the talk that Mike is producing, e.g. understanding what he is hearing in a particular way.

Mike, however, consistently opposes the analysis offered by Gary, attempting to demonstrate on the content level that the fight was not a sham, and on the structural level that his story has not in fact reached its climax. In the midst of a flurry of actions by various recipients treating the story as one of empty bravado that has come to conclusion, Mike attempts to push through with further development of the story (lines 72, 75,77, 80, 82), culminating in a report of actual violence (“Somebody rapped DeWald in the mouth” line 86). He consistently attempts to shape and reshape his telling so that it provides evidence for the version of events offered by the prospective indexical that launched the story, e.g. he works to demonstrate that he is describing “a big fight.” While recipients can challenge the understanding of a story proposed by its teller, that teller is able to try to counter their challenges, a process that leads to intricate shaping of both the story, and the interaction within which it is embedded. The battle over the sense and structure of a narrative that occurs here provides a vivid example how the coherence of a strip of talk — how it fits together as a meaningful report with a structure that participants can both recognize and use as a framework for the organization of their own action — is something that participants not only attend to, but actively negotiate through the flexible deployment of systematic discursive procedures in the midst of their interaction with each other.

5. Conclusion

The primordial locus for the constitution of intelligibility and coherence through human discourse is face-to-face human interaction. Coherence within conversation is a pervasive, temporally unfolding task. As part of this process **context** — the phenomenal environment that provides for the ongoing intelligibility of talk, action and situation — is both attended to and reconstituted (see Goodwin and Duranti, 1992). Thus, a key

framework providing for the relevant interpretation of both what an utterance means, and the types of action it is performing, is the **sequence** from which it emerges. Indeed, as was seen in the boys' sling-shot dispute, by virtue of the structure of its sequential environment the same utterance can count as different forms of action to different recipients. While attending to the possibilities and constraints provided by the sequence of the moment, participants are nonetheless able to radically change context, as the boys did by switching the topic of talk from choosing teams in the sling-shot fight to household chores. Despite the abrupt shift in topic, the sequential organization of the action sequence in progress continued to provide for the coherence of the talk in progress. The topic switch also led to a marked change in a second key structure attended to in the interactive organization of talk, the **participation framework** of the moment. The new activity invoked by the change in topic provided places for only two of the parties who had participated in the talk leading up to it. More generally, maintaining an appropriate fit between the talk of the moment, and relevant attributes of the participants who are linked to each other through it, constitutes one of the most important constraints on the organization of talk within the individual turn. As was demonstrated in the bridge playing example, a speaker's orientation toward the particularities of her current recipient can lead to systematic changes in the structure of her emerging sentence. Rather than being preformulated in the mind of the speaker, the sentence is shaped through a collaborative process of multi-party interaction.

This same orientation to interactively sustained frameworks for the constitution of coherence provides organization for the interpretation of long stretches of talk as well. For a number of reasons, including providing recipients with resources for recognizing when a story has come to completion, speakers preface their stories with brief characterizations of what it will contain, the speaker's alignment toward those events, and the point of the story. The **prospective indexicals** that formulate events in this fashion are used by recipients as interpretive frameworks to both make appropriate sense out of the events speaker is describing, and to monitor for the climax of the story, where recipients' co-participation again becomes relevant. By providing alternative interpretive templates recipients can challenge and dispute the interpretation of events proposed by teller, who can in turn counter their challenges. The continuing coherence of talk in conversation is made possible through participants' flexible, adaptive deployment of a range of systematic procedures. Through this process both micro events

within an individual utterance, and extended sequences of talk, are shaped in fine detail through ongoing processes of multi-party interaction.

NOTES

1. The most extensive analysis of how conversation is organized can be found in the approach to the phenomenon initiated by the late Harvey Sacks in collaboration with Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson (see for example Jefferson, 1973, 1987; Sacks, 1963, 1974, 1992a, 1992b; Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 1968, Schegloff and Sacks, 1973, Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977). An excellent collection of research probing the organization of conversation by many different scholars can be found in Atkinson and Heritage (1984). See Heritage (1984) for an account of the theoretical issues within sociology that led to ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, and Levinson (1983) for an analysis of its relationship to work on pragmatics within linguistics. Summaries of recent work in the field can be found in Goodwin and Heritage (1990), Heritage (1989), and Maynard and Clayman (1991).
2. The material in this section is taken with only very slight changes from Goodwin (in press). An earlier version of it appeared in Goodwin (1981).
3. For analysis of how information states are relevant to the construction of action see Labov and Fanshel (1977). Sacks (1992b: 437-443) has described the rule that a speaker shouldn't tell his recipient something that the recipient already knows, and examined its consequences for the interaction of spouses in a way that is relevant to the present analysis.
4. See Goodwin (1987) for analysis how such displays of uncertainty and forgetfulness can be used strategically by one spouse to try to dislodge another from a competing conversation.
5. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974:727) note that "perhaps the most general principle which particularizes conversational interaction [is] that of RECIPIENT DESIGN." Of particular relevance to what Pat does here is Volosinov's argument (1973: 86) that

