

Mike Huiskes

The role of the clause for turn-taking in Dutch conversations

One of the tasks participants of a conversation face is the sequential organization of their interaction. That is, they have to negotiate both the allocation and the timing of turns-at-talk. A first superficial glance at an arbitrary interaction shows that participants structure this sequential organization in a very orderly manner. Turn-taking is realized without a considerable pause or overlap. This raises the question what characteristics of turns-at-talk enable hearers to place their new turns at the boundaries of the foregoing turn with such precision.

In this study, we try to answer the question what constitutes turns-at-talk. We propose that turns are best analyzed as 3-tuples, describing structures on three distinct levels: syntax, prosody and pragmatics. We claim that all three levels are necessary to explain the turn-taking phenomenon. In this study we have two goals:

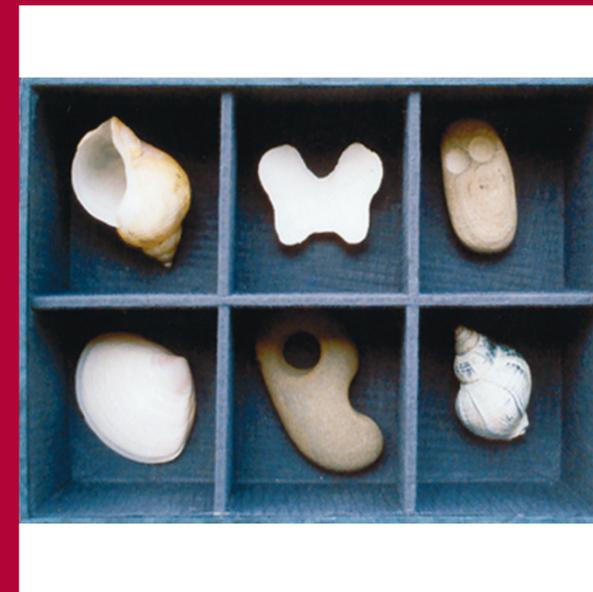
1. We want to show that turns are indeed best analyzed as complex units that comprise syntactic, prosodic and pragmatic units, and
2. We want to describe the interplay of these composite structures in the production of turns-at-talk. We want to describe how syntax, prosody and pragmatics are used as interactional resources in the organization of interactions.

These issues will be addressed in a series of corpus studies based on a large corpus of informal Dutch conversations. This work is of interest to researchers concerned with interactional linguistics and the analysis of spoken language.

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ISBN 978-94-6093-036-2

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