

SHARED KNOWLEDGE AS A PERFORMATIVE CATEGORY IN CONVERSATION¹

DEREK EDWARDS*
Loughborough University

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Abstract:

This article examines the implications of conversation analysis (CA), and the use made of CA in discursive psychology (DP), for psychological assumptions about what is going on when people talk to each other. A key idea is 'intersubjectivity': how to theorize it, alongside how to explore it empirically. Rather than conceiving of talk as the expression and communication of speakers' intentions, or as a kind of mediated communion between minds, CA promotes the analysis of talk as a domain of social action in which psychological states, intentions, understandings, communicative assumptions, beliefs, etc., are at stake in talk, just as institutional settings and roles are, as matters that are attended to, implied, made relevant, etc., as part of whatever business talk is doing. DP claims those principles as foundational to CA, and applies them to a broad range of psychological issues. Data from a domestic telephone conversation, and from a counselling session, demonstrate the value of analysing intersubjectivity as a practical, performative accomplishment.

Keywords: Conversation Analysis—Shared knowledge—Intersubjectivity—Discursive Psychology.

THREE STARTING POINTS

THIS article explores how various kinds of psychological claims are made for discourse, and especially for everyday talk, or conversation. One popular starting point is the idea that talk is a means of sending and receiving thoughts and intentions, a means by which participants update their knowledge of each other's states of knowledge. I want to argue that conversation analysis (CA) makes it difficult to sustain that cognitive, mentalistic conception of discourse. One of the main features of Levinson's (1983) promotion of CA, as a way of doing pragmatics, was his argument that it could handle, resolve, or even obviate, many of the problematics of speech act theory. That involved not only showing the merits of an *empirical* study of recorded sequences of talk, but also *conceiving* of talk as a domain of situated social action, rather than a set of conventions for the expression of intended messages.

The conception of talk as 'situated social action' identifies CA as a kind of sociology rather than, say, as a branch of linguistics or cognitive psychology. Up to now, when CA has been concerned with its place in the wider academic world, it has mostly addressed sociological themes, just as ethnomethodology has, such as the

* Latest version received in 2004. Derek Edwards is Professor of Psychology in the Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University. His interests are in the analysis of language and social interaction in everyday and institutional settings. He specializes in discursive psychology, in which relations between psychological states and the external world are studied as discourse categories and practices. Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3TU UK; e-mail: D.Edwards@lboro.ac.uk.

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production of social order, membership categories, orientations to institutional settings, and so on. But it has also touched on psychological themes, particularly in Levinson's (1983) and Schegloff's (1988, 1992) critical discussions of speech act theory, and in the use made of CA in disursive psychology (DP) (e.g., Edwards 1995a,b, 1997, 2000, in press; Edwards & Potter 2004; Wiggins & Potter, 2003).

The fact that CA has been developed largely against a background of sociological themes and issues, has left scope for variation in what its implications are for psychology. Contrasts have been drawn against psychologically-implicative domains such as speech act theory – on how the problems of so-called 'indirect speech acts' might be more elegantly handled by studying pre-sequences, for example (Levinson 1983; Schegloff 1988). But considerable scope remains for CA to be defined in relation to, or in contrast to, psychological models of discourse. It might be incorporated within a basically psychological framework, in which talk is the communication of intended messages. Or, in contrast to that, psychological states such as motives, intentions, and states of knowledge, might be given the same kind of analytical status in CA as social roles and institutional contexts (Drew & Heritage 1992; Potter 1998) – in other words, as participants' categories, talk's business, ways of talking, rather than as mental states that produce talk and result from it. Similarly in DP, talk is analysed as a domain of social action in which psychological states, intentions, understandings, communicative assumptions, attitudes, beliefs, and so on, are *at stake* in talk, just as situations and roles are, as matters that are attended to, categorized, implied, made relevant, worked up, ironized, and whatever else people do when talking.

