

Language and Body as Resources for Distributing Orientation: The Organization of Participation in Leaving the Ongoing Conversation

Mizuki Koda

Graduate School of Humanities and Studies on Public Affairs, Chiba University
mizu.07181008@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to describe one aspect of the organization of participation in interaction. Especially, I investigate how participants reorganize their participation by focusing on a transitional phase in interaction. The "transitional phase" in interaction is part of interaction where some changes happen to participants' distribution of orientation. To investigate what happens during the transitional phase, this study focuses on the procedure for leaving the current conversation. Based on detailed analyses of the practice in leaving the current activity, this paper argues that displaying double orientation to the current and next activity is one characteristic feature for accomplishing the smooth transition in an interaction, and that the departure from the ongoing interaction is finely coordinated with talk-in-interaction. Moreover, there is a possibility that the utterance is oriented to the ongoing activity and the bodily movement is oriented to another activity. Finally, I discuss the contribution of distributing orientation to a successful interaction.

Keywords: distribution of orientation, multiparty conversations, multimodality

1. Introduction

This paper aims to illustrate one aspect of the organization of participation in interaction. Especially, I investigate how participants reorganize their participation by focusing on a transitional phase in interaction. By saying "transitional phase," I mean the part of interaction where some changes happen to participants' distribution of orientation. As their orientation becomes stable, a new phase in interaction begins. In this sense, "activity" is defined as a course of action with a certain state of participants' orientation. Therefore, the transitional phase in interaction can be seen as a transition between activities. However, note that the next activity is not planned in advance, and created by the way in which participants change the distribution of their orientation. In what follows, I consider the very moment when participants are reorganizing their participation by distributing orientation differently compared to the previous as a transitional phase in interaction. That is, this paper investigates how conversationalist manage their behavior in the transition between activities.

In order to see the phenomenon, this paper focuses on the procedure for leaving the ongoing interaction. Since the pioneering paper by Schegloff and Sacks (1973), how to accomplish and coordinate closing conversation is a recurrent analytical topic in conversation analytic studies. On this background, Broth and Mondada (2013) has provided insightful observation focusing on walking away activity in interaction between guides and guided persons. They demonstrate that walking away as a coordinated and negotiated practice raises normative expectations among the participants. Paying more attention to the transition between phases of activities, Deppermann, Schmit, and Mondada (2010) have examined how participants collaboratively accomplish a written agenda of a meeting in local interactional work. They argue that the fine-grained multimodal coordination of bodily and verbal resources provides for opportunities of sequentially motivated relevant next actions. The difference between these previous studies and this study is that there are not officially planned activities shared among participants in this data. Of course, the setting of dinner party provides a rough outline of activities, such as having a meal after all the guests arrive there. However, how and when the interaction moves on to the next phase is more depending on the local environment compared to a meeting or a guided walk.

To see what happens in the procedure for leaving the current interaction, this paper deals with the following excerpts observed in face-to-face multiparty conversation among friends: 1) a participant leaves the ongoing conversation to join another one; 2) a participant physically leaves the current interaction to go to another place, and 3) a participant leaves the ongoing interaction by standing up. All the excerpts are part of the video-recording of face-to-face multiparty interactions among seven people having a dinner party at the host's house. For analyzing this data, this study adopts the approach of Conversation Analysis, that is analyzing interaction focusing on the sequential organization of it. The transcript was written by the author following the conventions originally developed by Gail Jefferson (2004). The multimodal description was inspired by Lorenza Mondada (Mondada, 2011; 2014). The symbols used in the transcript are explained in the list below.

The list of symbols

[a starting point of overlapping talk
(0.0)	silence represented in seconds
(.)	a micro pause.
::	the prolongation or stretching of the sound
hh	audible exhalation
.hh	audible inhalation
()	inaudible word(s)
(words)	likely possibilities of what was said
* *	delimit descriptions of Ivy's gaze and actions
+ +	delimit descriptions of Doris's gaze and actions
∫ ∫	delimit descriptions of Thea's gaze and actions
¥ ¥	delimit descriptions of Lucy's gaze and actions
Δ Δ	delimit descriptions of Asa's gaze and actions
*-->	gaze or action described continues across subsequent lines
---*	gaze or action described continues until the same symbol
#im.	the exact point where screen shot has been taken
H	hand
R	right
L	left
UP	upper
P:	actions conducted in a preparation phase of a gesture
S:	actions conducted in a stroke phase of a gesture
R:	actions conducted in a retract phase of a gesture

2. Leaving the Ongoing Interaction

I start the analysis with observing the organization of smooth departure from the ongoing interaction. It is observable that the behavior of participants who leave the current conversation displays double orientation to the current conversation and something else. Moreover, there is a possibility that the utterance is oriented to the ongoing conversation and the bodily movement is oriented to another activity.

2.1 Smooth Departure from the Ongoing Interaction

The focus of excerpt (1) is on how Lucy leaves the current conversation between John. Before this transcript, Lucy starts to talk about her experience of being asked if she is married or not by one of the teachers in the high school before she began to work there. However, she is interrupted by another participant (Thea), gives up her storytelling, and becomes a recipient of Thea's talk.

