11. *skylight*: repetition
12. *fell through*: repetition
13. *ceiling*: repetition
14. *sitting*: repetition
15. *watching*: repetition

Note that the extract also includes instances of *parallelism,* that is, the repetition of syntactic units larger than individual words, as in:

> it fell through the skylight
> it fell through the ceiling
>
> watching television
> watching The X-files

As we saw in Chapter 2, repetition serves a number of important functions in conversation, both textual and interpersonal. In the following extract, both lexical repetition and rhyme are used for creative effect, serving not only to bind the talk together but to reinforce the social ties between the speakers. It is cohesive in every sense.

Text 4.2: Iced coffee

Speaker 1:	Now who can I make an iced coffee for?
Speaker 2:	Oh I think you could make one for my fat stomach.
Speaker 1:	And Gavin?
Speaker 3:	Iced coffee or a nice coffee?
Speaker 1:	Iced coffee.
Speaker 3:	Um.
Speaker 4:	A nice iced coffee.
Speaker 1:	A nice iced coffee = = you can have it with
Speaker 2:	= = Or you can have an unpleasant iced coffee.
Speaker 1:	you can have it with milk and ice-cream.
Speaker 3:	Could I have just like a hot coffee?
Speaker 4:	No reason why not.

(OZTALK)

4.2 Interaction in conversation

In the analysis of spoken discourse we are interested not just in how utterances are made cohesive, nor in how cohesion is achieved across turns. We are also interested in how *interactivity* is achieved: that is, what roles speakers take on, how they position other interactants into particular roles, how turntaking and topic change occurs in contexts where one person is not in control (as, for example in an interview), and the different kinds of feedback strategies that participants use. As the primary motivation of conversation is interpersonal, in this next section

we will be focusing on how these interpersonal goals are realized at the discourse level. We will be describing how conversation unfolds and the patterns of coherence both across and within speaker turns.

Conversation is co-constructed by two or more participants, unfolding dynamically in real time. One of the major interests for spoken discourse analysts is how to describe the to-and-fro micro patterns of conversational interaction. As we explained in Chapter 1, ethnomethodology (in particular Conversation Analysis), the Birmingham School and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) all developed conceptual frameworks to describe the basic pattern of interaction in spoken English. The ethnomethodologists used the concept of the adjacency pair to describe the relationship between two adjacent utterances, and the Birmingham School used the concept of the exchange. SFL uses the concept of speech function to describe the adjacency pair structure of dialogue, and each utterance within this is called a move.

4.2.1   Adjacency pairs

In Conversation Analysis (CA) the basic unit of interaction is the adjacency pair. In this section we will describe CA's concept of adjacency pairs and in Section 4.2.3 below we will look at CA's research on turntaking in conversation.

Conversation Analysis was strongly influenced by the sociologists Garfinkel (1967) and Goffman (1981) and developed into a distinctive field of enquiry by Sacks (1972a, 1972b, 1992). In their analysis and description of naturally occurring conversations, conversation analysts' primary concern is to explain how it is that everyday talk makes sense. The questions they pose all have relevance to the description and teaching of conversation and include:

- Why does only one person speak at a time?
- How do speakers know when to change turns?
- How do speakers know when to initiate new topics?
- How do speakers know when it is appropriate to interrupt?
- How can one speaker complete another speaker's utterance?
- How do interactants recognize when a speaker wants to close a conversation?

In pursuing these questions, Conversation Analysis has focused on the micro-interactional features of conversation:

- the adjacency pair structure of conversation (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973/1974);
- the turntaking mechanisms in conversation (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974);

- how speakers initiate, shift and close topics, referred to as *topic management* (Sacks, 1992);
- how conversations can keep going indefinitely and continue to make sense.

