

Conversational Cooperation in Social Perspective

Author(s): John J. Gumperz

Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society (1990), pp. 429-441

Please see “How to cite” in the online sidebar for full citation information.

Please contact BLS regarding any further use of this work. BLS retains copyright for both print and screen forms of the publication. BLS may be contacted via <http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/bls/>.

The Annual Proceedings of the Berkeley Linguistics Society is published online via [eLanguage](#), the Linguistic Society of America's digital publishing platform.

Conversational Cooperation in Social Perspective

John J. Gumperz
University of California, Berkeley

The many recent linguistic studies that build on Gricean notions of inference can roughly be grouped into two general categories: (1) work in theoretical pragmatics that concentrates on formal models of inference at the sentence or clause level and (2) empirical sociolinguistic studies that seek to document the workings of specific conversational maxims through studies of speaking rules and practices in various languages, speech communities and discourse genres. My own perspective differs from both of these traditions in that I focus on general and in part universal processes of conversational inference at the level of discourse or, more specifically, at the level of speech exchanges. The basic concern is with the notion of situated understanding, which – in contrast to what one might call ‘lexical meaning’ – always rests, as I want to argue, on inferences that build on assumptions about conversational cooperation, assumptions that although not formal or readily formalizable are nevertheless implicature-like, contingent assessments of communicative intent.

Although Grice is quite clear about his claim that implicature presupposes assumptions about conversational cooperation, most of the discussion in his seminal article ‘Logic and Conversation’ (1975, 1989), as well as in his later comments on the topic, focuses on conversational maxims as such and on the inferential logic that underlies meaning assessments. The maxims of quality, quantity, relevance and manner, as well as the notion of implicature, are clearly defined. But no detailed description of what is meant by conversational cooperation is given. Nevertheless, I find the fact that Grice links inferencing to assumptions about conversational cooperation highly suggestive since it can be argued that this move constitutes a major step towards the development of a social perspective on language and understanding. Discourse analysts however have so far hardly begun to explore the significance of this linkage and what it implies for the way we formulate research questions and do our analyses.

Let me begin, then, by elaborating on the notion of cooperation. At the risk of repeating what everyone already knows, I quote from Grice’s initial description of what is meant by *implicature*. He refers to what he is attempting to do as an inquiry into ‘the general conditions that in one way or another apply to conversation as such, irrespective of its subject matter.’ Then, somewhat later, in introducing his discussion of conversational implicatures, he goes on to say:

Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction. This purpose or direction may be fixed from the start (e.g., by an initial proposal of a question for discussion), or it may evolve during the exchange; it may be fairly definite, or it may be so indefinite as to leave very considerable latitude

to the participants (as in a casual conversation). But at each stage, *some* possible conversational moves would be excluded as conversationally impossible. We might then formulate a rough general principle which participants will be expected (*ceteris paribus*) to observe, namely, Make your conversational contribution such as is required at the stage at which it occurs by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (Grice 1989, p.26)

I read the above remarks as arguing for, or at least suggesting, that we take an interactive view of communication where prototypically the source data for analysis is not a single speaker's utterance but a speech exchange or a set of exchanges. What this implies can be summarized as follows. (a) Communicating is not just simply a matter of individuals uttering sentences or speech acts or expressing their thoughts. Speech is produced and evaluated within the context of a communicative ecology involving the cooperative efforts of speakers and respondents. (b) Since communication consists of intentional acts, cooperativeness must be assessed with reference to some commonality of purpose or mutual agreement as to the general direction that an exchange is expected to take. As Grice points out, however, this does not mean that participants must agree in all respects; 'their ultimate aims', as Grice puts it, 'may of course be independent or even in conflict' (1989, p.29). (c) However, the agreement on goals, no matter how general, once achieved, directly affects language usage and, presumably also, the actual inferences made as part of the exchange. It would follow that assessments of a participant's cooperativeness must also be grounded in the organizational properties of the exchange.

But Grice does not specify what these properties might be. His illustrations rely on hypothetical data, and examples, for the most part, consist of single utterances or very short exchanges. Perhaps this is why much of the research on inference in pragmatics has not dealt with longer stretches of discourse. Yet lines such as the following, taken from the discussion of cooperative transactions, clearly refer to longer sequences of exchanges: 'There is some sort of understanding (which may be explicit but which is often tacit) that, other things being equal, the transaction should continue in appropriate style unless both parties are agreeable that it should terminate. You do not just shove off or start doing something else' (1989, p.29). I take it therefore that implicature is also meant to apply at the level of discourse.

