

Seminar Materials: Conversation in Context

Syllabus

It Goes Without Saying: Conversation in Context
CHDV 30###, PSYCH 30###

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Course Description

Language enables humans to communicate infinitely complex ideas into neatly packaged strings of words, but these words are neither delivered nor received in a vacuum. In day-to-day conversation, the language we use is part of a larger interactive context. As speakers and signers, our bodies, faces, voices, and histories send messages above and beyond the words we choose. By broadening the scope of how we think about dialogue, we can examine conversation as a multifaceted event - where language is just one of many ways we communicate.

This course will take an interdisciplinary approach to the study of conversation to ask how identity, society, and the physical world allow us to make meaning from language. We will discuss how the study of interactional context varies across linguistics, psychology, and sociology and think critically about the overlap and divergence we find across these perspectives. Over the quarter students will build an interdisciplinary analysis of a single interaction by examining and reexamining data through lenses such as social distance, barriers to communication, stance-taking, and gesture.

Required Materials

Readings

There is no textbook for this course. All readings will be posted on Canvas. Several readings come from the book *Using Language* by Herb Clark which is accessible as an e-book through the library website. Several copies will be available at the campus bookstore if you prefer to purchase a paper copy.

Video

Assignments for this class are centered around one short video clip you will choose during Week 1. It is essential that this video be accessible to *both you and me* through the end of the quarter. Online videos that are at risk of being removed for copyright infringement (or any other reason) are not an option. Videos that need to be purchased or require a paid streaming subscription are probably not appropriate, but I will evaluate on a case-by-case basis. I will provide several options to choose from if you would prefer not to find your own.

We will discuss the details of what this video clip should be on the first day of class, but the fundamental requirements are:

1. Video is of 2-4 people engaged in spontaneous, unscripted conversation
2. Clip is about 5 minutes in length (min 3, max 7; may be a clip from a longer video)

3. Video and audio are high quality
4. Language of interaction is English*

* While the concepts and methods we cover in this course are not specific to the English language or even spoken language, the assignments will be most successful if everyone – you, your classmates, and your instructor – are on relatively equal footing when it comes to understanding the video you choose. With that in mind I ask that, if possible, you select a clip that uses English. I recognize that English is not equally accessible to all students, so I will happily make exceptions to this requirement. If you ultimately use a video in another language, you will be required to schedule office hours with me once per unit to be sure we are on the same page before I grade your work.

Regardless of what video clip you choose, I encourage everyone to think about how these topics apply to all language/communication systems you are familiar with and to bring this up in class discussion!

Course Requirements, Learning Objectives, & Grading

Assignments for this class will be organized around performing a comprehensive analysis of a single conversational interaction. Over the 9 weeks, students will write brief papers discussing this interaction through four of the analytical perspectives we cover over the quarter. The final assignment will integrate these analyses into a larger discussion of interaction based on themes from the entire quarter. Grade distribution is as follows:

- **30% - Class participation.** Students are expected to attend and actively participate in all class discussions. Refer to policies and procedures for an explanation of what active participation may look like in this class.
- **20% - Topic papers.** Students will write 4 short (500 words) topic papers analyzing their video-recorded interaction through a lens from each unit topic. These papers will be graded as complete/incomplete and will be returned with formative feedback.
 - Learning objectives: Students will *identify multidisciplinary approaches* to the study of interaction. Students will *analyze original data* by revisiting an interaction from multiple perspectives.
- **50% - Final paper.** The final paper for the class will be a complete analysis of the student's selected interaction. It will comprise:
 - An introduction that reviews the relevant class materials (2-3 pages)
 - Learning objective: Students will use course readings and discussions to *describe how analytical approaches overlap and diverge.*
 - Revised versions of the 4 topic papers (4-8 pages total)
 - Learning objective: Students will use instructor feedback to *evaluate and revise* their writing.
 - A concluding discussion that integrates these analyses and offers a holistic interpretation of the interaction (2-3 pages)
 - Learning objective: Students will *integrate discrete analyses* to present a single cohesive discussion.

