Turn-taking through the lens of dialogic resonance in spontaneous conversation

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This study explores how dialogic resonance affects turn-taking patterns, such as overlaps and gaps, among native English speakers in spontaneous conversation. Dialogic resonance is the "catalytic activation of affinities across utterances" (Du Bois, 2014, p. 372). These affinities may be similarities or differences. Du Bois (2014) observes that, paradoxically, divergence of opinion is most readily expressed by adopting the interlocutor's words and structures (cf. Maschler & Nir, 2014). In (1), speaker B expresses divergent alignment with the prior utterance by speaker A, creating the mapping in the diagraph in (2), where the verb *walking around* is perceived to be categorically equivalent to the adjective *healthy* (adapted from Du Bois (2014, p. 368)).

(1)
| 1 | A | yet he's still healthy |
| 2 | B | he's still walking around |

(2)
| 1 | A | yet | he | 's | still | healthy |
| 2 | B | | he | 's | still | walking around |

Thus, the research questions for this study are as follows. Are there any differences in the way categories are created in convergent and divergent alignment of stance? What can turn-taking patterns tell us about the processing constraints associated with various levels of abstraction? By investigating the emergence of dialogic resonance, and the extent to which speakers make use of prior utterances, we will be able to explain how categories are created to meet the social goals of the speakers in natural conversation, as well as how categorization affects transitions from one turn to another.

The data for the study come from the London-Lund Corpus 2 of spoken British English, and the data set under investigation contains 50,000 words of spontaneous face-to-face conversation. The analysis is carried out in the multimedia annotation tool ELAN to allow for the annotation of both function and duration. First, the data are manually searched for instances of aligned stance pairs, constituted by a stance lead and a stance follow (Du Bois, 2007). Next, the annotation of the pairs includes classifying the stance follow in terms of its intersubjective function (agreement vs. disagreement), determining the aspects of the stance lead that speakers employ for reproduction (from simple repetition of words to abstract categories), as well as measuring the time it takes for the stance follow to be produced (either as overlaps or gaps). After annotation, the data are subjected to both exploratory and inferential statistical analyses to determine correlations between the factors.

Preliminary findings of the study suggest that dialogic resonance is strongly correlated with simultaneous talk as the constructions are readily available for the speakers to reuse. The extent to which speakers overlap, or respond after a gap, however, is dependent on levels of abstraction, and social goals. It can be observed that overlapping decreases progressively as speakers move from simple repetitions of prior words, typically to express convergence, to complex abstractions of form, meaning and function, as illustrated in (1) above. These results also suggest that categorization is a dynamic process, locally co-constructed between speakers with specific socio-communicative goals, and crucial for efficiently carrying out these goals in conversation.

References

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