What exactly then does cooperation involve? Since conversational maxims occupy such a prominent place in the treatment of inferential processes, one might conclude that cooperativeness can be assessed solely with reference to the maxims. But Grice normally speaks of the cooperative principle *and* the maxims, which suggests that he regards the former as separate from the latter, so that cooperation can perhaps best be understood as collaboration in the pursuit of shared communicative goals which serves as a precondition for maxim-based inferences. But this raises yet another set of questions. Grice's use of terms like quantity, quality, relevance and manner implies that following maxims is for him a matter of choosing appropriate expressions at the level of content. Can cooperation, then, be similarly described in terms of conforming to, violating or disregarding norms of interpersonal relations? The example of a speaker who replies: 'My lips are sealed', in response to a prior speaker's attempt to elicit information suggests that this is perhaps what he proposes. But elsewhere he points out that within the context of

shared assumptions, participants can also have conflicting goals, so that cooperation cannot be purely a matter of content.

I would like to suggest that we try to avoid some of these problems by dealing with shared assumptions or presuppositions at the level of illocutionary force. Cooperation, then, does not just depend on personal intent. Rather, assumptions about cooperation come to be seen as emerging from or inferable from what we may call the organizational properties of the exchange, properties that depend in part on content but in part also on certain features of surface linguistic form. I will illustrate what I mean on the basis of three examples extracted from audiotapes of naturally occurring talk: a cross-examination in court, a broadcast of a political debate, and an intake interview recorded in an employment office.

My approach builds in part on the work of conversational analysts, who during the last two decades have produced many ground-breaking empirical studies to show that speech exchanges everywhere conform to universal principles of conversational management. The basic concern in this work is with Goffman's notion of conversational involvement (1963), which in some ways parallels Gricean conversational cooperation. But active participation on the part of speakers and listeners, as precondition for the maintenance of conversational exchange, is the central concern, and analysis focuses on the strategies by which this is accomplished. Yet, I differ from those conversational analysts who have been interested largely in the general characteristics of exchange sequences in that I argue that involvement depends on inferences that participants must make in order to judge what they hear as cohesive talk, and that these inferences in turn are significantly affected by perception and interpretation of certain types of linguistic signs or contextualization cues (Gumperz 1982, 1990).

Prototypically, the initial unit in my analysis of contextualization processes is an *event*, defined as a temporally ordered sequence of exchanges characterized by a detectable beginning and an end which provides empirical evidence of what the event's outcome is, and therefore also evidence to confirm or disconfirm the analyst's assumptions about what was intended. My claim is that understanding in such events rests on two levels of inferencing: a global level where what is at issue is the overall purpose or direction of the exchange and a local level of inferencing which concentrates on sequential relationships such as what the conversational analysts call 'adjacency pairs'. Here I will illustrate the approach in the course of the actual analyses. For a detailed explanation, see Gumperz 1982, 1989.

The first example comes from cross-examination testimony by a rape victim (Drew 1990). Here is the relevant background. The victim had been sitting at a table with some friends at a local club one evening. The accused, who had come to the club alone, had joined the group and participated in the general conversation. When the victim got up to leave, the accused walked out with her, offered her a ride and asked her to accompany him for a cup of coffee. A few minutes after leaving the parking lot, he had turned into a side road and driven to an isolated spot where the attack occurred. In the following transcript, C is the defense counsel cross-examining W, who is the victim. (For explanation of transcription conventions used below, see Appendix.)

I. Rape Trial Cross-Examination.

- 1 C: well you had some uh p- .. uh fairly lengthy conversation
2 with the defendant, uh didn't you?
3 <0.7>
4 C: on that evening of February fourteenth?
5 <1.0>
6 W: we:ll we were *all talking.
7 <0.8>
8 C: well *you kne:w at that ti:me that the defendant was
9 *in:terested .. in *you, .. didn't you?
10 <1.3>
11 W: he: asked me how I'(d) *been:, and
12 <1.1>
13 W: j- just stuff like that

Some turns omitted.

- 14 C: and you went to *a: uh <0.9> ah you went to a *ba:r?
15 in *Boston <0.6> is that correct?
16 W: it's a *clu:b/
17 C: it's where uh .. uh <0.3> gi:rls and fella:s *meet, isn't it?
18 W: people *go there/
19 C: and during that eve:*ning:
20 didn't mister O come over to sit with you?
21 <0.8>
22 W: sat at our *table/

Some turns omitted.

