

Language As and In Technology: Facilitating Topic Organization in a Videotex Focus Group Meeting

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Though typically overlooked and thus taken-for-granted as a sophisticated process and product of human innovation, talk (and thus talk-in-interaction) is itself an omnipresent, finely organized, collaborative display of cultural activity.' In reference to the analytic exercise of studying conversations directly, Sacks observed over two decades ago that an overriding goal

... is to see how finely the details of actual, naturally occurring conversation can be subjected to analysis that will yield the *technogv of conversation*.... We are trying to *find* this technology out of actual fragments of conversation, so that we can impose as a constraint that the technology actually deals with singular events and singular sequences of events--a reasonably strong constraint on sonic set of rules.' (emphasis added)

Stated somewhat differently, Sacks notes how

Our aim is to transform, in an almost literal, physical sense, our view of "what happened," from a particular interaction done by particular people, to a matter of *interactions as products of a machine*. We are trying to find the machinery. In order to do so we have to get access to its products. At this point, it is conversation that provides us such access.' (emphasis added)

Upon close inspection, conversation reveals its own technology for getting interactional tasks done noticeably. In the first instance, by and for participants themselves as they make available to one another their occasioned orientations. Of the immense variety of social occasions in which conversation is vehicular for achieving understandings, specific gatherings are designed for the explicit purpose of addressing the impact of technological advancements on everyday life. One type of occasion, a Videotex focus group meeting, has been

selected for analysis in this chapter for its potential to reveal insights about basic working relationships among communication, culture, and technology. First, Videotex offers an innovative approach to interactive cablevision, one in which current impacts of interfacing televisions and computers in home and work environments are directly assessed. Second, the data to be examined-audiorecordings and transcriptions of the meeting-provide the possibility of understanding how language is relied upon to raise, and resolve, routine problems of an emergent cultural and technological apparatus. In so doing, however, it will be shown how the achieved and thus interactive character of "talking technology" and, conversely, "technological talk" are themselves problematic *as accomplishments*. In this sense, conversation and technology are reflexively coupled: Conversational activities are technological achievements in and through co-participants' methods for getting tasks done, just as descriptions of the impact of specific technologies on everyday life are possible *only* through the language employed to produce such descriptions.

Sacks observed that "whatever humans do can be examined to discover some way they do it, and that way will be stably describable. That is, we may alternatively take it that there is order at all points." How then, we might ask, does the work of language *as a technology*, *in a technological occasion*, get accomplished? What methods/devices/techniques/practices/strategies are relied upon to get activities-such as "facilitating" a hi-tech focus group meeting *done* for all practical purposes?

A partial answer to these encompassing questions can be provided by examining the interactional organization of a Videotex focus group meeting. Attention will first be given to a brief overview of Videotex services and discussion of the interactional data to be analyzed in this chapter. Constituent features of "speech exchange systems" will then be described as a way of beginning to understand focus group meetings as occasions displaying characteristics of both casual and institutional discourse. By next examining how the "facilitator" sets up and orients to the business-at-hand, it becomes possible to analyze three problematic instances of "topic organization" as an omnipresent and ongoing achievement-similar to, yet different from, the organization of topics across types of social occasions. Finally, conclusions are drawn about conversation as an intricate technological resource, one in which the workings of communication and culture can be found to be both self-evident and essential in the achievement of ordinary tasks.

BACKGROUND AND DATA

Within the past several years, pioneering investigations have occurred in the area of *interactive cable television*. One such system has been designed and implemented by Cox Cable Communications, Inc. of Atlanta, Georgia and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's Office of Science and Technology (the latter having a congressionally assigned responsibility to examine the implementation of new telecommunications technologies, as well as such technologies' potential for educational and public television licenses). Through Cox's INDAX (Interactive Data Exchange) format, the following description has been offered:

Considered one of the nation's most advanced interactive cable systems, INDAX uses state-of-the-art cable technology to make possible interactive services such as banking, shopping, information retrieval and education. In an interactive system such as its INDAX, the cable television viewer can use a keypad (similar in appearance to a remote control unit) to respond to televised material or to request that specific textual information appear on the television screen. A powerful computer located in the cable operator's system responds to viewer requests." (see also Appendix B)

One technique for assessing users' reactions to Videotex services is the *focus group*. These meetings are typically designed to solicit information regarding users' actual "first hand experiences" with Videotex-strengths, weaknesses, frustrations, and suggestions for improvement. Information of this sort can then be cycled back into the technical and planning dimensions of the industry to better refine, market, and advertise this "technological innovation."

The data reported in this chapter were drawn from an occasion in which eight users participated in a two and one-half hour meeting, facilitated by a researcher involved with collecting and analyzing information from the INDAX project. This meeting was audio-recorded with full knowledge and consent by group members, and transcripts were subsequently produced (see Appendix A for Transcription Notation Symbols). Selected segments of these transcripts are provided, for readers' critical inspection, as evidence of the following claims depicting how the facilitator and users co-produce this interactional occasion:

I 1 Facilitator's initial orientation to the meeting are specifically designed to create

a sense of order for subsequent talk, and users hearing, in the course of establishing a format for telling and talking about Videotex experiences:

2) what might be taken to be small and apparently insignificant "token" behaviors by the facilitator, such as "oka ." "oh great." and "unihmni," are found to be sequentially relevant in the organization of "speakership." "recipien cv," and "topic" as participants gain access to, and yield, the floor:

3) The problematic nature of topic organization is evidenced in circumstances wherein facilitator a) orients to users as having volunteered information prematurely. h) works to mark and thus receipt news while c) also preparing to move front passive reciprocity in the preparation, initiation, and carrying out of topic shift:

4) 1 lie activities noted above are essential in the process of "doing being a facilitator" by moving discussion along and keeping interaction "on track." The manner in which these activities get accomplished [reveals](#). in their sequential organization, a speech exchange system involving both casual and institutional features inherent in the reporting and receipting of news...

Focus GROUP MEETINGS AS SPEECH EXCHANGE SYSTEMS

One of the basic and useful distinctions for examining variations in social conduct involves contrasting talk in "natural/ordinary/casual conversation" with "institutional interaction." Best viewed on a continuum, casual talk displays a wider range of possible and expectedly "appropriate" activities, including recurring displays of affiliation and disaffiliation with speakers' claims. In contrast, institutional talk is constrained by such features as the narrowing of activities—a uniformity of interactional shapes and devices, for example—as specific tasks and roles get noticeably worked-out." Examples of occasions wherein participants orient to institutional constraints include (but are not limited to) classrooms, courtrooms, medical, and news interviews." In each of these settings, turns-at-talk are typically *pre-allocated* in the ways that who speaks, in what order, for how long, and on what topic(s) are more or less prespecified or constrained. Such candidates might include the explicit purpose for the gathering, orientations to "appropriate" procedure, and the readily apparent use of questions and answers to organize interaction."