Formatting and Assignment Specifics

Assignments should be uploaded to Canvas as .doc or .docx files. Formatting choices are entirely up to you, but when in doubt it's never a bad idea to go with Times New Roman, 12pt, 1 inch margins. You may use whatever citation format you choose so long as you do so consistently.

You will not lose points for occasional typos, spelling errors, or for going a little over the word limit. You *will* lose points for spelling and grammatical problems that impact readability, writing errors that have not been corrected in your revised final paper, and completely ignoring the word limit. If you are struggling with these sorts of writing problems for any reason, please let me know. We can work together to find supportive resources and/or make accommodations.

A note about word limits: When there is a maximum word/page count and no minimum – a good rule of thumb is to aim for 75% and see where that gets you. If you've written less than half of the maximum, you probably haven't given yourself enough space to fully address the topic. If you're on the verge of going over the maximum, take the opportunity for smart edits. Make your writing clearer and more concise by dropping wordy phrases. Make a more direct and compelling argument by going through your writing line by line asking "how does this sentence strengthen by thesis?" and dropping unnecessary details.

Late Work

If you need an extension for any reason, please ask! The more advance notice you give me, the better a strategy we can make for completing the assignment. I do not want to penalize you for being unwell, having four papers due the same day, coping with a family emergency, etc. Email me in advance of the due date/time and we will work something out. Without advance notice, late topic papers will receive 3 points; late final papers will lose 5 points per day.

Course Policies

Accessibility and Accommodation

I am committed to making this course accessible to students of all background, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make aspects of this course difficult for you to access, please contact me so we can discuss how to accommodate your needs. This includes, but is not limited to, accommodations around the format of course materials, the use of Canvas and other digital resources, the classroom and other physical resources, and the structure of assignments.

I will work with you to create an accessible learning environment whether or not you disclose your disability or personal circumstances. If you choose to disclose personal information with me, I will keep those discussions confidential. For certain accommodations you may need to contact Student Disability Services at (773) 702-6000 or disabilities@uchicago.edu.

Diversity, Inclusion, and Community

We will commit as a class to creating a welcoming, respectful, and productive classroom. We will expect each other to be mutually respectful of our meaningful identities. I expect that when we engage with each other in discussion we are considerate of the diversity of our classroom with regards to gender, sexuality, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, immigration status, and linguistic background. This course will discuss how many of these kinds of identities play roles in the interpretation of interaction. It is critical that we maintain respectful dialogue both academically in discussion of these identities in the abstract as they relate to our

course topics and familiarly, which includes using correct names and pronouns. If a member of our classroom community – including myself – is creating an unwelcome space for you, I hope you will bring this to my attention immediately.

Attendance and Active Participation

The participation component of your final grade is an assessment of your in-class engagement with the course materials and your classmates.

Your grade will be based on your **active participation** in class, which can look many different ways. It includes sharing your take on the readings and answering questions, but there are many other ways to engage with your classmates. Ask your classmate to expand on their point, ask for clarification, politely express agreement or disagreement, be conscious of your body language, share something you found surprising or confusing, connect the discussion to something in pop culture, make a joke. Practice the “step up, step back” guideline: step up and say something if you haven’t made your voice heard, step back to make space for others to contribute if you’ve had the chance to say a lot. I understand some students find it very difficult or anxiety-provoking to speak up in class. Let me know if this is a concern for you. We can plan strategies for how to make speaking up easier and/or find accommodations outside of class time.

Please email me to let me know if you will be absent from discussion. There is no direct penalty to your grade for absences, but frequently missing classes may negatively impact your overall participation grade. If you are concerned that unavoidable absences may be hurting your grade, please let me know as soon as possible to discuss ways to get full credit.

Laptops, tablets, and other electronic devices may be used to take notes and access readings during discussion. Your participation grade will suffer if your device is distracting you from discussion.