- 23 C: some distance back into the uh .. *wood, wasn't it?
24 <0.5>
25 W: it was up the *path/ I don't know how far/

Anyone examining the preceding encounter one exchange at a time might conclude that conversational cooperation has broken down since the witness regularly fails to provide direct answers to simple yes/no questions, disputes the counsel's use of words and in general seems to be interfering with his efforts to produce a coherent account. But more detailed examination suggests that the situation is more complex. We know that the underlying goal of courtroom interrogation is to establish the facts of the case for the benefit of the judge and jury. Moreover, in contrast to direct examinations where questioning is, for the most part, supportive, cross-examinations are adversarial proceedings where counsel's questions are designed to uncover flaws or inconsistencies in the witnesses' testimony, while the witnesses in turn seek to establish or reaffirm their own version of what took place. The two participants, therefore, can be seen to be engaged in a contest over which of several possible interpretations should be accepted as the correct one. Furthermore, given the rules of courtroom procedure, where turns at speaking are strictly allocated and participants are highly constrained in what they can or cannot put into words, the contest must in large part rely on indirectness. That is to say, what the dispute over interpretation is about must be inferred indirectly from the two speakers' language use, in particular, their choice among sets of related expressions.

An examination of the surface content of the exchange brings out the dynamics of the contest. The counsel's questions in lines 1-3 and 4 can be understood as suggesting the implicature that the witness and the defendant knew each other well before the incident, so that perhaps there might have been a prior sexual relationship between them. The witness is, therefore, faced with a dilemma. To answer 'yes' would be to confirm the counsel's implied meaning, but to say 'no' could likely have been shown to be untruthful. By substituting her own expression for counsel's wording, she manages to neutralize the implicature. Her answers to the following two questions in lines 11 and 13 have a similar effect. In lines 15 and 18 counsel seeks to depict the witness as a woman who frequents questionable places to look for men and could have been looking for sexual adventures. Again she counters by substituting the more neutral 'club' for 'bar' and 'people go there' for the sexually suggestive 'girls and fellas meet'.

Yet, how do we explain the fact that interpretation differs depending on whether we examine the exchanges one at a time or whether we look at the interaction as a whole? The answer must lie in the changing nature of the contextual presuppositions that enter into the interpretive process. Had the witness disputed the counsel's wording in just one exchange, her behavior might have simply been regarded as slightly odd, or perhaps nitpicking or somewhat argumentative. It is the cumulative effect of her responses that leads listeners to question their initial interpretation and draw on their knowledge of what a cross-examination is about and of the conflicting aims of the two participants to construct a new environment in which to ground their understanding of what the facts are. In other words, what we are talking about here are schema-based inferences where the implicatures that the counsel is trying to depict the witness as someone who willingly consented to the act and that the witness seeks to present herself as an innocent victim of an unprovoked attack rest on the presupposition that, to paraphrase Grice, each participant recognizes 'a common purpose or set of purposes' or 'a mutually accepted direction' in the exchanges. Both individuals agree that the goal is to convey to the jury what the facts of the case are, although each of the two is indirectly suggesting that the other's facts are wrong.

It is important to note that each participant's action at any one point is dependent upon that of the other. It is only in this way that we can understand responses like 'He asked me how I'd been – just stuff like that,' in answer to 'You knew that the defendant was interested in you,' and 'Sat at our table,' in answer to 'Didn't Mr. O come over to sit with you?' as implicating that the witness and the defendant only knew each other casually. This interdependence of participants' actions is not always apparent from surface form. Since the rules of courtroom discourse limit what can and cannot be lexicalized, speakers rely on non-verbal cues to convey inter-sentential relationships.

A brief look at both speakers' use of prosody and of syntactic form illustrates this point. For example, 'bar' and 'club' in lines 14 and 16 both carry similar stress and fill equivalent syntactic slots. This is also the case for the verbs 'meet' and 'go' in lines 17 and 18, and the nouns 'wood' and 'path' in lines 23 and 25. This is to say, then, that the listener perceives that the two terms are being contrasted from the way in which the talk is contextualized. The contrast, then, in turn suggests the

inference that the witness is intentionally substituting one term for the other, a fact on which the implicature rests.