These conventionalized forms of talk reflect marked differences with interactions occurring in non-institutionalized settings. Heritage provides a useful summary of several contrasts which are relevant to the subsequent analysis of speech exchange within a focus group meeting." One noticeable dimension of institutional talk is the *reporter-repartee* relationship: The more "formal" the setting, the more pre-established roles of reporter-reportee are expected and interactionally (often rigidly) maintained. Witnesses do not interrogate attorneys, for example, nor do patients diagnose physicians' illnesses."— Rather, it is assumed that witnesses and patients have some sort of "news" to deliver, as do those being interviewed in mediated and broadcast news events.

A second and related feature of institutional talk involves how those to whom the news is reported *receipt* such news. Heritage and Clayman independently observe how news interviewers display neutrality in receipting [news](#)." There is a noticeable lack of "alignment talk" between reporting parties and those relying upon questions to elicit news such as news interviewers and/or attorneys. In these ways, talk is designed for an *overhearing audience* including broadcast audiences, judges, and juries. Those eliciting the news typically *withhold* displays of affiliation and disaffiliation. Specifically, as questions are asked and answers provided, third-turn receipt objects such as assessments ("good"/ "how terrible") and various news markers ("oh really"/ "I see") are noticeably absent. Also missing are such objects as facilitators and continuers ("urn hmm" and "uh huh"), typically provided by recipients in casual talk as displays of passive reciprocity, acknowledgement, and/or moving toward gaining the floor and, in turn, assuming, "speakership."

The above descriptions of casual and institutional talk provide only a partial characterization of the constituent features of speech exchange systems.

However, this brief summary does offer a lens for assessing the ways in which focus group meetings might be located on the casual-institutional continuum. In the following analysis, an ongoing concern rests with how the talk is adapted to the task-at-hand: that is, how the interactional order is designed to achieve the business of arriving at some sense of understanding and shared orientation to the situation. Concerns rest with the ways in which various turn-taking practices structure participants' opportunities for involvement. We now turn to an analysis of transcribed instances from the focus group meeting, as visual displays of the methods employed by facilitator and users in the course of reporting (and receipting) Videotex experiences. Following this analysis the focus group, as one type of speech exchange system, will be reconsidered in light of the features described.

ORIENTING TO TM: BUSINESS-AT-HAND

Perhaps we should begin with the obvious: Meetings often require some "setting up" prior to "getting on with" the business-at-hand. Within the first few minutes of this two and one-half hour meeting, F (the pre-designated "facilitator" of the group) describes to participants what they are here "to do": namely, "talk about T Indax" and "tell us about it.":

(1) VT: Gnt:1:1.2

F: tint: what were [here](#) to do is is (.)

>\hat we're here today to do:?'< is to talk about T Indax (1.01 and what lilt what we're do:ine'? here. what this is called this

is called a focus group.

(2) F: well hh that (.) format >is kinda what we Hanta do today:' is we s+anna
just talk to you< Iih about Inda.x hit tilt you folks are the experts.

(3) F: so: uni ancwaic\ n hat 1.1 what welt gonna to today is just kuuluv as:k
==> you to Till us about it.

It is clear that F is attempting to clarify the purpose for meeting, and several important observations might be drawn from (1) - (3). First, while F's talk is produced as a single speaker's narrative, it is nevertheless designed for users' hearing as a means for creating a sense of social order for subsequent talk. In (2), for example, users are referred to as "experts.", the clear presumption being that experts are uniquely qualified to report significant news regarding their practical experiences with Indax. Second, the arrows (==>) in each segment draw attention to F's own reference to "talk" as the vehicle for "telling" such experiences. Of course, (1) and (2) are themselves only glossed versions of subsequent, actual activities comprising the group's discussions: they are not designed to extend or elaborate on circumstances that have not yet transpired, including the group discussion itself. And in (3), F appears both to bring an extended turn-at-talk to a close ("so: urn a yway.") and to project the relevance of "asking" and "telling" as achievements remaining to be worked-out-in the course of what such a meeting will be shown to be "about." 15

For these and related reasons, (1) - (3) contribute to what Garfinkel and Sacks refer to as the "accountably sensible character" of an occasion." In and through the ways that F is engaging in activities expected and reserved for the "facilitator" of such a gathering, such as initiating and keeping the meeting going, the encumbrances of such a "role" are exhibited and thereby made available for the group's (and researcher's) inspection. It is the group's recognition of F's actions as role and task-specific that allows Indax users to anticipate what a facilitator, as co-participant, might be aiming or arriving at in setting up a meeting of this sort. And with such recognition comes the possibility of co-producing informative and understandable reportings about various hitech experiences. This does not guarantee that reportings will, in all cases, turn out to be relevant and otherwise unproblematic. On the contrary, the subsequent analysis suggests that numerous ongoing troubles emerge involving such phenomena as turn-initiation and completion, topic shift and organization, and in each case these troubles require and receive solutions as the meeting unfolds.

It is the achieved character of such troubles, and their emergent resolution, that can begin to be gleaned from the following extended segment:

(4) VTFGM:1:5.6

(By F's request, each of the ten participants were asked to introduce themselves. The segment below begins immediately following the last introduction.)

13: >I'm eettice, snme< so me

n==>F: I I
Ok av. B: studies for the (0.2) SD. r Pardon?=
B: =communications.=
F: =>You acpill ticipatedinsome?< =

Ya Flu getting some nosy?

h==>F: =Oh grca:it " h and: > what
ou're doing right noss ? is: is Sort 0 f on e.