There is a topic variously called 'shared knowledge', 'mutual knowledge', or 'intersubjectivity', that is a central topic of pragmatics, of CA, and of the psychology of language, and therefore a suitable domain for drawing relationships and contrasts. In pragmatics it is mostly handled by exploring the nature and uses of special kinds of grammatical, lexical and intonational devices including deixis, anaphora, definiteness, 'given' and 'new' information, and so on, and by various imports from the philosophy of language, such as presupposition and implicature. There is often a *psychological* assumption in that work, though it is by no means a necessary one, that when people use these various devices, such as marking a bit of content as 'given' or 'definite', that for them, in some psychological sense, as a matter of belief, say, it actually *is* given, or assumed to be intersubjectively understood (e.g., Chafe 1994; Clark 1996). In other words, it may be assumed by the analyst that those devices express people's actual, realistic, most plausible, best guesses at what each other knows and thinks. That psychological assumption is sustained largely by using, as illustrative objects, decontextualized, invented examples in which, because nobody actually said them anywhere, nothing much was at stake in the saying of them. The trouble with those illustrations is not so much that they are invented rather than real, though I do think that is asking for trouble,² but that they work against seeing discourse as indexically situated and performative.

2. One kind of trouble it invites, is that it often amounts to building one's analytic assumptions into the phenomena or, to put it the other way round, idealizes the phenomena of talk by producing them as illustrations of an analytic point. If CA has shown anything, it is surely the value of dealing with talk as an empirical domain.

In CA, intersubjectivity is not so much a special domain of study, nor something carried by a special range of devices but, rather, it is a pervasive feature of talk, of the entire machinery of turn-taking for instance, of uptakes and recipient design, where *every* word we use is indexical. Furthermore, intersubjective understandings are part of talk's business, part of what a stretch of talk is doing or accomplishing or proposing. To borrow from Austin, shared knowledge is a *performative category*. *Treating* something as given, definite, new, or newsworthy, is a way of talking and of doing things by talking, rather than the expression of speakers' best guesses at what each other actually knows. But what difference does it make, to approach it one way or the other, as performative rather than expressive? I would suggest that it makes little immediate difference to our understanding of how linguistic devices such as deixis and anaphora work, except to promote the advantages of extending the study of those things empirically, as part of conversational organization, which is effectively to broaden the scope of investigation and to start doing CA. But it makes all the difference in the world to the *psychology* of language and communication.

Let us take three different starting points, for approaching the psychological nature of shared knowledge in discourse. These can be defined as theoretical assumptions or principles, and also distinguished empirically, in terms of the kinds of objects that are analysed. The principles or assumptions are:

1. A Cartesian, CIS (Communication of Intentional States) model of discourse. This is often associated with invented sentences and conceptual scenarios in which, given a sentence or proposition, we are invited to consider the problems it raises for communicating intentions. Examples include Clark's (1985: 181) discussion of «the Bakers are on their way»; and Levinson's (1983: 55) use of «meet me here a week from now with a stick about this big» to demonstrate the workings of deixis. But examples are legion; CIS is a very pervasive way of dealing with language and communication, theoretically and empirically, across the human and social sciences.
2. Lies, rhetoric, persuasion – a pragmatic, motivational layer of speakers' intentions, superimposed on (1). This second category of assumption is necessary in order to recognize how the CIS model is typically defended as not naïve; the idea is that discourse does indeed convey and communicate intentional messages, but that there is an additional (rather than integral) level of complexity, a range of manipulative, social-motivational factors. It is routine to conceive of propaganda, political talk, and advertizing, in these terms. For example, adverts such as «Save £20 on the world's finest wine glasses», and «You and the new Renault Clio are going to be very happy together», can be analysed as intentionally conveying what is, surreptitiously, textually presupposed (that these *are* the world's finest wine glasses, etc.; see also Edwards 1997). This second approach amounts to CIS plus social motives, and characterizes how language is conceived across much of experimental social psychology and studies of social influence.
3. An ethnomethodological/CA approach to talk as *performative of social actions* – which is to say, talk basically does things, accomplishes things, and is a kind of action, rather than represents things, or conveys thoughts and intentions. The objects under analysis are sequences of recorded talk-in-interaction. Rather than conceiving of talk as basically 'honest Jo' communications, with a possibly superimposed layer of deceptive manipulation, CA approaches talk as *pervasively* action-performative, where categories such as what is intended, speakers' motives, factual assumptions, and their psychological effects, feature (if at all) as participants' business, or matters at stake *in* the talk, rather than lying behind it, driving it along, superimposed onto it, or resulting from it.