Pass/Fail

Students who choose to take this class pass/fail must regularly attend discussion. To receive a passing grade, students need to complete all four topic papers. Rather than a final paper, students should submit revised versions of at least two topic papers with a 1-2 page general discussion.

Class Schedule

Please come to class each Tuesday having completed that week’s readings. *Readings marked with an asterisk are long, in-depth, or highly methodological. You only need to skim these before class but you may find them quite useful as you write your papers.

Introduction

Week 1: Introduction to Interaction

- Clark, H. H. (1996). Introduction. *Using language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Levinson, S. C. (2006). On the human ‘interactional engine’.

Unit 1: Coordination, Stance, and Affect – Topic paper due Friday 4/17

Week 2: Common ground and turn-taking

- Clark, H. H. (1996). Chapter 11 Conversation. *Using language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Duncan, S. (1972). Some signals and rules for taking speaking turns in conversations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 23(2), 283–292.
- *Wiebe, J., Wilson, T., & Cardie, C. (2005). Annotating Expressions of Opinions and Emotions in Language. *Language Resources and Evaluation*, 39(2–3), 165–210.

Week 3: Stance-taking, epistemics, and affect

- Clark, H. H. (1996). Chapter 12 Layering. *Using language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Du Bois, J. W. (2007). The stance triangle. In R. Englebretson (Ed.), *Pragmatics & Beyond New Series* (Vol. 164, pp. 139–182). John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Unit 2: Body and Voice – Topic paper due Friday 5/1

Week 4: Non-verbal behavior

- Bavelas, J. B., & Gerwing, J. (2011). The Listener as Addressee in Face-to-Face Dialogue. *International Journal of Listening*, 25(3), 178–198.
- Debras, C., & Cienki, A. (2012). Some Uses of Head Tilts and Shoulder Shrugs during Human Interaction, and Their Relation to Stancetaking. *2012 International Conference on Privacy, Security, Risk and Trust and 2012 International Conference on Social Computing*, 932–937.
- *Ekman, P., & Friesen, W. V. (n.d.). *The Repertoire of Nonverbal Behavior: Categories, Origins, Usage, and Coding*. De Gruyter Mouton.

Week 5: Paralinguistics

- Clark, H. H., & Fox Tree, J. E. (2002). Using uh and um in spontaneous speaking. *Cognition*, 84(1), 73–111.
- Swerts, M., & Kraemer, E. (2005). Audiovisual prosody and feeling of knowing. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 53(1), 81–94.

Unit 3: Interlocutors as Individuals – Topic paper due Friday 5/15

Week 6: Speaker identities

- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2004). Language and identity. *A companion to linguistic anthropology*, 1, 369–394.
- Jones, T., Kalbfeld, J. R., Hancock, R., & Clark, R. (2019). Testifying while black: An experimental study of court reporter accuracy in transcription of African American English. *Language*, 95(2), e216–e252.

- Lund, Holly (2019) "The Linguistic Capital of Amazon's The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel: Season 1," *Occam's Razor*: Vol. 9 , Article 5.
- Gross, T. (2015, July 23). From Upspeak To Vocal Fry: Are We “Policing” Young Women’s Voices? In *Fresh Air*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/425608745>

Week 7: Communicative barriers

- Friedner, M., & Block, P. (2017). Deaf studies meets autistic studies. *The Senses and Society*, 12(3), 282–300.
- Nicolaidis, C., Raymaker, D. M., Ashkenazy, E., McDonald, K. E., Dern, S., Baggs, A. E., Kapp, S. K., Weiner, M., & Boisclair, W. C. (2015). “Respect the way I need to communicate with you”: Healthcare experiences of adults on the autism spectrum. *Autism*, 19(7), 824–831.
- Park, J.-E. (2007). Co-construction of Nonnative Speaker Identity in Cross-cultural Interaction. *Applied Linguistics*, 28(3), 339–360.

Unit 4: Social Distance – Topic paper due Tuesday 5/26

Week 8: Socialization as distance

- Boxer, D. (1993). Social distance and speech behavior: The case of indirect complaints. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 19(2), 103–125.
- Clark, H. H. (1996). Chapter 10 Joint Commitment. *Using language*. Cambridge University Press.