B: I I
h m w l
I==>F: were hit we're laming to understand Ore Indax system. (0.5) trying to s:ee shat potential.it has: for all kinds of uses
an: (0.2) and >tryng to get some feedback Iruinyou?< hhh you you folks really do: know >m:ore about this svstem:< than (0.7) >than T almost anybody else in the country.
there aren't a thousand people
in the country.< .hh that kno:(ss) as much about this? ((.a) 1 potential system as L)
ou folks do. .hhh >so T that's why we wanna talk to you.< .hh an(d) we wanna find out everything that "e can about.it and then: use your opinion hh to help guide the future
develo ment of the system.
(1.0)
So \ou*rc It iou'rc sit tine

BJ: I house I
F: here representing a million people Sor whatever::5 -llt h

II

BJ: I hunt:se
c==> F: I I
>uh huh< _
BJ: =foreign students: (.) fr um=
c==> F: I I
Ijh huh?
BP = >all over the wor:ld.< _
c-->F: =Uh huh=
BJ: =and um: >1 use it quite a hit< for: their studies (experience in) studying English I.) it's the ", or:ds
h==> F: hhh : O: h! interesting=
BJ: =the meanings (1.0) uh: they use it
>quite a hit.<
2==> F: What else I (to the rest of you use it for
(1.0)

F: use it for studying English what (.) you

know (0.2) or (to you no::t use it >cuz

if you don't use it that's just as important
to find out.<=

B: No I use it myself I use it u:it I like the games
(LO)

Jo: (tin hmm?

II I I

B:

B: u::mm (0.2) course my- >1 had an eighteen year old girl that goes to school she (catches) the soap operas (as she sees fit) so we check
the< hhh soap operas that she ((.6) ju st missed?

I I

b==>F: Ah hah? (.) you like the soap opera (dia vies)

I I

B: u:mm=

c==>F: =uh huh?

B: TV guide um:(.) what's goin on in town for the foreign students? >(are ready to) go sce< _ c==>F: =Urn hnun?=
B: =u:mm (.) good restaurants? (.) uh: what's what's happening on weekends? (.) that they can go see (1.0) a:h >just (a)bout ev'rything<=
c==>F: =Uh T hit h

B: th at's available=

a/3=>F: =(o)Tkay hh and I know you're a real f:an of hulax cue you ss ha- schat do_{yi} use it for

I

I

Jo: Oh ya I think this-

that's J- the thing of the future ((continues))

As noted, this segment occurs immediately after group members introduce themselves, an activity that followed F's "setting up" the meeting in (1) - (3). In general terms, (4) above officially marks the initiation of "getting on with" the business of actually talking with users about their experiences. An understanding of how this task gets carried out might begin by reference to the types of activities (arrows 1-3, a-c) in which F, as facilitator, produces *in sequence* as the talk progresses.

Before turning directly to these activities, however, it is important to stress the relevance of "sequence" as consequential to the task-at-hand. Any sense to be made of segment (4) is most obvious when contrasted with examples (1) - (3), for now F's actions noticeably constrain (and are constrained by) the turns-attalk engaged by other parties. These engagements have much to do with how and when turns begin and are completed through such features as turn transitions, placements, and constructional-units; the ways in which speakers self-initiate and/or are invited to talk through turn distribution and allocation; minimal to extended turn size; and the projectability of each and every utterance-insequence, involving the work an utterance might be doing and its possible trajectory. These recurrent features of turn-taking are collaboratively organized en route to getting the meeting accomplished, displaying in their organization participants' orientations to the moment-by-moment contingencies of interaction.

WORKING THROUGH TOPICS: THREE PROBLEMATIC INSTANCES

Within (4) above, (1==>, 2==>, and 3==>) draw attention to certain behaviors enacted by F that are recognizably facilitator-like. The elaborated turn marked by (1==>), for example, closely resembles F's actions in (1) - (3): Yet another attempt is made to "set up" the discussion by describing to users the value of their knowledge, the desire to "get some feedback from Xou?" for developing the system, all of which is glossed by "we wanna talk to you" as with (1). Exactly why this turn emerges at just this juncture in the interaction rather than immediately preceding or following group introductions, and how the emergence of this turn marks a trouble-source in this sequential environment, will be addressed shortly.

The turns highlighted by (2==>) and (3==>) indicate what would seem to be basic devices for initiating a topic and keeping a discussion going, namely, asking users questions to elicit information. As with F's actions in (1==>), however, these questions might also be best understood within (not isolated from) the sequential environments in which they are occasioned: that is, by considering what interactional work preceded and thereby paved-the-way for these questions and topic shifts.

However, in accounting for the sequential relevance of F's actions in (1==>), (2==>), and (3==>) it is important not to overlook the comparatively small and (upon first notice) apparently insignificant behaviors marked by (a==>, "okay h==>. "oh great", "oh interesting", "all hah": and c==>, "um hmm", "uh huh"). These tokens are not randomly or mistakenly placed in the course of interaction, but rather accomplish specific and ongoing work by participants. By examining more closely the three portions of (4) involving (1,==>, 2==>. and 3==>), and the problems implicated in these [productions](#), it is possible to gain an appreciation of the rather intricate technology inherent in a facilitator's attempt to get such a meeting underway.

Displaying "Not Yet Ready" for Information

Let's once again begin at the beginning:

(5) VTFGM:1:5

B: >1'm getting. some< so me

I I

a==>F: Ok ay. B: studies for the (0.2) SD. F: Pardon?=

B: =communications.=

F: = >You've participated in some?< _ B: Ya I'm getting some now?=

h==>F: =Oh great! h and: > what you're doing
right now? is: is sort
otone.

I I

B: (hmm)

1==>F: we're hh ^{were} taming to undcrsta:nd the

Index y tem. (0.5) Trying to S: CC what potential? it has: for all kinds of uses

an: (0.2) and >trying to gel sonic feedback from you?< .hhh YOU yatt folks really do: know >m:ore about this system:.< than

(0.7) >than T almost anybody else in the country, there aren't a thousand people in the country.< hh that kno:(w) as much about this? (0.4) .1. potential system as (.)
 you folks do. .huh>so T that's why we wanna talk to you.< -jll an(d) we wanna find out everything that we can about it and then: use your opinion .hh to help guide the future devio ment of the system.

In (a==>), F places an "Okay" in overlap with B's self-selected (and quickly delivered. i.e. > ... <) attempt to volunteer information and initiate discussion. But why does an "Okay" get placed at just this point? Upon initial inspection it may appear that F's "Okay" acknowledges and/oraffiliates with B's objective-offering a telling about current involvements with "some studies." Yet an examination of what happens next in the sequence, in unison with what occurred prior to B's turn (introductions) suggests an alternative and even problematic explanation.