It is also interesting to examine how pausing strategies are employed in light of the two contestants' different goals within each one's understanding of the overall purpose of the interaction. Note that there is a .7 second pause after the counselor's initial inquiry which he then follows with a clarification question. This in turn is followed by a one second pause before the witness answers. Similarly, her remarks in line 11 and 13 are preceded by long pauses. If we take the witness's perspective, such pausing can be interpreted as an attempt to gain time to think so as to avoid possible traps on the part of the counselor. But the counselor might well claim that the witness's pausing indicates that she is procrastinating or is unsure of her answers. And it is possible to argue that in line 4 he cuts her short in order to convey the impression to the jury that she is in fact procrastinating. The counselor's own pausing, on the other hand, is not subject to such ambiguities. All of this again follows from the presupposition that the two contestants are engaged in a cross-examination.

To sum up then, it is clear that the two speakers understand each other and are cooperating when cooperation is understood at the level of illocutionary force. Cooperation, then, is both willingness and ability to collaborate in the production of coherent discourse. In the rest of this paper, I would like to illustrate some of the implications of this perspective.

Example II comes from a transcript of a 1960's radio broadcast of a panel discussion involving the then mayor of San Francisco, Joseph Alioto (A), and two leaders of the local black community, B, who is not heard in this excerpt, and Eldridge Cleaver (C). The mayor has been seeking to convey a favorable picture of what his administration has been doing in encouraging the black community to participate in municipal decision-making. B objects to this characterization. The excerpt begins as the mayor is responding to him.

II. Panel Discussion: March 7, 1968.

- 1 A: but the *point **i:s,
- 2 .. that the *black community in San Francisco Hunter's Point/
- 3 is *not giving me the story that they're being excluded
- 4 from any kind of positions of responsibility/
- 5 .. and i *have *told them,
- 6 if they're gonna par*ticipate in these things/
- 7 that there're gonna be *no,
- 8 .. bequeaths from Mt Olympus down *to them//

B's relatively brief turn is not included here. The transcript picks up as C breaks in, taking over B's turn with a latched response in which he directly contests the mayor's claim, arguing that, far from trying to involve the black community in local decision-making, the mayor's administration, along with other municipal administrations throughout the country, has been engaged in a war against the black community.

- 9 C: =={[lo] i would just like to say *this/}
 10 that uh .. the mayor, ... is the mayor of San Fran*cisco/
 11 he's not the mayor of the United *States//
 12 .. and uh, that's his area of responsi*bility//
 13 ==an::d, i would like to take exception to uh,
 14 ... the glowing picture that he's just painted,
 15 .. as to the relationship between uh,
 16 .. his *office, and his admini*stration,
 17 and his *government, .. and the black community//
 18 now it may well *be that he has,
 19 a good rapport with certain people in Hunter's Point//
 20 .. {[hi] at the same *ti:me,}
 21 .. the black community is very well a*ware/
 22 ... that San Francisco, .. *under Mayor A-
 23 ... {[ac] A, excuse me/}
 24 A: {[pp] alright//}
 25 C: uh ... the same as a::ll,
 26 .. uh city governments across this *country/
 27 ... {[dc] are sharply escalating/}
 28 ... the war against the black community//
 29 that the po*lice, ... who occupy black communities/
 30 .. are becoming {[dc] *more and *more}
 31 of an occupying army, {[ac] *in the black communities/}

At this point, A breaks into C's long turn with a latched challenge. There follow two brief exchange sequences until C resumes the presentation of his position.

- 32 A: ==in San Francisco?
 33 C: =={[f] in San Fran=cisco//}=
 34 A: =aw th=at's just a generalization/ =[lo] that's not true//=
 35 C: =[hi] in San Fran*cisco/=
 36 A: =[lo] that just isn't true//=
 37 C: =in San Fran*cisco/= the black population, .. is well aware,
 38 a:nd they're very very much con*cerned,
 39 .. uh with the type of tactics/
 40 a:nd the increasing {[ac] bru*tality of the San Francisco police department/}
 41 a:nd the *fact that the San Francisco police department/
 42 goes around *kicking down people's *doors/
 43 .. entering, .. il*legally without search warrants/
 44 .. with*out warrants for arrest//
 45 uh you may say that/
 46 .. uh the black community is cooperating with you fully/
 47 and that they're not uh, con*cerned about this/
 48 .. but i know for a *fact/ that the =black community=

Here again A breaks in with a question which seeks to categorize what C has just said as a 'complaint.' That is, by implication, a typical instance of the many problems that administrators have to deal with as part of doing their job.