The *cis* model starts with individual consciousnesses, lost in thought, struggling with how to know the external world, and how to communicate that knowledge to other conscious minds. The empiricist philosopher John Locke put it this way:

The comfort and advantage of society not being to be had without communication of thoughts, it was necessary that man should find out some external sensible signs, whereof those invisible ideas, which his thoughts are made up of, might be made known to others (Locke, 1894: 8).

cis is a conceptual starting point, a presumption about the human condition, that gives rise to many problems of modern philosophy and psychology, such as the 'coordination problem', and the problem of 'mutual knowledge' (e.g., Smith 1982; Clark 1996). It is echoed in psychological characterizations of the role of shared knowledge in conversation, such as Chafe (1994; see also Edwards 1998), and Clark's (1985, 1996) use of the term *common ground* for «shared information» that participants «mutually know, believe, and suppose» (Clark 1985: 183). Similarly, «once we have formulated a message, we must do more than just send it off. We need to assure ourselves that it has been understood as we intended it to be» (Clark & Brennan 1991: 147). Again, «the fundamental question is how communication and effective interaction are possible between discrete individuals» (Goody 1995: 25).

The *cis* model is often set up using the metaphor of artificial intelligence (AI) — even Levinson does this (e.g., Levinson, 1983: 44). The metaphor is that communication between people is like a situation in which there are two robots or computers, and we have to get them to co-ordinate their activities by talking to each other. It is a Cartesian, or Lockean start-point, where we have the two individual robots *already possessing* various kinds of competencies, and states of knowledge, before any kind of communication starts. So any solution we might come up with, regarding how intersubjectivity is accomplished, is a solution to the problem as defined, as conceptually set up like this. It is as if we were, in a state of nature, individuals with mental processes and intentional states and meanings, prior to living in society and co-ordinating with other people. This is highly questionable. The primordial state of nature is surely not minds in isolation, with thoughts and intentions, facing the problem of getting them safely across the airwaves. A different assumption is that we are, primordially, social, and that the notion of individual mentalities communicating their thoughts is itself a social convention. Inverting the *cis* assumption, we might ask instead, starting from the primacy of sociality, or of interaction, how is the notion of 'discrete individuals' possible?

It is not that the traditional Cartesian, Lockean, *cis* model of talk has no part to play. Rather, we remove its status as a basic analyst's assumption about thought and language, and redefine it as a potential participants' resource, a cultural, conceptual, rhetorical resource, a possible but not necessary basis on which people may talk, which they may use, for example, to define and repair interactional difficulties, or to define and orient to various kinds of settings, such as giving testimony in court, being honest, or engaging in relationship counselling (see also Edwards & Potter, 2004). So the *cis* model has an empirical basis, but it is something that various philosophers have extracted from ways of talking, and adopted as an all-purpose, idealized presumption about how talk generally works. In associating CA with this kind of critical argument, CA can be linked with various other argu-

ments against mentalism and transmission models of language (see Harris, 1988), ranging from Bakhtin to Wittgenstein to Derrida. But my purpose here is to get to ways of analysing empirically how shared knowledge is handled in conversation.