Here it is seen that F's "Okay" might be heard as a dual-orientation to this interactional moment: 1) It marks a closing of prior activity (introductions); 2) By so doing, it also displays a transition-readiness to move onto the next activity by once again assuming speakership and hence the role of facilitator. " F does eventually gain the floor as evidenced in (I==>), but this does not occur without interactional work designed for this very possibility. In particular, F seeks clarification ("Pardon?"), perhaps because B's self-initiated turn was unexpected or otherwise not oriented to by F at the precise moment at which J was in transition to next topic/activity. In not receiving clarification, however, F then issues an "other-initiated repair" in next turn ("You've participated in some?") by partially repeating a portion of B's earlier utterance.' This repair initiation evidences a trouble-source in prior turn(s), and is offered as a means of remedying problems with understanding what B is "up to"-that in fact B is in the process of volunteering information, and appears to be pursuing an opportunity to discuss these experiences.

By turning to (h==>), it is clear that F has now attained the understanding sought through repair. The task now remains of what to do "next" with such information-to continue or terminate B's volunteered topic? As a solution to this problem, F's "Oh ~. el:t !" both marks the news of and positively assesses B's volunteered information." Yet this assessment token is decidedly not projecting the status Of a recipient who is passing the opportunity to take a fuller turn, given that another participants' turn is already in progress. **In** fact, "oh" + "assessments" are often placed immediately prior to a topic-shift and function to

enforce recipient's coming to a stop (and are thus closure-relevant).!" h) this specific instance. F sinultaneously moves alrav from B's continual volunteering of information and *toward* the elaborated turn in (I==>)-a transition-point at which the closing of prior topic (B's telling) promotes an opening for extending alternative topic(s). In response. B appears to recognize with "harm." and orients accordingly by not continuing to offer additional information.

One way to summarize the interactional work in this segment is to suggest that F. as facilitator, displayed a "not yet ready" orientation to B's volunteered information. By opting to shift the focus of discussion to what eventually became (1==>), rather than pursue B's experiences in more detail. F effectively deleted the trajectory of B's talk by pursuing an alternative course of action. The "Okay" and "Oh r !" tokens accomplished important work in this segment. and in each case indicate just what F was attending-to at specific points in the talk: Closing down prior and moving to alternative topics.

It should not be surprising that B and F display contrasting agendas in this brief exchange. In (1)-(3) F strongly encouraged participants' involvement, and uncertainty about procedure is expected in light of the fact that the actual discussion-the first order of business-had yet to get underway. Nor is it surprising that these interactants rather quickly resolved the problematic nature of the talk, for such circumstances are routine in conversational organization. Of course, neither of these observations are intended as a way of discounting B and F's collaborative efforts. On the contrary. they function to complement how B and F were, in the first instance, orienting to the contingencies of these circumstances *at a moment's notice*. The technological details of this work are evident within participants' organization of topic(s).

On the Fringe of Reciprocity and Speakership

That B was not the only participant to volunteer information upon first opportunity, and perhaps "pre-emptively." is apparent in the following and second segment extracted from (4):

(6) VT:FGM:1:5.6 1==>F: .

you folks do..hhh >so T that's s+hy we wanna talk to you.< .1111 an(d) we wanna find out everything that we can about it and then: u: se
 visit opinion .hh // help guide the future deye 0 meat of the system.
 (1.0)

I: So you're .It s m'te sit ling

I
 13.1: I house¹

F: here representing a million people \$or whatever::1i hh h

//
 BJ: 1 hot] se
 / 1

C==>F: >uh huh<

B.1: =foreign students: (.) tr a111

F: Uh huh? BJ: = >all over the nor:Id.< c==> F: =t]h huh=
 BJ: =and urn: >1 use it quite a hit< for: the:irstudies (experience in) studying English (.) it's the w or:ds

b==>F: hhh T O::h! interesting=
 BJ: =the meanings (I .0) oil: they use it
 >quite a hit.<

2==>F: What else / do the rest of you use it for

(1.0)
 F: use it for studying English what (.) you know (0.2) or (to you nova use it > cuz
 if you (to) use it that's just as important to find out.< =
 B: No I use it ntvse:lf I use it u:h I like the games
 (1.0)

In overlap with F's formulation ("So you're .11 you're sitting here representing a million people \$or whatever:\$. hhh") of (1==>), BJ twice prefaces a telling of her experiences. As BJ Continues, F immediately and repeatedly (c==>) receipts the telling with three "uh huh's". Once again, the question can be raised: Why are they placed at just this point? One probable answer is that F was simply being attentive to BJ's telling, indicating interest and acknowledgment. As was mentioned earlier, a key dimension to facilitation is receiving reporters' news. However, it may not be sufficient to limit the analysis to F's "being attentive." As Schegloff suggests:

When 'till huh's etc. are considered in the aggregate, then, the characterization of the class as signaling attention, interest, or understanding appears equivocal. Although it can be argued that attention and understanding are generically relevant in conversation, no ready account is at hand (when the aggregate of cases is considered) for why these issues need specially to be addressed, why they are addressed with these tokens, why addressed at these particular points (if, indeed, it is at particular points, on this account, that these tokens are placed)."

Given the equivocality of "being attentive," then, what alternative characterization (if any) exists for these "uh huh's"?

By initially observing what follows the three "uh huh's," it is apparent that F's (b==>, "O:h! interestin(T=") occurs immediately prior to a topic shift in (2==>). First, F's inbreath (.hhh) in (b==>) suggests that F was headed for speakership even prior to the oh + assessment, in that inbreaths so placed typically occur prior to turn onset. Second, F's (2==>) is an "unmarked overlap retrieval" that effectively deletes BJ's intermediary turn and in so doing, displays uncontested rights to the floor.'- Strikingly similar to F's "Oh greaa!" in (5), F's token in (6) also marks the news delivered by BJ, positively assesses the information offered, and works toward a transition to the next topic as F relies upon a question to select the next speaker(s).

With these activities in mind, F's "uh huh's" might now be described as (i) splay rig a *1ii'yia'edncs, s to .vhiff topi* '. As Jefferson notes, "uhhuh's" routinely evidence a step toward speaker-readiness and thus a "recipient's orientation to some ongoing talk as sufficient and terminable."

Throughout (6), therefore, we have an instance where tokens such as 'nh huh' and "oh interesting" simultaneously resolve the problem of attending to the current speaker's talk, while also paving-the-way formoving onto the next topic. All these ways, through the course of BJ's brief telling, F's facilitation amounted to the work of preserving status of recipient, co-participant's role as teller, and yet remaining positioned to quickly assume the next speakership. Though seemingly precarious, working on the "fringe" of reciprocity and speakership is par for the course as interactants achieve topic.