Week 9: Language as distance

- *Cromdal, J. (2004). Building bilingual oppositions: Code-switching in children’s disputes. *Language in Society*, 33(01).
- Jan, J. Mohd. (2003). Code-switching for power wielding: Inter-gender discourse at the workplace. *Multilingua - Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*, 22(1), 41–57.
- Snow, C. E., & Uccelli, P. (2009). The Challenge of Academic Language. In D. R. Olson & N. Torrance (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Literacy* (pp. 112–133). Cambridge University Press.

Final paper due Tuesday, 6/9

Assessment Plan

Overview

Graded assignments for this class include four short topic papers written throughout the quarter that are revised, compiled, and integrated into a final paper. The topic papers will be graded for completion rather than for quality grades. Students will receive formative feedback on these papers; instructor comments will indicate recommended revisions for content and writing style. Students will be expected to incorporate these revisions into the final paper they submit for a quality grade. The final paper will additionally be an opportunity for students to demonstrate that they are able to critically compare approaches to the study of interaction and to integrate multiple perspectives into a cohesive interpretation of data.

Sample Assignment

Topic paper: Nonverbal aspects of conversation

These two weeks have focused on the *nonverbal and paralinguistic features of conversational interaction*. Using theories and methods from the readings and classroom discussions, revisit your selected interaction and present a brief analysis of how nonverbal communication contributes to the interaction as a whole.

Your paper must address:

1. What methods will you use in this analysis? Why are these methods appropriate?
2. What nonverbal and/or paralinguistic resources are most salient in this interaction?
3. Do these nonverbal and/or paralinguistic resources communicate *above and beyond* speech content? If so, how? If not, what are the limiting factors?

Other questions you can use to guide your analysis:

5. Do you notice any differences between speakers in the use of nonverbal resources? For example, who uses more gesture? Why might that be?
6. We have discussed gestures in terms of both *form* and *function*. Which is more useful to think about for this particular interaction?
7. Implicit communication with the body and voice can be more ambiguous than the textual content of speech alone but can also add information to ambiguous speech. In this interaction, do nonverbal and paralinguistic signals make messages more or less ambiguous? Are these signals “on the record” or “off the record”?

Assignment Rubric

Topic Paper

Complete (5pts): The paper addresses all required questions and makes at least one additional claim.

Incomplete (0pts): The paper is off-topic or is not submitted.

In rare cases I may give <5 points where papers have serious flaws and require major revisions. Students may rewrite and resubmit within one week for full credit. I may also very occasionally give 6 points for truly exceptional work.

Topic Section in Final Paper

Scored out of 10 for each topic section

Writing

- 2 points: The writing is clear and concise. There are no writing problems that impede comprehension. The paper uses appropriate vocabulary for course concepts.
- 1 point: The writing is not always clear. There may be some grammatical or structural issues that impede comprehension. The paper generally uses appropriate vocabulary but may have an inappropriate tone or style.
- 0 points: Parts of the writing are very unclear. Grammatical and structural problems confuse or distract from the argument. The paper may not use appropriate vocabulary from the course.

Basic Analysis

- 2 points: The paper fully addresses all the required questions. Answers are consistent with class discussion of the unit topic.
- 1 point: The paper does not fully address all required questions, or some answers are problematically inconsistent with class discussion of the unit topic.
- 0 points: The paper does not adequately address any of the required questions or inaccurately presents the fundamental concepts around the unit topic covered in class.

Extended Analysis

- 4 points: This paper goes above and beyond the basic analysis. It makes astute observations about the unit topic. It presents an excellent interpretation of how these communicative features contribute to the interaction.
- 3 points: This paper goes beyond the basic analysis. It makes appropriate observations about the unit topic. It presents a strong interpretation of how these features contribute to the interaction but may be lacking in creativity or complexity.
- 2 points: This paper attempts to make observations about the unit topic beyond the basic analysis but may have overlooked or misidentified some important aspects. It attempts an extended discussion but may suffer from misinterpretation.
- 1 point: This paper attempts to make observations about the unit topic beyond the basic analysis but has done so inaccurately or inappropriately. Any extended discussion may suffer from major misinterpretation.
- 0 points: This paper does not go beyond the requirements of the basic analysis.