One approach would be that we should start with (what we take to be) the simple case, the baseline case, of literal meanings, written examples, minds in isolation, intended messages waiting in thought, ready to be sent off and received, rather like the two robots; this is the *cis* model. Propaganda and advertisements would represent something superimposed *over and above* that, another level on top of it, using the same pragmatic devices, but in which various kinds of rhetorical manipulations use and abuse the baseline, co-operative, honest-to-goodness, straightforward expression and exchange of information. But which of these would be the best start-point model of everyday talk, Honest Jo or Machiavelli? In fact *CA* and *DE*, along with most 20th century linguistic philosophy, suggests neither, but offers a radical re-working of it all. Rather than choosing between Honest Jo and Machiavelli, we may cut across that kind of dichotomy in a thorough respecification of where to start, both theoretically and methodologically, in analysing the pragmatics of spoken language. We can argue that shared knowledge is, *basically* rather than as an optional extra, produced in talk and text, as part of managing some performative business. As such it is, at base or in essence, neither a reflection of speakers' and hearers' best mental guesses, nor something Machiavellian, but merely the way everyday discourse works, as situated social action.

In order to investigate shared knowledge empirically, as an actively managed participants' concern, we have to abandon the *cis* and re-start, from the kind of conception of it offered by Garfinkel and Sacks. For example:

all that machinery for checking things out – why an utterance is said, why now, why did he do it, why did he refer that way, etc. – as much as is possible is built into the structures for doing talk. And if talk is at all understandable, it solves those issues (Sacks: 1992, Vol. 1: 545-6).

That is to say, the problems of intersubjectivity are practical ones, managed and resolved in talk itself, and by participants, and routinely, rather than being sensibly posed as theoretical conundrums specified by the *cis* model, involving the possibilities of knowing other people's minds. Similarly, «the appropriate image of a common understanding is... an operation rather than a common intersection of overlapping sets» (Garfinkel 1967: 30). Again, Sacks specifies the principle for *CA*, contrasting it against a rather stereotypical psychology experiment:

A typical device is if somebody tells a story, you give a hearer ten minutes and ask them to retell the story... Now what's impressive here is, instead of saying 'Let's find a way of seeing whether people understand what somebody else says,' we've asked 'Is there some procedure people use which has as its product a showing that they heard and understood?' (Sacks 1992, vol. 2: 30-31).

We turn now to some empirical materials in which «a showing that they heard and understood» is practically handled, as an activity.

said, or shown, that she 'knows' Neville Cole. And in line 6 Lesley then denies she knows the boy. I shall come back to that issue of 'showing recognition' later.

(1b) (continuing from 1a)

- 6 L: =No I dɔ:₂[n't
 7 E: [Uh:::m
 8 (0.6)
 9 L: ['s lots of Coles,]
 10 E: [He's at Ansford as we]:ll,
 11 L: Hm:?
 12 E: He's at Ansford as we:ll,
 13 L: hAh:.
 14 (0.3)
 15 E: A::[nd
 16 L: [↑Oh I kno:w him:₂, nuh- nice fam↓ily.=
 17 E: =Neville Cole yeh.[()
 18 L: [↑Ye:s ↑Gordon's very friendly
 19 with ↓Ronald the older son.=
 20 E: =Right.

[Note: 'Ansford', in lines 10 and 12, is not explained here, nor earlier in their talk, so it is clearly something Ed offers as recognizable by Lesley, and probably (given its sequential location) as a basis for Lesley to identify who 'Neville Cole' is. 'Gordon' (line 19) is Lesley's son.]

Lines 7 and 8 imply some possible difficulty on Ed's part, in receiving what Lesley has said, and Lesley's response to that is to provide an *account* (line 9) that explains her problem in identifying the boy – «there's lots of Coles». That turn overlaps with Ed's offering of some *further* information that, presumably, might help Lesley locate who he is talking about. So both lines 9 and 10, spoken simultaneously, orient to the notion that Lesley may not have sufficient information to identify the boy. Lines 11 and 12 define Lesley's problem with line 10 as a mishearing, probably on the basis that she had been speaking at the same time as hearing it, but also a 'mishearing' on the grounds that Ed repeats his utterance exactly, rather than re-phrasing or repairing it in any way.