Marking Topic Shifts

The final segment from (4) begins with (2==>) where, as noted previously, F shifts topic by asking a question. Of course, merely asking a question does not guarantee uptake and, following a (1.0) pause, F qualifies a query as a means of eliciting a not-yet-forthcoming response:

(7) VT: FG,1:t0

2==>F: What else j-do the rent of you use it tier (t.1)
 F: use it for studying English what (.) you know (0.2) or do you no:a use it >cu,
 it you don't use it that's just as important to find out.< =
 B: No I use it myself I use it u:11 I like the games
 (1.0)
 x: t'm iiiiiiii .
 /// l l
 B: u:mm (0.2) course MV- >1 had an eighteen year old girl that goes to school< she misses the soap operas >she doesn't get'ta see it so si e
 check the< hhh soap operas (hill she (n.h) n st missed^o
 / /
 h==>F: Ah huh!' I-I you like the soap opera (dia ries)
 / /
 13: u:n1n1=
 c==>F: =uh huh?
 B: TV guide um:(.) what's gain on m toycn for the foreign students? mare reach to) go see< _c= ^> F: =Um hunt =
 B: =u: nun (.) good restaurants? (.) uh: hat's what's happening on s eekends? (.)that they can go see (1.0) a:h >just (a)bout cv'rvthmg <=
 c-- =11h T hit it
 // B: th at's available=
 aialable = (o)TUN' Jill and I knob' voule a real i:iiii of
 Indax cur you wha- what do a use it for
 / /
 Jo: Oh ya I think this- th at's
 / the thing of the future (0.8) that thing right
 there (.) vkith some little impro:vments ((continues))

In the next turn, B initiates a response by telling of an eighteen-year-old girl who misses the soap operas. This is followed by Jo's passive reciprocity and likely agreement (Unn hmm?), and B continues the telling. Though F's overlapping "Ah hah?" in (b==>) appears to be displaying a special understanding or realization, it is unclear whether or not it moves B to closure like "oh great" and "oh interesting" above, just as F's next "uh huh?" following B's "u:mn!" may be spurious." In any case, F's next three behaviors in sequence-"Um hmm?," "Uh Thuh," and "(o)Tkay"-strongly resemble Jefferson's observations that the movement from "mm hmm ==> uh huh ==> yeah" frequently indicate transitions from "passive reciprocity" through speaker readiness" to "speakership-associated" activities such as "yeah." In (a/3==>) above, F's "(o)Tkay" functions similarly to "yeah," in that it prefaces what Button and Casey refer to as a "topic initial elicitor"-in this utterance, "wha- what do you use it for" which frequently occur following closing components in conversations." Prior to (a/3==>), however, notice that F's move to speaker-readiness ("Uh Thuh") is placed immediately following B's construction of a three part list ("good restaurants?", "weekends?" and a generalized list completer "just (a)bout ev' ything" that is syntactically re-completed with "that's available"). In the recogni zeable course of their construction, such listings project completion of an utterance and thus provide "a point at which another can or should start talking."

With this projectability in mind, it now becomes possible to observe how F's "(o)Tkay" in (a/3=>) is placed precisely at the end of B's three part list, with no gap tar overlap (thus latched, =), as a pre-closing device for eliciting continents front next speaker.

Summary: Analyzing Facilitated Interaction

Having worked through several key features of (4). it now becomes possible to describe how the interaction comprising this occasion--as a speech exchange system-might be located on the casual-institutional continuum. This focus group meeting might best be situated *nrichrcr* on such a continuum. It displays a variety of features typically associated with each generalized type of speech exchange.

First, it is clear that this discourse is, to some extent, both formalized and task-specific. For example, the meeting would not have occurred if it had not been scheduled, facilitator and users' roles were specified in advance, a sequence of "introductions" occurred, the facilitator set up the meeting for an overheard "audience" and proceeded to structure the unfolding discussions, and the reporter/reportee relationship was maintained (at least in part) through questions and answers.

Second, and in contrast to more formalized institutional talk including courtrooms and news interviews, the facilitator/reportee did not remain "neutral" by refraining from displays of affiliation. F's frequent continuers and assessments ("uh huh/ "oh great") displayed considerable alignment with the users' nest's reports. even though such work was shown to be more than simply affiliative in the ways topics came to be organized. However, just as (4) does represent a sequence involving the first opportunities to offer and receipt news/ tellings, so might F's frequent affiliation and alignment be heard as somewhat 'overdone.' Two different, though perhaps interdependent, accounts might be offered in this regard. On one hand, in getting such a meeting underway and attempting to set a "proper tone" for reporting and receipting news, it is not difficult to understand F's efforts as moves toward de-formalizing the occasion. Another possible explanation involves framing F's alignment as attempts to minimize possible and emergent troubles with terminating and shifting topics. Put simply: Just because a facilitator is "responsible for shifting topics and thus moving the discussion along, it does not necessarily imply that users' tellings and experiences be treated as unworthy or in any way inappropriate. Whatever the reasons motivating F's actions, it is also clear that details such as how users self-selected turns-at-talk (at times, preemptively) to volunteer information also differs from more formalized settings.

It remains to be seen how the meeting continues to unfold. Questions may now be raised about what additional methods F employs to elicit news reports. not to mention the kinds of troubles emerging when, for example, users seek clarification of F's topic elicitors and/or are treated by F as though the discussion has gotten "off track" (two instances of which are briefly examined below). These are more encompassing activities comprising such a focus group meeting, extending quite beyond the present analysis. However, it is important to note that these and related activity-types are intricately woven within "topic organization," and in each and every instance require working out by and for the participants themselves.

As noted earlier, F's first and last actions in extended segment (4) involved "okay" as a pre-closing device for topic shift. Numerous additional instances of "okay" have been located throughout these and other transcripts. pointing the

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direction toward gaining an understanding of "okay" as topic shift-implicative. These data-collection strategies are necessary for locating and substantiating the patterned nature of F's facilitations, as well as how interaction as a "technology" or "ni achinery" is ordered across occasions. Inherent in the claim that language is "technological" resides the responsibility of searching for recurring instances of a given "phenomenon," locating the occasions of its use, and determining the shape of its organization." Only by so doing can claims for social structure be put forth. While the road toward "universality" is indeed arduous, the goal of advancing each step along the way is to promote a cumulative base for subsequent and more encompassing inquiries.