Revision

- 2 points: The paper fully incorporated instructor feedback from the topic paper.
- 1 point: The paper has addressed some feedback but not all.
- 0 points: This paper has not been revised since the first submission.

Teaching Methods & Lesson Plan

Teaching Methods

This will be a seminar-style class structured primarily around facilitating student discussion. Discussion-based class meetings will include at least one block of whole-class discussion and at least one block of discussion in small groups or pairs. Some class meetings will include a lecture component to introduce students to new methodologies, as in the sample lesson below. These mini-lectures will provide a minimal amount of new content and are instead designed to immediately incorporate new content into theoretical and practical application. Lectures will be broken up with small group discussions and will include exercises to practice new analytical methods individually and in small groups.

Sample Lesson Plan

Lesson title: Fundamentals of Co-Speech Gesture

Course: It Goes Without Saying: Conversation in Context

Unit: Nonverbal Behavior in Interaction

Session: Week 4, Session 1

Primary Course Outcome(s): Students will learn to analyze interaction through multiple perspectives. In this unit, the central perspective is non-verbal behavior. For this lesson, the focal subtopic is co-speech gesture.

Learning Objectives: By the end of the session, learners will:

1. Categorize co-speech gesture in terms of gesture form and gesture function
2. Distinguish between cognitive and communicative functions of gesture
3. Apply these categorization schemas to gesture data

Emphasize: This lesson should emphasize the major differences between form and meaning and between cognitive and communicative function. It is important to clearly define common categories of form and meaning and to give prototypical examples. It is not necessary to exhaustively describe any one category. It should be made explicit that gesture form and meaning are related but do not share one-to-one correspondence. Emphasize that cognitive and communicative functions are not mutually exclusive.

Materials: Co-speech gesture slide deck, coding table handout, Seinfeld video clip

Duration: 60 minutes

Note: A 15 minute microteaching version of this lesson includes shortened versions of some activities and omits others. The first column in the table below shows time allotted for a 60 minute class session. The second column indicates whether the activity should be included in a 15 minute session and if so the time allotted.

Minutes (full/micro)	Description/Activity
3 / 1	Introduction. Recap introductory unit and why we would study interaction beyond the level of language. Briefly summarize what kinds of nonverbal behavior contribute to interaction and highlight co-speech gesture as the topic of the day.
5 / 3	Think/Pair/Share: Why do we gesture when we speak? Where do you notice gesture in your everyday life? What is the utility of gesture in those contexts? Refer to slides for additional prompts.
15 / 3	Large group discussion. Define gesture <u>form</u> and <u>meaning</u> . As a class, use TPS examples to create lists of common forms and meanings. Present slide with complete lists of forms and meanings and define each term. As a class, discuss how forms and meanings are potentially related using common examples. <i>Note: For microteaching lesson, present lists of forms and meaning without defining terms comprehensively. Use 2-3 examples of common gestures to call attention to several items and emphasize the difference between form and meaning.</i>
5 / NA	Small group discussion. Work in small groups to think of one gesture form that takes multiple meanings and one gesture meaning that takes multiple forms.
3 / NA	Transition to a discussion of function. Refer back to the TPS activity and ask for intuitions about why we gesture. Why is it useful? How does it help us in conversation? Group student suggestions into cognitive and communicative functions.
7-10 / 3	Mini-lecture. Present slide with list of cognitive and communicative functions. Give a mini-lecture on theories of gesture function. Center the lecture on the distinction between cognition and communication. Emphasize that gestures may serve multiple functions and that we cannot be certain about function from observation alone. <i>Note: For microteaching lesson, limit to general discussion of cognitive and communicative benefits. Do not elaborate on specific functions.</i>
10 / 3	Gesture coding handout. Pass out coding handout and orient students to the table columns. Ask students to look out for two specific gestures as they watch the video clip. After showing the clip once, talk through as a class how to code those two gestures. Play the clip again for students to code 1-2 gestures independently. <i>Note: For microteaching lesson, walk through one example before showing the video clip. Walk through the second example following the clip and end the activity.</i>