Lesley receives Ed's additional information as informative (line 13), and performs emphatic, explicit recognition in line 16. Note how she now offers *further* information about the boy (lines 16-19) independently of what Ed has provided, together with an assessment ('nice family'). This is the kind of thing I raised earlier, and with regard to Sacks's principle, that recognizing a person, place or item, when your recognition of it has been raised by another person, may involve *showing* you recognize it, for instance by some kind of emphatic insistence, or (in this case) by providing further information of your own. That is what Lesley does here. And note its sequential trajectory – Ed's confirming acceptance on line 17, of Lesley's having (at last) recognized who he is talking about. And note *how* he does that. He reiterates the name he gave to start with («Neville Cole yeh.»), with emphasis and 'final' intonation (marked by the full stop or period), as if to say that the words «Neville Cole» were sufficient all along for Lesley to identify the boy, which is a way of implying that it was not his fault for not providing more in the first place – he said enough, «Neville Cole yeh.».⁴

4. It may be that the name repetition and conclusive intonation serve only to show that the prob-

Note also how the information provided by Lesley in lines 18-19 is there not just for its intrinsic interest, as if Ed might be interested in who Gordon's friends are, but that it serves to demonstrate that Lesley *has indeed* (now, if not before) recognized who Neville Cole is, such that she is in a position to add further identifying details to what Ed himself has provided. Is there evidence for these kinds of analytic remarks in the data? Look at line 20. «Right» signals receipt by Ed of Lesley's prior turn, as showing that what Lesley has just done is shown that she has finally identified Neville Cole. He does not say, for instance, «Oh, how long have they been friends?» and pursue their common interests, or anything of that kind. Similarly in line 17, rather than following Lesley's assessment «nice family» with a second assessment, which is normatively done when assessments are offered (Pomerantz, 1984), Ed receives it with «Neville Cole yeh.» – that is, as an act of showing recognition. In fact, it is recognition of Lesley's recognition, a case of intersubjectivity in practice, and as a practice.

So what we have here is intersubjectivity being worked up interactionally, within a turn-taking framework of offerings, inquiries and uptakes, where what is jointly known is part of the business being packaged and handled, and where what is known or not, and *said* or not, or said sufficiently, is attended to as *accountable* (lines 7-9, 16, 17, 18-19). Even in mundane, ostensibly straightforward exchanges like these, shared knowledge is this kind of actively managed business, a kind of active interactional work, rather than something to be equated to the states of mind that speakers start and end with, or 'express' in their talk.

Extract 2 is the first lines of transcript of a couple's first session with a counsellor. 'Relate' is a British organization for relationship counselling.

(2) DE-JF:C2:S1:1 C=counsellor, W=wife, H=husband

- 1 C: (So) I understa:nd that you've bee:n (0.8)
 2 to::: Relate before:.=
 3 W: =Well (.) not really [we just r:e]gistered,
 4 H: [°(we)°]
 5 (0.2)
 6 W: Y'know?
 7 (.)
 8 C: And you ne[ver came
 9 W: [We regist[ered (.) with the problem]=
 10 H: [Never went (through with it)]
 11 W: =and then (.) by the ti:me (0.5) it ca:me up, the
 12 appointment came up we were sort o' sayin och it's
 13 a:ll right we won't bother. .h this time y'know?
 14 (0.6)
 15 C: °Right.°
 16 (0.6)
 17 C: So:,
 18 (0.8)
 19 W: >We [literally know< nothing. about(hh)
 20 C: [Why-

lem is considered to be finished with. But see also Schegloff (1979: 40) on how an issue can arise and be handled, between telephone caller and recipient, of «who is 'at fault', the caller for not supplying sufficient materials from which to be recognized, or the recipient for failing to recognize».

