

Cycle de conférences du CRIS

On the nature of playful and non-serious contributions to talk

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1^{er} février 2016, 12h15 – 13h45 (Faculté de droit, salle B29)

Contributions that we may loosely term 'humorous', 'playful' or 'non-serious' are ubiquitous in talk. They are also extremely diverse; ranging from clearly playful or joking sequences at one end of the spectrum, to ones that are impossible to distinguish from serious interaction at the other. Analysis from a range of disciplines helps to throw light on the nature of these closely related categories, facilitating the development of technical understandings of what are, in the first place, lay terms.

In this paper I consider technical understandings of non-seriousness and playfulness. Using instances taken from naturally occurring conversations I show how consideration of turns in sequences can suggest ways of better understanding these phenomena. Building on Sacks' (1992: 672) discussion of non-seriousness it is possible to base a technical understanding on consideration of responses that orient to a prior turn as not having their more usual sequential implications (for example as an invitation inviting an acceptance or a declination) but as making relevant responses that orient to their non-seriousness, such as laughter.

In a similar fashion it is possible to offer a technical understanding of playful contributions to talk. Responses that orient to prior turns as playful do treat them as retaining their more usual sequential implications, but also orient to their playfulness through elements of the design.

Analysis of instances using CA reveals how sequences of non-seriousness and playfulness are negotiated in interaction and that they also encompass serious actions. Further, the role of laughter in collaboratively creating such sequences becomes clear.

Reference

Sacks, Harvey, 1992. *Lectures on Conversation, Volumes I and II*, edited by Gail Jefferson. Oxford, Blackwell.