Orientation of the word toward the addressee has an extremely high significance. In point of fact, *word is a two-sided act*. It is determined equally by *whose* word it is and *for whom* it is meant. As word, it is precisely *the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee*. Each and every word expresses the "one" in relation to the "other."
I give myself verbal shape from another's point of view ... [italics in original]
6. **Second Stories** built parasitically on the structure of the story they follow constitute one systematic exception (Sacks, 1992b).
7. Recipients can, and do, talk into the body of a story by providing continuers (Schegloff, 1982) and assessments (Goodwin, 1986b) at the boundaries of individual turn-constructural units. Such recipient co-participation in the telling is, however, quite different from talk that counts as a subsequent response to the story.
8. The analysis briefly reported here is developed in far more detail in Goodwin (1986a). Schegloff (1992) provides an analysis of the larger extended telling within which the story being investigated here is embedded.

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APPENDIX

Complete Auto Race Story

- (4) G.84:215
- 1 Phyllis: Mike siz there wz a big *fight* down there
 2 last night,
 3 Curt Oh rilly?
 4 (0.5)
 5 Phyllis: Wih *Keegen* en what,
 6 Paul de [Wa::ld?
 7 Mike [Paul de *Wa:ld* Guy out of=
 8 Curt: =De *WA:ld* yeah I [(know 'm.)
 9 Mike: [*Tiffen*.
 10 Mike: =D'you know *him?*,
 11 Curt: *Uhhuh*=
 12 Curt: =*I* know who 'e *i:s*,
 13 (1.8)
 14 Mike: *Evidently Keegan* musta *bumped* im in the, (0.6)
 15 Gary: W'wz it la:st week sumpn like th't
 16 ha [ppn'n too?
 17 Mike: [Oh no:, th [is:
 18 Gary: [Somebody *bumped* somebody
 19 else 'n [they- spun aroun=
 20 Mike: [I don't *kno:w*.
 21 Gary: =th'tra: [ck
 22 Mike: [Oh *that* wz::uh a 'week
 23 be [*fore* last in the *late* models
 24 Phyllis: [Yeh they'd be doin'it en den they go down
 25 'n they *throw* their *hhelmets* off
 26 'n then th(h)ey [j's l:look at each [other.
 27 Mike: [But, [this
 28 Curt: Ye::h hh [*heh* heh
 29 Phyl: [ehhehhh
 30 Mike: [This:: uh:::
 31 Gary: They *kno:w* they ain't gonna get hurt,
 32 Phyllis: [ehh heh!
 33 Curt: [Little *high* school ki [ds,
 34 Gary: [No [matter=
 35 Mike: [This,
 36 Gary: =what [ju:re)
 37 Mike: [De *Wa::ld* spun ou:t, 'n he *waited*.
 38 (0.5)
 39 Mike: Al come around 'n passed im
 40 Al wz leading the feature.

- 41 (0.5)
- 42 Mike: en then the *sekint*-place guy,
- 43 (0.8)
- 44 Mike: en nen *Keegan*. En boy when keeg'n come
- 45 around he come right up *into* im
- 46 tried tuh put im intuh th'wa:ll.
- 47 Curt: Yeh?,
- 48 Mike: 'en e tried it about four differrn times
- 49 finally *Keegan* rapped im a good one in
- 50 the *a:ss'n* then th-b- De Wald wen *o:ff*.
- 51 (0.5)
- 52 Curt: [Mm
- 53 Mike: [But in ne *meantime* it'd cost *Keegan*
- 54 three spo:ts'nnuh *feature*.
- 55 Curt: Yeah?
- 56 Mike: So, boy when *Keeg'n* came in he- yihknow
- 57 how *he's* gotta temper anyway, he jus::
- 58 *wa:::h* sc [reamed iz damn=
- 59 Curt [mm
- 60 Mike: =e:ngine yihknow.
- 62 (0.5)
- 63 Mike settin there en 'e takes iz helmet off
- 64 'n *clunk* it goes on top a the *car*
- 65 he gets *out'n* goes up t'the *trailer*
- 66 'n gets that god damn iron *ba:r?*
- 67 *hhh *rraps* that trailer en *away* he starts t'go
- 68 en evrybuddy she *hey* you don't need dat y'know,
- 69 seh y`h yer right'n
- 70 'e throws [that son`vabitch down=
- 71 Curt: [Mm hm hm
- 72 Mike: =*hhhhh So they all [go dow [n
- 73 Gary: [A:ll [All show. (0.2)
- 74 Carney: Yeah, *th* [ey all,=
- 75 Mike: [They *all*-
- 76 Gary: =hn- [hn!
- 77 Mike: [They *all* go down th [ere,=
- 78 Gary: [Gimme
- 79 a // beer Curt,
- 80 Mike: =N [o some- *somebuddy* so:me buddy,
- 81 Carney: [It reminds me of those *wrestl(h)ers*, *hh
- 82 Mike: So:me [body ra:pped=
- 83 Carney: [hhh(h) *on* t(h)elevi [sion.
- 84 Gary: [Bartender how about
- 85 a beer. While yer settin there.
- 86 Mike: So:mebuddy rapped uh: DeWald`nn *mouth*.