- 49 A: =they have complaints?= is that what you mean?

50 C: complaints?

51 A: =they have complaints, the *white community has com*plaints,=

52 C: =they're not complaints/ they're not com*plaints//=

When C questions A's use of the term 'complaints' in line 49 by echoing the latter's words with a rising intonation, A repeats what he had said in line 49 with a slightly falling intonation on 'complaints' such as is found in listing, and then begins to list the many complainers that he has to deal with. C then tries to shift the rhythmic patterns with his repeated statements in line 52 so as to deny the applicability of the term 'complaints' to the black community's situation. His turn overlaps A's previous turn, but A continues with his rhythmic string of parallel constructions involving repeated mention of the theme of complaints, which leaves no space for C's counter-arguments.

53 A: the *North Beach community has com*plaints,

54 the *straight colony out in Haight-Ashbury has com*plaints,

55 the fact that there are com*plaints from different communities,

56 .. doesn't mean that we have some kind of

57 irreconcilable conflict that **must erupt in violence//

58 =[([hi]) it doesn't mean that at all//]=

As in example I, the two speakers agree on the general goals or purposes of the exchange. They know that to debate is to engage in a contest over which of several conflicting views will prevail. What distinguishes this encounter from example I, however, is the way in which contextualization strategies enter into the argumentation. At the outset A employs accent and choice of terminal intonational contours to achieve rhetorical effect. C on the other hand relies on phrasing, pausing and pitch register shifts to chunk the stream of speech in such a way as to highlight his points. In line 37, C manages to abort A's challenge by means of the rhythmicity of his delivery. But towards the end of the passage, A shifts his tactics and adopts C's way of using repetition and rhythm as a contextualization strategy. By doing so, he manages to drown out C's objections. In other words, C automatically responds to A's new contextualization strategy and allows A to go on with his argument. Basically, each speaker is aware of what the other is trying to do on the level of intent, but A alone seems to have control over both strategies at the level of discourse production and this gives him the advantage in the debate.

The next example consists of a passage taken from an initial interview at a state-financed employment center where job seekers register for positions. The encounter was recorded in the British Midlands. The interviewer (A) is a native speaker of the local form of British English, and the candidate (B) a locally resident native speaker of a South Asian language with relatively good instrumental control of English, whose discourse strategies, however, reflect those of the native South Asian language. The transcript begins shortly after the introductory portion of the encounter as the interactants turn to systematic questioning.

III. Job Center Interview.

8 A: yeah, you're on the youth opportunity .. scheme (xxx)?

9 B: .. yeah/

10 A: (xx) that's right/ can you tell me a little bit about it?

11 what you what you're actually doing (on it)?

- 12 B: well ehm .. you do .. two weeks,
 13 A: .. hmm/
 14 B: we change around every two weeks/
 15 A: yeah/
 16 B: we're doing ehm .. plastering now/
 17 A: .. yeah/
 18 B: it's a work () opportunity/
 19 A: oh yeah, yeah/
 20 B: and then ehm ... we've done some plumbing,
 21 A: yeah/
 22 B: and next week, we'll be going to eh painting, ... wallpapering,
 23 A: .. oh yeah/
 24 B: (xxxx)/
 25 A: yeah/
 26 B: (xxx)
 27 A: alright now, just going back to what you said at first, the plastering,
 29 B: ()
 30 A: how- .. you know, what- what do you actually do?
 31 how- how involved are you?
 32 B: well, ... he shows us what to do,
 33 and we ... plaster the wall out in plasterboard,
 34 A: yeah/ do you do all the mixing on that?
 35 B: ==yeah/
 36 A: ==you do all that?
 37 B: we mix it by hand,
 38 A: ... mhm/
 39 B: and then we-
 40 ... we () wall () to learn how to plaster/
 41 A: yeah/ right/ and it is- it- .. are you just putting the- .. y'know,
 42 skimmin, ... and that? i mean, are are you doing are you doing
 43 everything?
 44 B: yeah/
 45 A: you're doing it all/ yeah/ ... do you do any- .. working at
 46 heights? anything like that?
 47 B: yeah, we use scaffold/
 48 A: ... yeah/
 49 B: ==and then, ... we work on scaffold/
 50 A: yeah, what sorts of heights have you worked in?.. () like?
 51 B: like .. fifteen foot,
 52 A: ==say fifteen/
 53 B: ==something like that/ .. ()
 54 A: ==ri:ght/ and .. you
 55 said, .. before that, you'd done .. plumbing, did you say?
 56 B: yeah/
 57 A: can you tell me a little bit about what you've done.. on that
 58 side?
 59 B: well, we did it at nelson/

At first glance, the above exchange reveals little that strikes one as problematic. The content shows that both interviewer and applicant are aware that what is at issue at this point is the gathering of information on the applicant's previous employment and training history. Although the interviewer at times has problems in eliciting the information she needs, the applicant's answers seem to be at least minimally informative and thus cooperative.