One of the most significant contributions of CA is the concept of the adjacency pair. An adjacency pair is composed of two turns produced by different speakers which are placed adjacently and where the second utterance is identified as related to the first. Adjacency pairs include such exchanges as question/answer; complaint/denial; offer/accept; request/grant; compliment/rejection; challenge/rejection, and instruct/receipt. Adjacency pairs typically have three characteristics:

- they consist of two utterances;
- the utterances are adjacent, that is the first immediately follows the second; and
- different speakers produce each utterance.

Here are some examples, taken from authentic conversational data:

Question/answer:

> A: You don't like the fish?
> B: No, it's not that I don't like it, it's the way it is done.

Offer/accept:

> A: Now who can I make an iced coffee for?
> B: Oh I think you could make one for my fat stomach.

Request/grant:

> A: Jerry hi, where's our cake?
> B: It's coming, it's coming. [laugh]

Compliment/response:

> A: Great haircut.
> B: Do you think? The hair colour burnt my scalp!

Challenge/rejection:

> A: Mmm, don't speak with your mouth half full, pull the bloody thing out.
> B: I will do what I bloody well like.

Instruct/receipt:

> A: Hand me the knife from the bench, will you.
> B: Here you go.

(Authors' data)

Where there is a choice of responses – as in an invitation or a request, for example – one of these choices typically requires less elaboration than the other. Accepting an invitation, or granting a request, require less 'face work', that is to say, they are less face-threatening – than refusing either an invitation or a request. The less face-threatening response is referred to as the preferred sequence, as in:

> A: Would you like to try my Armenian dessert George?
> B: I'll taste it yes, thank you.

whereas a sequence such as:

> A: Why don't we go to see it tonight?
> B: No-way! I just want to collapse in front of tele.

is a dispreferred sequence. It is often the case that mitigating strategies – such as giving the reason for the refusal or apologizing – are used with dispreferred sequences to ensure conversational co-operativeness.

The initial identification of a two-part structural unit – the adjacency pair – led to the recognition of sequences that are longer than two units and of more complex sequential organizations than strict adjacency. A sequence is an adjacency pair and any expansions of that adjacency. There are three types of expansions: *pre-sequences, insertion sequences* and *post-sequences,* where the sequence is the base adjacency pair and its expansions. For example:

1.	pre-sequence	first pair part	A: What are you doing tonight?
2.	pre-sequence	second pair part	B: Nothing
3.	base adjacency pair	first pair part	A: Do you want to have a drink?
4.	insertion sequence	first pair part	B: Where?
5.	insertion sequence	second pair part	A: Down the pub
6.	base adjacency pair	second pair part	B: Great

In this example turns 3 and 6 constitute a question/answer pair. However, turns 1–6 are all related semantically – there is a sense of their belonging together. It is instances such as these that CA refers to as sequences.

The concept of the adjacency pair has been extremely significant as it provides a way of capturing the local organization of talk. In fact Taylor and Cameron (1987) argue:

> The concept of the adjacency pair is, arguably, the linchpin of the ethnomethodological model of conversational structure.

> Not only . . . does the operation of the turn-taking system rely upon it, but . . . without the concept of the adjacency pair there would be no ethnomethodological model of conversation.
>
> (1987: 109)

The concept of the adjacency pair, however, is limited as it can only describe the relationship between the base adjacent utterance and its expansions. It cannot so easily account for the structure of extended stretches of conversation, including the relationship that exists between the different moves made by the same speaker in longer turns of talk. In short, it cannot account on its own for the discourse structure of conversation. In the next section we will expand the notion of the adjacency pair to describe the structure of the related semantic units of the move and the exchange.

4.2.2   Moves and exchanges in conversation

Adjacency-pair structure is one way of describing some basic elements of discourse interactivity. In this next section we will explore the unfolding of conversational exchanges, describing how one speaker's move leads to another, and then to another. The concern in this analysis is to demonstrate how it is that conversation keeps going – how the conversation unfolds. To account for the interactivity of conversation, we need to go beyond an analysis of the vocabulary and grammar of spoken English and give functional labels to the different roles speakers can assume, and to the roles they assign to others. To do this we will outline a functional interpretation of interaction. Both the Birmingham School and Systemic Functional Linguistics (outlined in Chapter 1) describe the pattern of interaction in conversation functionally – that is, by describing what function each speaker's move achieves in that context.