(1) Application

18 JOH: #For your [school?
19 DOR: [Oh [re-?
20 IVY: [Okay.
im #im.1-1
21 IVY: [.h h h h h [h h h h h ¥# [Yeah, I wa-
22 DOR: [ahahaha
23 THE: [I'm sor¥# [ry.
24 LCY: ¥# [Yeah, (when)
lcy ->¥gaze IVY-¥JOH-->
im #im.1-2
25 LCY: mine [like when we [were
26 IVY: [actually [uh:hm
27 LCY: crossing [() they asked for married
28 JOH: [No way.
29 LCY: [female. That's why ¥#a lot
30 IVY: [Nakagawa sen¥#sei
lcy ->¥gaze IVY-->
im #im.1-3
31 LCY: [of [em
32 IVY: [says.
33 MAR: [() half of them
34 (0.2)
35 JOH: O::h, oh, oh



im.1-1 im.1-2



im.1-3

Triggered by John's question about previous Lucy's story in line 18, Lucy resumes her storytelling in line 24. When talking about her experience, Lucy's verbal and non-verbal behaviors show her double orientation. Her utterance and face directions are oriented to the conversation with John. On the other hand, the lower part of her body keeps facing to the coffee table, the center of all the participants. Her

body is torqued. Schegloff (1998) argues that body torque displays involvement in more than one activity or a course-of-action. Also, lower segments of the body are oriented to prior activities, he says. From this point of view, Lucy's behavior is displaying her main involvement in the co-occurring conversation, and the side involvement in the conversation with John (Goffman, 1963).

When leaving the conversation, Lucy's behavior also displays her double orientation. In line 29, even though Lucy keeps talking to John, she shifts her gaze direction from John to Ivy (im.1-3), the recipient in the other conversation. Ending her turn in line 31 at a syntactically incomplete point, Lucy completely leaves the conversation with John and starts another activity (listening to Thea's talk) at the same time. To sum up, when leaving the ongoing interaction, Lucy's behavior displays her double orientation both to the current activity and something else: her utterance is oriented to the current conversation, and her body and gaze direction are positioned for participating in another conversation.

The next fragment (2) also describes that the person who leaves the ongoing interaction displays double orientation. In this scene, Ivy, Doris, and Thea are looking for the host's cat, while the other participants are washing hands in the bathroom for having dinner. Ivy joined the conversation on the way to the bathroom.

(2) Cat 1

40 DOR: *I think it () **#like run away.
ivy *walks to the stairs----- *gaze down stairs->
im #im.2-1
41 (1.2) * (0.2)
ivy *steps to L-->
42 THE: Like a blu*#r(0.5) [hhhhhhhhh
43 IVY: [Actually
ivy *body orients to the table>
im #im.2-2
44 IVY: I foun*#d like(0.1) *went*#(0.4)
ivy *steps to L--*body orients to the bathroom>
*P: lifts arms----- *S: shows the path->
im #im.2-3
45 IVY: *so **#quickly.*
ivy *R: lowers arms*
*steps fwd/walks away-->
im #im.2-5
46 (0.3)
47 THE: #Aha
im #im.2-6



im.2-1



im.2-2 im.2-3 im.2-4 im.2-5



im.2-6

Ivy starts to walk away before the end of the sequence. In lines 43 to 45, Ivy reports what she saw about the cat describing the path which he took (see im.1-3 and im.1-4). Ivy's turn is responded to by Thea's utterance in line 47. "Aha," which is equivalent to the "change-of-state" token *oh* (Heritage, 1984), proposes that Ivy's talk is informative to Thea. Also, "Aha" does not require any responses, the sequence is closing on line 47.

Even though Ivy's departure is ignoring Thea's response in line 47, her leaving procedure is accomplished gradually by displaying her double orientation. As Ivy is ending her turn, she performs a gradual turning away from the conversation with her body movement. After looking at downstairs, she turns around (im.1-2) and shows the path with her right hand (im.1-3 and im.1-4). As the images captured, the direction of her lower body is gradually shifting to the bathroom, which is on the right side of her. As was mentioned above, lower segments of the body are oriented to prior activities. Therefore, Ivy's main involvement is shifting from searching the cat to leaving there for the bathroom. That is, her utterance is displaying her orientation to the current activity, while her body movement is showing the orientation to another activity.

2.2 Leaving the Interaction Intermittently

The previous examination illustrates that the smooth departure is supported by the behavior displaying double orientation to the current activity and another activity, which is usually the next thing done by participants. The last excerpt shows that the leaving procedure is coordinated with talk in interaction. In the fragment (3), Ivy, who leaves the ongoing conversation, fails to leave, shows the full involvement in the conversation, and finally leaves there.

In this scene, all the participants are sitting at the dining table to start the meal. Asa, the host suggests washing hands in lines 3 and 4 (also see im.3-1). In response to her behavior, other participants stand up to go to the bathroom.