- 21 C: .hhh
 22 W: y' [kno:w,]
 23 C: [y- you] knownoth[ingaboutRelate.]((smileyvoice))
 24 W: [I know nothing.]
 25 W: No:, °but a° (.) friend of mine has co:me and I've
 26 just got bits of information from her but I know
 27 nothing about Relate or-
 28 (0.5)
 29 C: °Okay.°
 30 (.)
 31 C: .hhh In which case, (.) let's start by:
 32 explorin:g why you've come (.) to Relate
 33 >telling me why you've come to Relate<
 34 a:nd during the course of that (.) I'll try
 35 and explain a little about, (.) how we wor:k,
 36 (.) and we'll see if by the end of this session,
 37 we can work out a kind of contract.
 38 (0.5)
 39 What we're trying to achieve. What you both want.
 40 'n how long that [will ta]ke.=
 41 H: [(clears throat)]
 42 C: =What's invol:ved.
 43 (0.5)
 44 C: Okay? [(so::)]
 45 W: [Sounds] fair enough.

In lines 1-2, C offers the notion that the couple have been to Relate before – a case of establishing common ground, a place to start, an initial shared understanding. But it is also a kind of proposal, that this is the appropriate, proper, task-relevant place to start, and, of course, that he is the one to propose it. It is the start of counselling, of doing being the counsellor, and of establishing a relevant starting point for that activity. It also has some content to it. In raising the notion that they had been to Relate before, C is providing a slot (cf. Antaki 1996) for them to explain, or narrate, their counselling-relevant business – such as, what is the problem? Why are you here? Do you know what being here involves? And perhaps, if they have had some counselling already, why they broke it off, or why they are back for more. As it turns out (lines 3-13) they had not actually been counselled. But these kinds of relevancies are not merely interpretative speculation; they are the ways the talk progresses, once the initial difficulties are sorted out, and the specific business addressed when the counsellor then explicitly re-starts the session (lines 31ff).

The kind of thing I want to draw attention to, is how intersubjectivity is managed by specific words, at specific sequential junctures, and how those lexical particulars and junctures are performative. Note C's use of the word 'understand' (line 1). Rather than asking them what they know, and why they are here, he formulates what *he* already knows, believes, or has a basis for saying. It makes relevant something from them, some kind of elaboration on, or further information about, having been there before. In fact, what he gets is a problem with what he assumed to be the case, which has to be sorted out before they can continue – in what relevant sense have they been there before?

But 'I understand' (line 1) is not just a state of knowledge being expressed. First, it is a *specific lexical formulation*. Contrast it with 'know', 'assume', etc. Unlike 'assume', it implies a basis beyond mere plausibility (C may possess some kind of record of their previous visit). Unlike 'know', it is not something he is asserting to be the case, but something more tentative and inquiring than that. Unlike 'believe', he defines the matter as something for which 'understanding' is relevant, which opens it up as possibly some kind of puzzle, something that *requires* understanding, and perhaps an explanation. Second, it is said at a *specific juncture*. What he actually, mentally 'understands' might be put into words, and into a variety of different words, at any time. The classic CA issue is, what is it, and it specifically, doing here? Of course, the specificity of 'understand' makes relevant the kind of location (starting the session) and trajectory (misunderstanding and repair) that we find in the extract. Third, it is *constitutive of setting and purpose*, part of doing counselling and setting up a slot for them, at the start of the session, to provide a task-relevant, counselling-oriented problem-telling story of why they have come to Relate. The evidence for this, is that it is that trajectory of business that evidently gets balked, from line 3, and returned to in C's re-start, from line 31.

Note also how, like Ed did in Extract 1, C *pursues* this matter of their having been there before. Lines 5-7 imply a possible difficulty for C to continue (cf. the notion that his attempted opening, and invitation to them to tell their troubles, has been balked). W's «y'know?» invites acceptance of the adequacy of her correction in line 3. But C's delayed formulation «and you never came» pursues some kind of further elaboration, which W and H then provide (lines 9-13) in the form of an *account* that sets out the restricted sense in which they had 'been to Relate before'. It is an account that attends to C's possible assumption they had already started into counselling, or that they knew about what Relate counselling involves, and that such an understanding might serve as a *given* basis from which to start. So I am arguing that C's expression of what he 'understands' is performative, rather than simply telling what he knows.