Each utterance in a conversation (described above as one pair part of an adjacency pair) can be referred to as a *move* (see Martin, 1992). A move is, therefore, the basic semantic unit in interactive talk – it is the smallest unit of potential interaction (see Slade, 1996; Eggins and Slade, 1997). It indicates a point of possible turn-transfer, and therefore carries with it the idea of 'it could stop here'. (This is what the ethnomethodologists call a 'turn-constructional unit': see below.) By describing the different types of moves that can occur in English conversation we can begin to describe the patterns of conversational structure, that is, the way interactants negotiate the exchange of meanings in dialogue. According to Halliday's functional description (1994: 69), the basic initiating moves in conversation are the four primary speech functions of *command*, *statement*, *offer* and *question*.

A command is typically realized by an imperative, a statement by a declarative, and a question by an interrogative:

Speech function	Grammatical structure that typically realizes it (mood of the clause)	Example
command	imperative	'*Eat your vegetables*'
statement	declarative	'*I love vegetables*'
offer	no corresponding congruent form	'*Would you like some vegetables?*'
question	interrogative	'*What kind of vegetables do you like?*'

(adapted from Halliday, 1994: 69)

With each speech function there is an expected response and a discretionary alternative, with each of these examples constituting an interactive move in conversation:

Initiating speech function	Expected response	Discretionary alternative
offer	acceptance*	rejection
Do you want to get married?	*Absolutely.*	*Certainly not!*
command	compliance*	refusal
Get married first.	*Okay.*	*Under no condition.*
statement	acknowledgment	contradiction
I am getting married.	*Wonderful news!*	*Over my dead body.*
question	answer	disclaimer
Are you getting married?	*Yes.*	*What do you mean?*

*these responses are frequently non-verbal

(adapted from Halliday, 1994: 69)

Every move in dialogue can be assigned a *speech function*. So the definition of a move can now be refined as being the basic semantic unit in interactive talk that selects for speech function. Speech function then describes the adjacency pair structure of dialogue.

Both expected and discretionary responses engage with the initiating move. However, the difference is that the expected responses tend to finish the exchange as there has been a resolution (for example, an offer followed by an acceptance; or a question followed by an answer). Discretionary responses, on the other hand, tend to open out the exchange because, for example, if an offer is rejected or a statement contradicted, further

negotiation is needed – such as a reason, an excuse or an apology. Expected responses support the proposition of the speaker and thereby serve to create alignments and solidarity. By contrast, the discretionary responses are either disengaging and non-committal or openly confronting.

Ironically, discretionary moves occur more frequently in casual conversation than do expected responses. This is because of the social role of conversation, which is not only to affirm likenesses and similarities but also to explore differences. Many conversations between close friends involve as much probing of difference as they do confirming of similarities.

Due to the frequency of discretionary moves in conversational English, Martin (1992) and Eggins and Slade (1997) have extended the analysis of the different types of discretionary moves that can occur. There are two categories of discretionary moves: *tracking* and *challenging* moves (see Martin, 1992: 70, and Eggins and Slade, 1997: 207).

Tracking moves monitor, check or clarify the content of prior moves. For example:

> A: I'm just going to the shop.
> B: Where did you say?

where the content of what was said is being clarified. Or:

> A: I'm just going to the shop.
> B: To the shop?

where speaker B seeks confirmation of what she heard.

Challenging moves challenge the speaker's initiating move in some way. For example, in the case of one speaker trying to terminate the interaction:

> A: I'm leaving tomorrow.
> B: I don't want to hear about it.

Or where the proposition is countered in some way. For example:

> A: I'm leaving tomorrow.
> B: I thought you said next week.