3 / 2	Summary/Closing. Reflect on what was interesting or challenging about the coding handout. Re-emphasize how form, meaning, cognition, and communication were used in the coding activity. End on the open question of whether we can think about other nonverbal behaviors with these same concepts.
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Assessment Strategies/Comments: Use the coding handout to assess students' general understanding of the lesson's major topics: form, meaning, cognitive function, communicative function. It is less important that students provide precisely the correct code and more important that they understand the boundaries of coding category. For example, students may not know whether a representational gesture has an iconic or metaphoric meaning. It is more important that they understand both "iconic" and "metaphoric" are categories of meaning than it is for them to distinguish between them.

Time permitting, walk through the coding process for some of the gestures students identify in the video clip. Highlight the possibility of multiple functions or multiple meanings for a single gesture.

If time is short, share the video link with students and ask them to spend 10 minutes coding at home and come to the next class prepared to share their work.

Why do we gesture when we speak?

It goes without saying.

Microteaching lesson
March 6th, 2020

Why do we gesture when we speak?

- You already know!
- You are an expert of your own language use. What are your intuitions?

Why do we gesture when we speak?

Think Pair Share

- Where do you notice gesture in your everyday life?
- What is the utility of gesture in those contexts?

To get you thinking...

- Can you think of politicians, actors, or other public figures with memorable gestures?
- In what situations would it be more or less appropriate to gesture?
- Have you noticed differences in how groups of people gesture? e.g. speakers of different languages or different ages
- Imagine yourself in a few different social contexts - out with friends, a job interview, a presentation, etc. Do you gesture?



Describing gestures: Form vs. Function

Categories of form:

- Deictic / pointing
- Conventional / emblematic
- Representational
- Non-representational

Categories of functions of meaning:

- Indexing something in the world
- Indexing an abstract concept
- Visually representing something in the world (iconicity)
- Visually representing an abstract concept (metaphor)
- Lexical signaling
- Emphasizing speech
- Directing interaction
- Displaying affect and/or attitude

Describing gestures: Cognitive vs. Communicative

Cognitive functions

- Lexical retrieval
- Enhanced learning and memory
- Organizing thoughts
- Planning language

Communicative functions

- Reveals implicit knowledge and intention
- Adds to or reinforces meaning in speech
- Directs interaction

Description of FORM	Functions of MEANING	Relationship to SPEECH	COGNITIVE functions	COMMUNICATIVE functions
(t=0:18) deictic, two hands tap on surface				
(t=0:37) iconic - holding				



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKpt2E2Lqcw&feature=emb_title

Description of FORM	Functions of MEANING	Relationship to SPEECH	COGNITIVE functions	COMMUNICATIVE functions
(t=0:18) deictic, two hands tap on surface	indexing location, emphasizing speech	"keeps the car here" - emphasizes <i>here</i>	syntactic planning	reinforces meaning, maintains attention
(t=0:37) iconic - holding	metaphorical "holding" reservation	reinforcing <i>hold</i>	lexical retrieval (literal "hold" to reference metaphorical "hold")	convey affect/attitude

Coding Handout

Description of FORM	Functions of MEANING	Relationship to SPEECH	COGNITIVE functions	COMMUNICATIVE functions
(t=0:18) deictic, two hands tap on surface				
(t=0:37) iconic - holding				

Description of FORM	Functions of MEANING	Relationship to SPEECH	COGNITIVE functions	COMMUNICATIVE functions
(t=0:18) deictic, two hands tap on surface				
(t=0:37) iconic - holding				