(3-1) Cat 2

```

1 THE: *( ) [( ) you're
2 DOR: [( ) hhhhhhhhhh
3 ASA: [Sorry, should Δwe-
    ivy *gaze THE-->
    asa Δraises hands-->
4 ASA: should we*:
5 THE: right in *front of
    ivy ->*gaze down-->
6 THE: the cameΔ[ra(0.6) ha
7 DOR: Δ[Actually I *#was
8 ASA: Δ[like *#ah:
    asa ->Δholds hands-->
    ivy *ASA-->
    im #im.3-1

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9 DOR: there to[o and *I *#was like
10 MAR: [Y e *a *#h
    ivy -gaze ASA *R-->
    im #im.3-2
11 DOR: [u:m (0.2) [Think I kind of
12 ASA: [Sorry ( ) [but
13 THE: [.hhahhuhu
    ivy -touches the seat-->
14 DOR: wanna avoid it. (0.3) [.h.h
15 THE: [hu
16 (0.2)+*#(0.2) ∫(0.2)
    dor +points IVY w/ RH-->
    ivy *gaze fwd-->
    the ∫gaze IVY-->
    im #im.3-3
17 DOR: I+vy was *like *#I think I don't
    dor +gaze THE-----+table-->
    ivy -gaze fwd*DOR---*places hands on lap
    im #im.3-4

```



im.3-1



Ivy, who is gazing at Asa (im.3-1) also tries to leave there. In the leaving procedure, her behavior displays double orientation. Ivy seems to be seeking the good timing for standing up by looking at the right side of her (im.3-2). However, her orientation is distributed into two in lines 16 and 17 because Doris points at Ivy and starts to talk about her. As the image 3-3 shows, Ivy's gaze direction is oriented to the conversation between Doris and Thea, while her arm position is showing her orientation to standing up. After that, Ivy shows her full involvement in the conversation by resting her hands on the lap, gazing at Doris and facing the lower part of her body to the table.

(3-2) Cat 2

```

18 DOR: wanna *sit *here
    ivy *gaze R-->
    *touches the seat-->
19 DOR: +huhah[h *#h( ) yeah
20 THE: [Oh my *#gosh,
    dor +gaze IVY-----+THE-->
    ivy -gaze R-*faces fwd-->
    im #im.3-5
21 THE: *really?
    ivy *gaze THE-->
22 DOR: *#she was like *(oo*ps)
    ivy ->*gaze DOR-->
    *grabs the back/leans fwd-----*leans back-->
    im #im.3-6
23 DOR: sorry *to*(o) (soon) hhhhhh
    ivy *gaze table-->
    *leans fwd-->
24 THE: hhhhhha
25 (0.1)

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However, Ivy resumes the leaving procedure soon. Her behavior again displays her double orientation to the current conversation and the departure for the bathroom. She touches the seat again looking at the right side of her in line 18. She does not stand up quickly and gazes at Doris and Thea grabbing the back of her seat (im.3-5 and im.3-6). Finally, Ivy stands up and leaves the conversation between Thea and Doris in line 26.

The timing of her standing up links with the sequence organization of talk. Ivy leans forward during Doris's turn line 23 to stand up. However, she does not stand up until after line 25. In line 24, Thea is laughing, and no one starts a new turn. That means that the sequence is closing in lines 24 and 25. Therefore, Ivy's departure for the bathroom is initiated at transition-relevance place, in which the transition to a next speaker becomes possibly relevant (Schegloff, 2007).

3. Conclusion

The episodes presented in the excerpts (1) to (3) offer various instances of the same phenomenon: one participant leaves the ongoing interaction. It has been shown that leaving procedure is accomplished by distributing orientation to the current activity and another activity, which is the next thing done by participants. According to the observation, the departure from the ongoing interaction is finely tuned to the organization of talk. Also, there is a possibility that the current activity is oriented to by utterances, and the next activity is oriented to by bodily behaviors.

How participants use their bodies in interaction for coordinating with others has been discussed in various ways since many scholars conducted an intensive analysis of video recordings in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g., Goodwin, 1981; Heath, 1984). In the stream of interaction, different parts of utterances and one body display distinct orientations that are differently distributed toward the environment and other participants. Such an integrated contexture of orientations is constituted in response to, and constitutive of, the current progress of the ongoing activity (Nishizaka, 2017). By revealing the complex practice of distributing orientation, this study strengthens the concept

of language and body as resources for locally succeeded interaction.

Finally, this paper considers why people distribute their orientation in a transitional phase in interaction. One of the possible answers is that projecting the next movement supports a smooth, successful interaction. "Projection" is regarded as an essential element of the turn-taking system. In the sequence of talk, the possible completion, where the transition of speakers can happen, is projected by the design of each utterance. Because of this mechanism, interaction is conveyed without any significant delays or gaps. From this point of view, it can be said that distributing orientation to the current and next activities supports the smooth transition between phases of interaction in the same way the projection does.

4. References

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