The tracking and challenging moves tend to trigger sequences of talk that interrupt, postpone, abort or suspend the initial speech function sequence. In many ways tracking and challenging moves are characteristic features of conversational English – they occur much less frequently in formal spoken English. As Eggins and Slade point out (1997: 212), this is because formal interactions, such as job interviews or interactions in the bank, aim at closure and completion. On the other hand, casual conversations are aimed at sustaining and maintaining social relationships, a goal which is never completely achieved, hence the need for linguistic strategies that open out, rather than foreclose, the conversation.

We can now list the major types of moves that can occur in conversation in English (examples of each of these are above):

Initiating moves (I)
  statement: I:S
  question: I:Q
  rhetorical question: Q:R
  offer: I:O
  command: I:C

Expected responding moves (R)
  answer: R:A
  acknowledge: R:K
  response acknowledge offer: R:O
  response to command: R:C

Discretionary moves
  tracking: tr (confirming, checking and clarifying)
  response to tracking: rtr
  challenging: ch (disengaging, challenging, countering)
  response to challenge: rch

When we focus on the interactional structuring of exchanges, we find that a single move will often make a distinct contribution to the development of the exchange. It may serve to initiate a new exchange; it may serve to respond to an exchange that has been initiated; or it may serve to complete an exchange after a response has been supplied.

However, at other times, these functions in an exchange will be achieved not by a single move but by a group of moves. We will refer to this as a *move complex* (Slade, 1996). For example, in this extract from a coffee-break conversation between a group of women supervisors in a hospital, Jessie asks a question that elicits gossip about Richard:

Exchange structure	Move	Speaker	Transcript
I:Q	1	Jessie:	Mmm, what's happened about Richard?
tr	2a	Judy	Ah about Richard.
R:A	2b		Ah nothing [laughs].
	2c		He's been spoken to,
	2d		it'll be a sort of a watch and wait == something
			. . .
I:Q	3	Jessie:	== Yeah, what do you reckon is going to happen?

(Authors' data)

Judy's response in the exchange is not a single move but three gram-
matically related moves that form her answer to the question. This then
is followed by a new exchange, initiated by Jessie asking another ques-
tion. For this reason, functional linguists refer to this basic interactive
pattern as an *exchange* (rather than the similar concept of an adjacency
pair). An exchange then can be defined as 'the sequence of moves con-
cerned with negotiating a proposition stated or implied in an initiating
move. An exchange can be identified as beginning with an opening
move, and continuing until another opening move occurs' (Eggins and
Slade, 1997: 222).

We will now analyse an authentic conversational extract in terms of its
exchange structure. In the extract a group of supervisors at a hospital are
chatting during their morning tea-break. There are three participants in
the conversation – Mary, Fran and Adam – and they are gossiping about
Joanne, a work colleague.

Text 4.3: Joanne

Exchange structure	Speaker	Transcript (divided into moves)
I:S	Bron:	I'm about to throw Joanne out the window
tr	Pat:	Joanne who
rtr	Bron:	Peterson
I:Q	Pat:	Why?
R:A	Bron:	She gets really pushy.
I:S		I'm looking for a file for Gary.
		Kerry gave me three others and I was in the
		middle of finding the third one for her.
I:Q	Gary:	Kerry gave you three did she?
R:A	Bron:	Yeah, you know they have to be done
		and Joanne came up
		and she said 'oh, can you do this?'
		and I said . . . and she went 'oh it's just
		that they can wait until after this one 'cause
		they're needed today'. Oh I was about
		ready to strangle her =she gets
R:K	Gary:	Joanne's too busy
R:K	Bron:	I know
		and I appreciate that she's busy
		but she gets really pushy
R:K	Pat:	Yeah,
		I don't like pushy people either

(Authors' data)