Indeed, sometimes that performative feature overrides any kind of literal reading of the content of what is said. We can see that in further details of Extract 2. W's elaboration still proves awkward for C (lines 14-18, and 20), such that W provides an explicit and extreme formulation – that they «literally know nothing» about Relate (lines 19, 24, 27). This use of 'extreme case formulations' (Pomerantz 1986) signals the performative, rhetorical nature of what W is claiming. Its upshot is for C to tell them about Relate (lines 31-45). But note its ironic status too. The notion that W and H «literally know nothing» about an organization they have come to for help (and which involves them paying for that help), lacks *prima facie* plausibility if taken literally – why then would they have come? Note C's ironic receipt in line 23, his smiling reiteration of the point, and W's subsequent modification of it in lines 25-27.

The irony works from both the extremity of W's formulation (Edwards 2000), including the word 'literally', and also that it leaves their current presence at Relate unaccounted for (if they literally knew nothing, it would be difficult for them to have any basis for being there). Note how W attends to both those considerations, both the extremity (she corrects/modifies 'nothing' in lines 25-27), and also the basis for being there despite knowing nothing – a friend's experience and recommendation, rather than anything she directly knows herself. The

phrase «bits of information» (line 26) is marvellous, in its minimizing, and vagueness, about what W has actually been told. W thus orients to C's ironic uptake, while also re-asserting «I know nothing about Relate» (lines 26-27).

The way that C takes all that (in lines 28ff), is to treat it as a proposal for a basis on which to proceed («okay... in which case...let's start by...», lines 29ff). As a proposed basis on which to proceed, the matter of what W and H *actually already mentally* know about Relate is not the point; they are to proceed, and C proceeds, and W and H (lines 44-45) accept that proceeding, on the basis that, to start with, they «literally know nothing».

The thing to emphasize here, is the functional, performative nature of «We literally know nothing». Although it is apparently contradicted by lines 25-26, it is then reiterated in the same utterance (26-27). So hearing about Relate from her friend is not something to set *logically* against W's 'knowing nothing'. We would not want to conclude that W's talk is illogical, contradictory, incoherent, because that would be to miss what it accomplishes, the basis for saying it. Rather, we have to view it as performative. W's emphatically knowing nothing works as a proposed basis for proceeding, for C to assume nothing, and for C to explain what *he* is doing there, what kind of thing he will provide, as a Relate counsellor. And C then takes that (lines 29-31) as a new basis for proceeding, and for *formulating* a basis for proceeding. And that includes all these features (lines 31-44) – the fact that they are 'starting by' saying these things, and that what they are going to do, as a way of starting, is to explain to each other what Relate involves, what they are doing there, and expecting to do.

This kind of performative analysis works against taking C's and W's formulations, of what they know and do not know, simply as expressions of knowledge states. They are, whatever else they are, *specific formulations* of knowledge states, done at *specific junctures*, and those features provide for how they work performatively. The handling of shared knowledge is therefore an integral part of talk's interactional, situation-oriented, business, in this case part of an orientation to doing counselling and being counselled, part of how the session gets started and set up as an interaction of a particular kind.

CONCLUSION

The argument in this article is directed against efforts to incorporate the findings and methods of CA into a cognitive-psychological framework (for a collection of positions on CA and cognition, see also te Molder & Potter 2004). What is linguistically 'given' need not be psychologically or inter-mentally given (Edwards, 1997). Nor need 'new' be new: not actually, nor intentionally, nor inter-mentally. It is a public way of talking, not a window onto the mind. It can be investigated empirically as a participants' actively managed, performative category, by studying samples of talk, using the principles of CA.

As far as intentionality is concerned, we never get beyond ways of talking. The kind of 'intentionality work' that participants do, in next turn uptakes, in repair, in pre-sequences, in formulations of what each other has been trying to say, and so on, are actions in their own right. They are not ways of retrieving something behind the talk, such as what was 'actually' intended, but rather, they project, define, and re-work the notion of what was intended, in the performance of

interactional business. And the best way of seeing how that is done, is to study sequences of recorded conversation.

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