However, if we look in detail at the sequencing of turns at speaking, some significant problems become apparent. In line 10, A asks for information on what the applicant is 'actually doing on the youth opportunity scheme', a type of question that is commonly understood as a request to list and describe the job skills the applicant has acquired. The answer 'You do two weeks', however, makes no reference to skills. A then pauses as if to wait for B to elaborate before interjecting 'hm', which, given the context, counts as a mild prompt. But B simply responds by rephrasing his earlier statement. A responds with 'Yeah'. This then elicits 'We are doing plastering now.' Although plastering is mentioned here, the syntactic form of the utterance shows that what is being referred to is a general activity, not a specific skill. There follows another pause followed by the interviewer's 'Yeah'. When B then responds 'It's a work opportunity,' A's reply, 'Oh yeah, yeah', suggests impatience. In his next turn then, B refers to yet another activity, plumbing, and then responds to the next 'Yeah' by mentioning a third activity, wallpapering. In reply A once more pauses to give B another chance to produce more relevant detail. When there is no result, her 'Oh yeah' indicates increasing impatience. In response B lowers his voice and his talk is mumbled and unintelligible. When A repeats her prompt, B produces another unintelligible answer.

Finally, A attempts once more to get a more responsive reply, this time making explicit what she wants in words, 'Going back to what you'd said at first, the plastering, what do you actually do? How involved are you?' B responds by being just a little bit more specific about the techniques they learn in the course. But A continues to have difficulty in eliciting the specific data she needs. No information is spontaneously given. A has to work for every bit of relevant information. Her question in line 41 reveals what kind of replies she is looking for: statements that make specific reference to the skills that make up the various operations that are mentioned, and that refer to these components using conventional terminology employed by the relevant craftsmen, such as 'skimming', 'mixing plaster', 'working on scaffolds', 'plasterboarding', etc., and presumably listed in job specifications.

What is at issue here is that the applicant's responses violate the maxim of relevance, with 'relevance' being defined here in terms of what we know about the communicative expectations associated with this type of job interview. As with the lexical substitutions in example I, it is the cumulative effect of such violations that suggests that lack of cooperativeness. Again, one single instance might have passed as a lapse. In contrast to example I, however, the two interactants do not have conflicting goals. Moreover, the applicant is at first unaware of the fact that his answers are problematic. When, as with A's exclamation in turn 23, it becomes evident that B is not giving the expected answers, he seems distressed, as evidenced by his mumbled replies.

One problem with the B's responses is that he is not aware that the interviewer needs specific information about the actual skills that he has acquired in order to

determine what job openings he may be eligible for. But even if he did know this, since he does not seem to control the technical vocabulary in terms of which to describe what he can do, his answers are found lacking. In addition, he seems to be unable to apply his knowledge of what the purposes or goals of the encounter are to his interpretation of what is transpiring at the level of utterance sequences. As a result, he fails to recognize the interviewer's hints and prompts for what they are.

The interactants have evidently failed to achieve conversational cooperation. But the issue is not one of unwillingness to cooperate or differences in agenda at the level of activity. The problem lies in signalling at the level of speech act sequential organization. The two participants seem to be operating with different sets of contextualization conventions, so that the interviewer's prompts and her attempts at cuing the applicant with relevant terms are misunderstood.