While it lies beyond the scope of this chapter to offer a comprehensive analysis of "okay" in conversational organization, just as several constituent features of "topic organization" have only been sketched in the analysis of segment (4), it is important to rely upon the analysis provided as a possible map for pursuing such a phenomenon. This pursuit has been extended with the Videotex focus group meeting under investigation, and the instances examined herein begin to evidence how F does, in this occasion and for these tasks, repeatedly rely upon such a device to terminate prior and move on to next topics. The key issue. Of course, has more to do with the sequential environments in which marked and unmarked "okays" occur, including any and all sequential consequences and troubles for topic organization, than with simply locating "okay" as a pre-closing device or "discourse particle." ""

CONCLUSION

The preceding analysis was offered in order to gain a reflexive understanding of language, technology, and culture by providing empirical (microanalytic) evidence of more global (macroscopic) assumptions regarding technology in everyday life activities." - It also displays the intricate and altogether innovative nature of conversation as a technological resource, the organization of which is ultimately rooted in practical circumstances of everyday choice and action. By providing readers with actual instances of interaction, and in so doing inviting critical and shared inspections of the constituent features of a 'hi-tech occasion,' it becomes possible to formulate relationships among "evidence and claims" in ways having specific, observable consequences. How else might language be described as "technological" if, for example, the facilitation of a focus group *meeting was not shown to be an achievement comprised of identifiable and recurring features?* As it turns out, it is the re-specification of the ordered nature of these features that comprises the analytic exercise of accounting for talk and its manifold possibilities. Without such re-specification, it is likely that everyday conversations as communication technologies in their own right-would remain taken-for-granted and in these ways glossed as resources for producing and refining technological advancements such as Videotex.

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By examining closely F's methods for setting up and getting on with the interaction in segment (4), problems with "topic organization" became apparent. Clearly, working through "topics" is itself a cultural enactment. However, a wide variety of other segments, extracted from the two and one-half hour recording and transcript, can also be examined to reveal unique features of the "culture of ^{technology}." Consider the following instance:

(s) VI:FGNI:t^_I
Ju: .

either vertically horizont(ally) or di(onal ly

BJ: And so ~~ath~~ Ju: =and it won't heap.

BJ: you know T 1: ~~feel the ways she~~
~~did that uh we are.) (- fighting the computer.~~
~~hand uh-but~~

F: Urn hmn
 BJ: still this uni uh. it's a challenge.=

Jo: -01 cowli make taconw::ses on Na

BJ: >(if you wanna) get id |cets.<
 _> F: Uhkay hit now- ya know those are for the games let', taken like the health games ((continues))

Prior to this segment, F was silent for over two minutes. During this time users discussed a variety of experiences with Videotex technology, including the "topic" noted above by BJ: "fighting the computer". This reference begins to indicate ways in which users "anthropomorphize" machines, including computers, by attributing human-like actions and even intentions to how and why the computer "behaves" as it does. For example, consider Jo's "Or you'll make two moves on ya". One avenue for research inquiry, therefore, is to examine how interactants co-produce descriptions, such as BJ and Jo above, as a means of assessing ways in which inanimate "objects" can be oriented to as, essentially, interactional partners.

Yet also notice that within this sequential environment, F does receipt and mark a topic shift with "Uhkay" at the end of this segment, moving the discussion onto "health games." Need these two activities-"anthropomorphization" and "facilitation/topic shift"-be separated in analysis? Any or all answers seem to depend upon what questions researchers and/or interactants might be asking, and if something like "talking about the computer" may or may not be deemed relevant for a given purpose such as a focus group meeting and/or research

inquiry. In any case, it cannot be overlooked that in this sequential environment the two "activities" emerged interactionally and thus must be treated as displaying interrelationships (at least for the participants involved.) A final and similar instance appears below:

(9) VI::FGM:I: " Jo: .

>like for instance< the old channel
 F: 'uh. fairchild? .hh when it he:at You: they'uh:: o- >one of the gantes< i'wa i'wa (t) I (think) it was some type of | tic tac to: e
 hh it would
 S~ It YOU: L(3::SE TUR:KEY!! ((tough voice))

t==>F: \$Uh okay heh heh\$

Jo: an(d) i-i-i-i- Go(d) it uh ir:i fates

a==> F: (And) you feel kinda sba: :d h uh\$?

Jo: \$Ya:: \$ 2==>F: Iih o hay

lu: >Th at's allright I call my
 computer.< d- dununy?
 THEH HUH till hch

F: \$Uh h till till hch\$

Jo: >Well see that's a nice th up about

it=
 Ju: =heh heh (\$ S)

JO: say you were till .hh all the COMMunica tion
 with it=
 3==>F: = \$Okay\$ _
 JO: you can cuss it / out an it wont answer
 you back=
 Ju: Hell hell bell lieh

Jo: hell hell heh

a==> F: Um hnun an' >that's kinda
 nice huh < .hhh= JO: =Y a:.

4==>F: O kay° .111, um: le- let's talk about (cct) some other issues of concert. We talked a little bit about p vary ((continues))

Among the rather diverse phenomena that could be examined in this segment, including shared laughter and collaborative descriptions of the computer, it is again apparent that "anthropomorphization" co-occurs with F's repeated attempts to regulate topic. In (a==>) F twice offers affiliative assessments that could be argued as topic-terminal queries. Similarly, each of the "okays" appears to possess "speakership associated" qualities. For example, (1==>, 2==>, and 3==>) get overlapped or latched by the next speaker, and F selects not to produce an "okay + topic initial elicitor." In (4==>), however, once the laughter had "played itself out," F prefaces the topic shift with an "okay" and moves the discussion onto a related set of issues.

In light of F's repeated (and eventually successful) attempts to shift topic, it appears that Jo's and Ju's descriptions were deemed irrelevant and/or somehow "off topic" to the business-at-hand. Clearly, one task of facilitators/ reportees is to keep interaction "on track," and this instance provides a clear indication of the methods and persistence involved in "steering" the discussion back to those topics designated as "important" by F. These and related options are legitimately available to those institutionally responsible for an occasion's focus and purpose.

One final note: Upon re-examination of segments (9) and (10), and throughout the entire recordings/transcripts of this focus group [meeting.it](#) is clear that Videotex offers technologically sophisticated services to a wide variety of users. As experts, these individuals rely upon their experiences "interacting with the computer" to report news about the system and its operation. As Turkle has noted, "The computer's reactivity and complexity stimulate a certain extravagance of description." Yet, "there is something about people that makes it impossible to capture our intelligence in machines." Through the perspectives and analyses developed in this chapter exemplifying language as technology, the conclusion might best be drawn that Videotex interactions both symbolize and embody the "bedrock details" of such an impossibility.