The first column of the transcript details the interactive structure, that is the relationships between moves produced by different speakers. Bron's first initiating statement, *I'm about to throw Joanne out the window*, immediately establishes Joanne as the topic. This is followed by a tracking move to clarify who Bron is talking about. After Bron responds to the tracking move, Pat asks why she is annoyed with Joanne and this then is followed by a detailed response, clearly stating her negative evaluation. Bron then initiates another statement, providing evidence or justification for her negative evaluation of Joanne. In the rest of the text Bron develops the 'case' that Joanne is really pushy. Adam and Fran contribute to the construction of the gossip sequence by means of a few simple moves where they ask for further information from Bron. She then responds in turn, using a series of move complexes in each case. Initially, Pat and Gary are reluctant to gossip about Joanne, but Pat's final 'response: acknowledgement' provides tacit approval of the gossip, with her comment: *I don't like pushy people either*.

In most gossip sequences, unless there is agreement, the speaker is likely to back down. If the participants in these contexts (colleagues chatting at work) do not agree with the gossip, they are more likely to be non-committal to enable the gossip to continue. Gary, for example, was non-committal with his comment, '*Joanne's too busy*'. (Note that gossip sequences, including this one, will be the subject of further analysis in Chapter 5.)

The conversational structure analysis has demonstrated that the exchange is jointly constructed by the two roles of gossip provider and gossip seeker/participant, where the gossip provider then launches into longer move complexes in order to build up a case against 'the absent other'. The analysis has also demonstrated who the dominant and incidental participants are, which participants produced the most moves and move complexes, and the kind of speech functional selections speakers made.

The purpose of this analysis is to focus on the micro-interaction of conversation: analysing the exchanges in terms of speech function and categorizing each move according to what it is doing in that context. Interactants develop conversation locally move by move. For each move, the current speaker will make a particular set of speech-function selections. By analysing each move we get a clearer picture of how the interactants propel the conversation forward – initiating, responding, challenging etc. Exchange structure analysis is, therefore, a way of capturing the semantic coherence across moves by different speakers.

In Chapter 5 we will be describing the same extract from the perspective of genre – outlining the text structure of gossip, and detailing the different stages the text moves through to reach its goal. Each of these different accounts provide complementary perspectives and begin to

build up a comprehensive picture of how conversation is structured to achieve its goals.

In the next section we will continue our description of the interactivity of conversation by describing one key aspect of interaction: how interactants know when it is their turn to talk, at what points in the conversation another interactant can self-select to take the turn or what linguistic strategies the speaker uses to select the next speaker.

4.2.3   Turntaking in conversation

Perhaps the most significant studies on turntaking have come from CA, from within sociology rather than linguistics. In Section 4.2.1 above we described CA's concept of adjacency pairs and in this section we will describe CA's research on turntaking.

Sacks (1974), who developed CA into a distinctive field of enquiry, transcribed and analysed many hours of naturally occurring conversations. He describes how turntaking works in English: the current speaker can either select the next speaker, by for example, naming them, looking at them, directing a question to them, or the next speaker can self-select, with many possible strategies, such as *that reminds me of* or *have you heard what Mary did yesterday*?

In conversations, although there are many overlaps and interruptions, the way people take or allocate turns is not random. It is systematic and the signals, which may not be explicit, are clearly understood by speakers familiar with the cultural context. This is evidenced by the fact that conversations can flow coherently for extended periods of time, and without prolonged silences or breakdowns in communication. CA is interested in uncovering how it is that conversation keeps making sense and how people know when and how to make a contribution.

So, in trying to explain how it is that speakers keep taking turns, Sacks (1974) argued that it is because interactants in the conversation recognize points of potential speaker change, these being indicated by linguistic units which he calls *turn-constructional units*. A turn-constructional unit (TCU) is the minimal semantic unit that can constitute one complete turn of talk. In this example each of these turns is a TCU:

> A: Do you want to have a drink?
> B: Great idea

However in the following example each utterance could constitute a complete turn in its own right. Hence there are two turn-constructional units within the one speaker turn:

> A: Do you want a drink? We could go somewhere after work.