The analysis shows that if we take the notion of speech exchange seriously and adopt an interactive perspective along the lines of that outlined at the beginning of this paper, then conversational cooperation becomes considerably more complex than would appear from a surface reading of Grice's 'Make your conversational contribution such as is required at the stage at which it occurs by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged' (1989, p.26). Cooperating, in other words, requires much more than simply agreeing to engage in a collaborative endeavor. To begin with, while participants as individuals may have shared understandings of what they seek to achieve, these understandings must be realized by engaging in one or another activity type (Levinson 1979). Activity types are associated with culturally defined, communicative goals, knowledge of which is acquired in the course of an individual's communicative experiences. Cross-examinations, political debates, and job interviews are instances of such activity types. Such context-specific, shared understanding of what the activity's goals are, along with knowledge of relevant contextualization cues, other linguistic knowledge, and other matters then enter into implicatures that underlie interpretations of specific exchanges. In example I, it is the rape case witness's skillful use of lexical substitutions to generate such implicatures that makes her strategies so successful. In example II, what is significant is the interactants' use of contextualization strategies, particularly of prosody and rhythm. These contextualization strategies constitute embodied, taken-for-granted knowledge that is automatically applied and responded to without conscious reflection. When C, the second debater, automatically responds to his opponent's use of such strategies by yielding the floor, he loses control of the debate. In example III, cooperation breaks down in spite of the fact that both parties share a common purpose, and both intend to cooperate. It is apparent that, despite his willingness to cooperate, the applicant is unable to do so because he lacks relevant background knowledge and does not have sufficient control of contextualization strategies.

The notion of cooperation that emerges in this differs significantly from what Grice intended. One might, for example, argue that Goffman's term *coparticipation* is more applicable to the phenomena I describe. But clearly the inferential processes referred to here are implicature-like. Once we take an interactive view of speech exchanges, we also leave the realm of individual intent and are forced to deal with shared, mutually understood knowledge. Cooperation, then, cannot be described in commonsense terms. It becomes a precondition for the production of

coherent discourse which crucially involves both willingness to collaborate, as a matter of personal intent, and ability to collaborate, as a function of communicative competence.

Appendix

Symbol	Significance
-----	-----
//	Final fall
/	Slight fall indicating "more is to come"
?	Final rise
,	Slight rise as in listing intonation
-	Truncation (e.g. what ti- what time is it/)

..	Pauses of less than .5 second
...	Pauses greater than .5 second (unless precisely timed)
<2>	Precise units of time (= 2 second pause)
=	To indicate overlap and latching of speakers' utterances e.g. R: so you understand =the requirements= B: =yeah, i under=stand them/ ~~~~~ R: so you understand the requirements? B: ==yeah, i understand them/ R: ==and the schedule? B: yeah/ with spacing and single "=" before and after the appropriate portions of the text indicating overlap and with turn-initial double "=" indicating latching of the utterance to the preceding one.

::	Lengthened segments (e.g. wha::t)
*	Accent; normal prominence
**	Extra prominence
{[]}	Nonlexical phenomena, both vocal and nonvocal, which overlay the lexical stretch; [ac] accelerated; [dc] decelerated; [lo] low pitch register; [hi] high pitch register; [p] quiet voice; [pp] very quiet voice; [f] loud voice; [ff] very loud voice; e.g. {[lo] text//}

()	Unintelligible speech
di(d)	A good guess at an unclear segment
(did)	A good guess at an unclear word
(xxx)	Unclear word for which a good guess can be made as to how many syllables were uttered with "x" = one syllable

References

- Atkinson, J. M. and Heritage, J. (eds.). 1986. *Structures of Social Action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Drew, P. 1990. Disputes in Court Room Cross-examination: 'Contrasting Versions' in a Rape Trial. *Rethinking Context*, ed. by A. Duranti and C. Goodwin. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Goffman, E. 1963. *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.
- Goodwin, C. 1986. Notes on Story Structure and the Nature of Participation. *Structures of Social Action*, ed. by J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goodwin, C. and Goodwin, M. H. 1991. Frameworks for Participation Within Units of Talk. *Contextualization*, ed. by P. Auer and A. Di Luzio. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. In press.
- Grice, H. P. 1975. Logic and Conversation. *Syntax and Semantics*, vol. 3: *Speech Acts*, ed. by P. Cole and J. Morgan, 41-58. New York: Academic Press.
- Grice, H. P. 1989. *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gumperz, J. J. 1982. *Discourse Strategies*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gumperz, J. J. 1989. *Contextualization and Understanding*. Berkeley Cognitive Science Report No. 59, April 1989.
- Gumperz, J. J. and Berenz, N. 1990. Transcribing Conversational Exchanges. *Transcribing and Coding Methods for Language Research*, ed. by J. A. Edwards and M. D. Lampert. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. In press.
- Heath, C. 1986. *Body Movement and Speech in Medical Interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Levinson, S. C. 1979. Activity Types and Language. *Linguistics*, vol. 17:356-399.