NOTES

1 See Emanuel A. Schegloff. "Analyzing Single Episodes of Interaction: An Exercise in Conversation Analysis." in a Special Issue on Language and Social Interaction. ed. Douglas W. Sclafaro. *Social Interaction Quarterly* 50 (1987): 11-14; Emanuel A. Schegloff. "On an Actual Virtual Servo-Meclumist fin' Guessing Bad News: A Single Cam Conjecture." in a Special Issue on Language, Interaction, and Social Problems, ed. Douglas W. Maynard. *Social Interaction Quarterly* 35 (1985): 442-257. With increasing regularity, COMMUNIAU researchers are relying upon conversation analysis (CA) as a viable method for examining the organization of talk-in-interaction. In brief, the basic research procedures of CA include the collection of audio and/or video recordings of interaction, the careful production of transcripts as textual records of the talk, repeated listenings of recordings in unison with transcripts, and written analyses of findings. See: John Heritage. *Gul'inkel and tlnwnc'lt/odolo,v* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 195-4); Robert

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Hopper, Susan Koch, and Jenny Mandelbaum. "Conversation Analysis Methods." in *mnixanpoTory Is.tiues in Language and iscourse Prrnesces*, ed. Donald G. Ellis and William A. Donahue (Hillsdale, New Jersey: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1986). 169-186; *Sequential Or.,wrcatiott of*

Conersational Activities, ed. Wayne A. Beach. Special Issue of the *ICesrrrn.l. ttt/ of S/re cr Ir Communcation* 53 (1989).

2 Harvey Sacks. "On Doing 'Being Ordinary'." in *Sitmoes of Social Action: Studies in ConcercationAnalysis*, ed. J. Maxwell Atkinson and John Heritage (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 1984), 413-414.

3 Harvey Sacks, "Notes on Methodology," in *Strut aaz*s of Social Action*, 26-27. 4 Sacks, 22.

5 A similar videotext service, Prodigy' Services Co., has been designed and implemented by Sears and IBM. As overviewed in the *San Diego 77-ihune* (9-21-88), the system involves home shopping, information, and entertainment: "... San Diegans will be able to let their fingersng happily on the keyboard of a personal computer-do the shopping and banking, make travel arrangements and tap into a variety of sports, news, stock market and lifestyle information. Prodigy's services also include advertising and distribution networks via the Prodigy Interactive Personal Service. These and related options are available through "a low-cost modem the size of a cigarette pack that is simply Plugged into the back of the user's PC and has no settings to be

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adjusted." As a result of spending "more than 530 million on advertising over the next 15 months is appeal in order to stage a media blitz unparalleled in the videotext industry." the goal is to to a market broader than "gadget-happy computer huffs.... We're looking to attract folks beyond the computer hobbyist."

AT&T's contributions to the videotex industry include the Sceptre terminal and [keypad.as](#) utilized by Gateway Southern California (see Appendix B).

6 "Project Report," University of Nebraska Educational Television Network and Division of Continuing Studies (1982), I. This project report provided a useful overview of current activities in interactive cablevision. However, the actual audio-recordings and opportunity for microanalysis were provided through a grant from the Communication Research Center, San Diego State University, directed by John Witherspoon.

7 See J. Maxwell Atkinson. "Understanding Formality: Notes on the Categorization and Production of 'Formal' Interaction." *Briticlr Journal of Snciologv* 33 (1982): 86-117.

8 See Paul Drew and John Heritage, eds. *Talk at 11014: So(ial huerac lion in Inctinuiorral Setirr. c* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

9 In respective order, see: Alex Melloul. "The Organization of Turns in Formal Talk in the

Classroom," *Langua.,e in Society* 7 (1978): 182-213; Hugh Mehan. *Learnin., Lessons: Social Organization in the Classroom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); J. Maxwell Atkinson and Paul Drew. *Order in Coma The (rganisation of l crhal Interac Lion in .Judicial Settings* (London: Macmillan, 1979); Douglas W. Maynard, *Inside Plea Burgattnn.,* (New York: Plenum Press, 1984); Richard M. Frankel. "Talking in Interviews: A Dispreference for Patient-Initiated Questions in Physician-Patient Encounters." in *Interac nc nal C : nq trc.col.* George Psathas (New York: Ablex, forthcoming). 162-231; Christian Heath, "talk and Recipency: Sequential itn in Speech and Body Movement," in *Sit'ucnrres of Social Action*, 247

265: Organizat

265: John Heritage. "Analyzing News Interviews: Aspects for the Production of Talk for an Overhearing Audience," in *1/amhooko(Dicrouc c Anahsis. 6 o/une3: Discourse and Dtao,uc*, ed. Teun van Dijk (London: Academic Press, 1985). 95-117; David Greathach, "A Turn-Taking System for British News Interviews." *Lammag in Sot ietr* 17 (1988): 401-430; Steven E. Clayman. "Displaying Neutrality in Television News Interviews." in Special Issue of *SO;Ul Pi vrhncm.s*, 474-492.

11 See Harvey Sacks, Emanuel A. Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson. "A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation." *Lml,uage* 4 (1974): 696-735. 1 Heritage. "Analyzing News Interviews." 112-116.

12 Of course, both witnesses and patients can and do rely upon specific interactional techniques for dealing with constraints enacted through the pre-allocated nature of the setting. In Courts, for

Lart,1na,t'c ;l s and In Terltmno,lv 217

esaln III e. Lie fell dants tic img, cross el it In tried routine lc orient to attorneys' questions as accusatory by constructing excuses (justifications, rationalisations) into their answers (see Atkinson and Drew, *Ordcrin('sint. Cha ters2.3).anulorb*) genet atingalternatice andcomPetingdescri Pilions of,as (scenicdetails(SeePaulDress."AnalyiingtileUseofl,anguageinCourtrooullnteractiOn," in *l/andhook of Disc nurse Analysis*, 133-147). And patients have been shown to employ various

hod nuwements Such as msural shifts, kicks, and l-gestures in order to display " recipiencv, ' and l

in so doing eliciting involvement front co-interactant (see Heath. "Talk and Recipients").

13 Heritage. "Anal) zing Ness Interviews," 96-1(11: Claman. "Displaying Neutrality..."

14 See Gail Jefferson. "'Caveat Speaker': A Preliminary Exploration of Shift Implicative Recipency' in the Articulation of Topic." End of Grant Report-Mimeo (London: Social Science Research Council, 1981); Emanuel A. Schegloff, "Discourse as an Interactional Achievement: Some Uses of uh huh' and Other-Fit ings that Come Between Sentences," in *Anah_ino Dim vnuse: Te. ytcmdTulk- -Grur.,erounLMirersitxRoundtableonLan,uc(,esandLinyuisric:c*(Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1982). 71-93.

15 See Jenn Mandelbaum. "InterPersonal Activities in Conersational Storytelling." in *Su('taential Orqganzation of Conersational Aniritie,c*, 114-1'6.

16 Harold Garfinkel and Harvey Sacks, "On Formal Structures of Practical Actions." in *Diem etical So(inln,c*, ed. J.C. McKinnes and E.A. Titakian (Ness York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970). 338-366.

17 For a discussion of "okay" as a Pre-closing device in telephone conversations, see Emanuel A. Schegloff and Harvey Sacks, "Opening up Closings." *Semiotic a* 7 (1973): 289-327.

18 See Emanuel A. Schegloff, Gail Jefferson, and Harvey Sacks. "The Preference for Self-Correction in the Organization of Repair in Conversation." *Language* 53 (1977): 361-382. See also Schegloff's discussion of remedying problematic hearings and understandings in "Discourse." 87-89.

19 For a more detailed analysis of "oh" in conversation, see John Heritage, "A Change-of-State Token and Aspects of its Sequential Placement." in *Structures of Social Action*, 299-345.

20 Jefferson. "Caveat Speaker." 62-66.

21 Schegloff. "Discourse." 79.

22 See (fail Jefferson and Emanuel A. Schegloff. "Sketch: Some Orderly Aspects of Overlap in Conversation." NIMCOLIaph in author's possession (1975).

23 Jefferson. "Caveat Speaker." 26.

24 See Jefferson. "Caveat Speaker." 30-31. for a discussion of how certain tokens come off "as utterly spurious and may be produced to be seen as utterly spurious ... given our Still Immerg sense of the triviality and transiency of acknowledgment tokens in general."

25 Jefferson. "Caveat Speaker." 32.

26 Graham Button and Neil Casey. "Generating Topic: The Use of Topic Initial Elicitors." in *Structures of Social Action*, 169-177. See also Douglas W. Maynard, "Placement of Topic Changes in Conversation." *Semiotic* 30 (1981): 263-290.

27 Gail Jefferson. "List Construction as a Task and Interactional Resource." in *Competent* 13.

28 See Wayne A. Beach, "Orienting to the Phenomenon." in *Cooperation and Feedback*, ed. James A. Anderson (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, in press).

29 See Dehoia Schiffrin. *Discourse Structures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 102, 138.

30 See, for example, Emanuel A. Schegloff, "Between Macro and Micro: Contexts and Other Connections." in *The Micro-Macro Link*, ed. James Alexander, B. Giesen, R. Munch, and N. Sluisef (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming).

31 See Sherry Turkle. *7/11: A Story of Survival*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 14.

32 Turkle. 19.

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(From *Sequential Organization of Conversational Activities*, ed. Wayne A. Beach, *Estes, Journal of Speech Communication* 53 (1989): 89-90.)

Transcription Conventions

The transcription system employed for data segments is an adaptation of Gail Jefferson's work (see J. M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. ix-xvii). Symbols are employed to provide vocalic and prosodic details (e.g., pauses, word stretch and emphasis, intonation, aspiration, etc.) so as to preserve the integrity of recorded interaction. The orthography is designed to capture how words sound, but not at the expense of making the transcript unreadable. Abbreviated information, provided prior to transcribed segments, index location and original source from which data were drawn.

Symbol	Name	Function
		<i>I</i> Brackets Indicate beginnings and endings of overlapping utterances.
		= Equal signs Latching of contiguous utterances, with no interval or overlap.
3. (1.2)	Timed Pause	Intervals occurring within and between same or different speaker's utterance, in tenths of a second.
4. (.)	Micropause	Brief pause of less than ((1.2)
5. :::	Colon(s)	Prior sound, syllable, or word is prolonged or stretched. More colons indicate longer prolongation.
6. .	Period	Falling vocal pitch or intonation. Punctuation marks do not reflect grammatical status (e.g., end of sentence or question).
7. '?'	Question Mark	Rising vocal pitch or intonation.
8. ,	Comma	A continuing intonation, with slight upward or downward contour.
9. <i>T.I</i>	Arrows	Marked rising and falling shifts in intonation.
		1(l. °° Degree Signs A passage of talk noticeably softer than surrounding utterances.
11. !	Exclamation	Animated speech tone.
12. -	Hyphen	Halting, abrupt cut off of sound, syllable, or word.
13. <i>bold</i>	Italics	Vocalic stress or emphasis. or Underline
14. OKAY	CAPS	Extreme loudness compared with surrounding talk.
15. > <	Greater than/less than Signs	Portions of an utterance delivered at a noticeably quicker (> <) or slower (< >) pace.
16. hhh	FFs	Audible outbreaths, possibly laughter. The more h's, the longer the aspiration. Aspirations with superscripted period indicate audible inbreaths. H's within parentheses indicate audible inbreaths, possibly laughter.
speech		shark within-speech aspirations, possibly laughter. 17. ((noise)) Scenic details Transcriber's comments (e.g., gestures, non-sounds).
18. ()	Parentheses	Transcriber is in doubt as to word, syllable, or sound. Empty parentheses indicate indecipherable passage.

Often preceding an inbreath.
Relative closed or open position of laughter.

laughing talk between markers.
Double left-hand brackets indicate utterances linked together, begun simultaneously.

As evident from the 1984 Gateway Southern California brochure advertisements below, the "interactive" in Videotex cable services consists of "communicating with your TV" through the Sceptre terminal and keypad (a trademark of AT&T company). Described as "two-way communication that opens new channels of communication," it is useful to contrast these technological orientations and achievements with conversational activities comprising a focus group meeting. While each is a collaborative production, the technology of conversation is a unique exchange system in which speakers and hearers coproduce and thereby constrain turns-at-talk-and the activities accomplished in and through the sequencing of such turns. Just as the approaches to communication are markedly different, so are the purposes of the technologies in everyday life, and these differences allow for yet another perspective on the possibility of a reflexive view of "language as and in technology."